

The Status of the Social Sciences in Romanian Educational System

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ABSTRACT: In Romania, “the social and humanistic sciences” is a general concept that includes the social domain and mostly the topics that the students study in those 12 years of school. In the next few pages, I’m going to present the situation of the Romanian school concerning the teaching of those subjects. Besides that, it’s important to know that the social area should be more important nowadays especially in the context of the actual social and political crisis all over the world.

KEYWORDS: school, society, culture, social and humanistic sciences, Romanian educational system, civic life, level of study

1. The specifics of the social sciences

The concept of social sciences is very often used nowadays, mostly to express the social reality that we live in. First of all, we should know that the social sciences are those humanistic domains that help us to better know and to deeply understand these times, the present realities and the main problems that concern the society: war, disease, poverty, terrorism and so on. The social sciences have to fulfill the expectations of the individuals, to find theoretical and practical solutions for urgent problems.

As a science, the social area has, first of all, an informative side. It has to explain the given reality and mainly to suggest some possible solutions. Also, it has a normative dimension that means that through them the people receive some references about how they should act, what should and shouldn’t do at the time. It’s important to mention the interrogative aspect which is essential in social sciences concerns. They offer the possibility to have a

critical opinion about some specific problems. They teach us that we have to study a social situation and then to find all sorts of arguments to support or to contradict an idea or an opinion.

If we refer to social sciences in the educational area and how they could help the students to develop themselves and to become active citizens, we can say that there are a lot of advantages studying them. First of all, they give the students the possibility to express their opinion and to bring arguments for it. Also, they have the possibility to learn how to contradict an idea of another student. In this manner they can have a productive dialogue and a real debate. This helps them to better express themselves, to become more self-confident, and to have the courage to fight for their rights and for their country. The students can also have the chance to analyze in a critical way the decisions of the power, to decide which person is better to be elected in a public function and also to pay attention to corruption. With all this fulfilled, a society would function much better.

2. The distribution of the social sciences in Romanian educational system

In Romania, the educational system is mostly based on school's activities. The school is subordinated to the Ministry of National Education which provides the curriculum for all learning domains. The Ministry decides which domains will be studied, how many hours/week will be studied and also, they set the content for each subject. The students have less opportunity to decide what to learn or to choose how to be their classes. That's why the Romanian educational system is included in the category "in course of decentralization". Basically, the given curriculum represents around 70% while the chosen curriculum is around 30%¹.

In this context, the social sciences have one hour per week at almost each level of education. In some specializations like "Social sciences" or "Philological studies" there are two or three hours per week but such specializations exist only at theoretical high schools.

In Romania the educational system is divided in few levels:

1. The first level is the *primary school*, from 6 to 10 years old. This includes the reception class, the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and the 4th grade.

2. The second level is the *gymnasium/secondary school*, from 11 to 14 years and has the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grade.
3. The third level is the *high school* from 15 to 18 years and has 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th grade.

In this division the students have a minimum and a maximum number of classes per week. In the primary and in the secondary level almost all the students have the same number of classes and study almost the same disciplines because this stage is considered the compulsory one².

So, the number of school hours per week (including all subjects) can vary like that:

- For the 3rd and the 4th grade there are around 20 hours per week;
- For the 5th grade there are from 26 hours/week, the minimum – to 28 hours/week, the maximum;
- For the 6th grade, there are from 28 hours/week to 30 hours/week;
- For the 7th grade, there are from 31 hours/week to 33 hours/week ;
- For the 8th grade, there are from 31 hours/week to 34 hours/week;
- For the 9th grade, at the theoretical field there are from 31 hours/week to 32 hours/week;
- For the 10th grade, at the theoretical field there are from 31 hours/week to 32 hours/week;
- For the 11th grade, at the theoretical field there are from 31 hours/week to 32 hours/week;
- For the 12th grade, at the theoretical field there are from 31 hours/week to 32 hours/week.
- For the technical high schools, from 9th grade till 12th grade the students have around 30 classes per week.

The study of social sciences begins in the 3rd grade and ends in the 12th grade. In the 3rd and in the 4th grade the name of the social subject is *Civic Education*, in the 5th grade it is called *Critical Thinking and Children's Rights*, in the 6th grade they study *Intercultural Education*, in the 7th grade we have *Education for Democratic Citizenship* and in the 8th grade it is *Economic and Financial Education*.

In high school, in the 9th grade, the name of the subject is *Logics, Argumentation and Communication*, for the 10th grade it is *Psychology* and also *Entrepreneurial Education*, for the 11th grade there are also two possibilities: *Economics* for any type of high school and *Sociology* only for those high schools that have humanistic studies. Finally, in the 12th grade, children from technical high schools study *Applied Economics* while those from theoretical high schools study *Philosophy*. Also, the students from humanistic profiles like “Social Sciences” study both *Philosophy* and *Social Studies* (See the Table 1).

