

# Chapter 1

## Research Focus on European Education Policy: An Overview

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter includes an overview of the academic research recently dedicated to educational policies in European higher education. This chapter reviews the main research databases, looking for general and specialized articles referring to academic research, and the authors map the trends in mainstream literature. They identify the dynamics of articles dedicated to academic research, the most frequent topics, and assess their impact on educational policies in European universities. The chapter is based on a quantitative analysis of the records, as well as on the debates and analyses of the research on educational policies in recent years.*

### INTRODUCTION

The issue of changing policies in the European education has attracted researchers on two aspects: the post-communist evolution of higher education systems in Central and Eastern Europe (Mitter, 2003), and the post-EU accession transformations, in the new member states. Pépin (2011) discusses the landmarks (in) when it comes to European cooperation in education, from 1976 (on) further, pointing out the progresses achieved through the Lisbon strategy, as well as the drawbacks

(encountered) at national level. Jallade (2011) discusses six cooperation methods in the European education systems:

1. *Promoting universal, normative values among the education community.* This is considered to be the most ambitious and (global) goal of cooperation (in) on the educational level, all across Europe, with a long-lasting effect on the national education systems.

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2. *Setting and monitoring common (or shared) goals for education systems.* This means quantifying progress, when it comes to the European convergence in education, by establishing clear benchmarking tools and indicators that can be followed over time and included in quantitative analyses.
3. *Developing equivalent quality standards and performance indicators.* This objective (follows) results from the precedent one, as Jallade points out that quality standards and discussions on system performance are no longer the privilege of the specialists in the field of higher education, but come to interest the general public.
4. *Enhancing a policy dialogue and disseminating good practices (at) on country and regional levels.* Comparative studies have emerged, as an effect of this objective, and they ensure the spreading of common standards and the dialogue of European higher education systems, with a view to disseminate good practices.
5. *Providing financial aid for system governance through institutional development.* The learning process, from the developed to the developing clusters of countries should not involve only good practices transfer, but also a transfer of funds and support, improved infrastructure and governance.
6. *Promoting the European dimension of education through student/staff mobility and institutional networking.* Last but not least, Jallade mentions that the European union of education cannot be achieved without enhanced mobility of staff and students, which may assure a practical and real exchange of practices and behaviours in higher education institutions. Thus, a European dimension of education is promoted and sustained.

A discussion upon the success of the European education unification and convergence initiatives should start from these objectives and their

fulfilment should be assessed in various national systems.

## **COMMON EDUCATIONAL POLICY IN EUROPE**

The need for a common educational policy in Europe (is) has been long discussed. The growing competition (Ramoniene, Lanskoronkis, 2011) and the aim to infuse the higher education systems with a European dimension created this focus on higher education decision-making (process).

Issues like IC reporting, at the university level and at the national level as well (Hervas-Oliver et al, 2011), pitfalls of innovative education, in the context of globalization (Ramos and Ballell, 2009), and fragmentation in the European research (the Sapir report, 2003) are currently under discussion.

Considering this context, with educational reforms at the core of Europe's progress towards the knowledge society, the paper investigates the problems of policy-making in education (in) for a recent EU member, experiencing transition from communism to post-communism, as it is the case of Romania.

Hard to die mentalities narrow mentalities, groups of interests, lack of inside (knowledge) (information) and political coherence are examined, starting from a focus group with experts and stakeholders of the higher education system. The findings allow for a clearer image of what policy making involves in this societal pattern, considering the variety and the inconsistency of stakes.

(The) European education is designated to build the future of Europe, which will be shaped by approximately one third of its young population potentially enrolled in various forms of education (Wielemans, 2000), (which explains) this explaining why educational policies are currently a focus. Elena-Pérez et al (2011) discuss the correlation between the future of universities and their (wise) management of intellectual capital. Their research refers particularly to Romania, as

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