Table 1: *The social discipline*

| The level | The social discipline | Number of hours/ week | | |
|---|------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Primary school | -3 rd level | <i>Civic Education</i> | 1 | |
| | -4 th level | <i>Civic Education</i> | 1 | |
| Secondary school | -5 th level | <i>Critical Thinking and Children's Rights</i> | 1 | |
| | -6 th level | <i>Intercultural Education</i> | 1 | |
| | -7 th level | <i>Education for Democratic Citizenship</i> | 1 | |
| | -8 th level | <i>Economic and Financial Education</i> | 1 | |
| High school | | <i>Logics, Argumentation and Communication</i> | 1 | |
| | 1. Theoretical field | <i>Psychology</i> | 1 | |
| | 1.1. Realistic field | -9 th grade | <i>Entrepreneurial Education</i> | 1 |
| | | -10 th grade | <i>Economics</i> | 1 |
| | | -11 th grade | <i>Philosophy</i> | 1 |
| | | -12 th grade | <i>Philosophy</i> | 1 |
| | 1.2. Humanistic field | | <i>Logics, Argumentation and Communication</i> | 2 |
| | | -9 th grade | <i>Psychology</i> | 2 |
| | | -10 th grade | <i>Entrepreneurial Education</i> | 1 |
| | | -11 th grade | <i>Economics</i> | 2 |
| <i>Sociology</i> | | | 2 | |
| -12 th grade | | <i>Philosophy</i> | 2 | |
| 1.3. Humanistic field - social and humanistic sciences | | <i>Philosophy</i> | 3 | |
| | | <i>Social Studies</i> | 1 | |

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|-------------------------------|-------------------------|--|---|
| 2. Technological field | | <i>Logics, Argumentation and Communication</i> | 1 |
| | -9 th grade | <i>Psychology</i> | 1 |
| | -10 th grade | <i>Entrepreneurial Education</i> | 1 |
| | -11 th grade | <i>Economics</i> | 1 |
| | -12 th grade | <i>Applied Economics</i> | 1 |

So far, the social sciences seem to have an important place in the Romanian schedule of learning. But, let's see the next situation. As we can see in the table, the number of the classes at social sciences is mostly one hour per week. In total, the number of possible classes of social sciences per week is 24 in all those 12 grades. If we make a simple calculation, an average between the minimum and maximum number of classes to all levels, we will see that there are **276 hours per week**. Out of these, the social sciences have a number of **24**. More than that, if we calculate the percentage of the social studies throughout all levels, we will see that this is around **8,69%**. But we get these results if we take into account all the classes from all levels. Instated, if we take each year of study separately, we will see that the percentage is even smaller. For example, in the 5th grade, with an average of **27** hours per week, and one hour of social sciences, the percentage is around **2,7%**, while another subject, like mathematics, has around of 8%.

Besides that, if we refer to the classes specialized in social and humanistic sciences, we observe that the maximum number of hours is **4** (in the **11th and 12th grade**), while if we will look at the technical classes, there are at least 5 or 6 hours per week of specialized subjects and some extra classes of practical learning at the end of the school year. This is an example for the 9th grade, but if we go further, in the 12th grade, there are around 10 classes per week of such subjects and some extra classes of practical learning.

On the other hand, as we could see before, with each higher level, the number of classes is higher. This means two things: one is that the number of hours for some subjects is higher now and also, the other one is that there are new subjects introduced that weren't there before. But, even if we talk about the 3rd grade or about 12th grade, for social sciences, the number of hours is the same, one hour per week, while with other subjects, the situation is different.

Then, concerning the Baccalaureate exam, the social sciences have two difficult positions: the first one is that at the realistic and technical specializations the

social sciences are included neither in the compulsory subjects nor in the optional ones. The second one is that for the humanistic specializations the social sciences are optional for the Baccalaureate exam even if they are part of the specialized subjects of the field.

In this case, **the conclusions** are obvious.

Firstly, while the 70% of the curriculum is made by the Ministry of Education and the teachers and the students don't have the possibility to choose what to study, it's obvious that there is not that much interest in studying social sciences in Romania. It's considered that the students are not and shouldn't be that interested of their own social life. There are other more important things like realistical or technological domains. Secondly, the present distribution of the social sciences in the national curriculum, doesn't allow the students to study them better, to find out important things about the society they are living in, about their rights, about the political situation of their country. Most of them don't even know who the prime minister of Romania is or which are the economical or political goals of our country.

Then, it's sad that in Romania, except for the ones who are specialized in humanistic and social sciences (and not even them all the time), the students can't have the chance to get involved in the social and civic life because they don't know how. Most of the students don't know how to formulate an idea or how to analyze, in a critical way, a social situation. The employers are not willing to employ students who graduated and have "social sciences" on their diplomas as the name of the specialization, because this means nothing to them. These students don't even have the chance to work with people after graduation because they were not trained properly and the reason for this is mostly the small number of classes per week and the fact that in our country we don't give much importance to the humanistic side. All of these situations and other like them, made the status of the social sciences to be a less important one and induced the idea that those domains are not that important and we don't really need them, which is obviously completely false.

Endnotes

1. We have to mention that in the chosen curriculum, the number of hours and the domains are set by the Ministry also. Only the content and the name of such a curriculum are decided by students, teachers and parents.
2. Even if the compulsory stage is considered till 10th grade, the students study different subjects in the 9th and 10th grade because this depends on the chosen high school.

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