

## Acta Pedagogica Naturalis

Former Annual of Konstantin Preslavsky University

Journal homepage: <http://acta-pedagogica.shu.bg>

**Received: 20.12.2017**

**Accepted: 09.03.2018**

### The quality of geography education - vision and challenges

Irena Radeva

PhD student „St. Cyril and St. Methodius“ University of Veliko Tarnovo, Department of Geography,  
Bulgaria

E-mail: [irene\\_geo@abv.bg](mailto:irene_geo@abv.bg)

**Abstract:** *The new concept of education, which defines new educational goals and policies, necessitates change, and the issue of a new quality of education has yet again become the issue of the day.*

*Quality is inherent in each of the key features of the education system - resources, functioning, results. It is measurable in the aspects and levels in which it can be operationalized, and inseparable from the management processes.*

*The purpose of this article is to present a model for quality management in geography education at school level, taking into account the dynamic nature and the different approaches to the „quality“ category.*

**Keywords:** *geography education, education system, quality of education*

#### Introduction

The issue of quality is not a new one, but the overall theory of its measurement, control and management is associated with the names of William Deming, Joseph Juran, Kaoru Ishikawa, etc. Working in the period of „system approach“ to ensure quality management, they become the founders of the Total Quality Management (TQM) philosophy [9].

As a philosophical category, quality expresses a substantial definition of objects – „it is in the beginning of the doctrine of existence“, according to Hegel [8].

As a social category, it represents the level of development of society, the quality of life and the standard of living.

We are talking about the quality of products, services and processes, and in this sense it is an economic category.

Quality is also defined as a creative category, reflecting the way of thinking, awareness, the state of the spirit.

Realizing the meaning of the existence of the state through the level of the services of the institutions, it is also an administrative category.

According to the interpretive vocabulary, quality is a property, a sign that separates one essence from another.

ISO Standards treat it as an aggregate of properties and features of products or services that satisfy existing or supposed user needs or as an aggregate of attributes that meet established requirements [9].

In this study, I accept the concept of quality as a complex concept that characterizes the efficiency and effectiveness of all parties in a process, as a result and a way to achieve it.

In this study I accept and basically adhere to the concept of quality in terms of system approach and the theory of quality management. In studying the quality of geography teaching, I accept for leading the factor-process-results.

The appearance of the science for measuring the quality indices (qualimetry) gives the possibility to give quantitative estimates of the qualitative characteristics of products. On the basis of a large number of properties, which can be grouped by their degree of importance for the specific conditions and can be expressed in digital form, qualitative characteristics are achieved. This makes quality measurable also in areas such as education and training. These methods give the possibility to take account of the non-conformity of the product with the requirements set, and the non-conformity to be expressed by any permanent unit of measure.

There is no general theory of quality in education, but the term "quality" can refer to the education system, as well as to the school, teaching, working with students, etc [6].

The Institute of Market Economics is making a research of the status and trends of school education in Bulgaria, examining a number of quantitative and qualitative indicators. The qualitative indicators in this study are identified as more important for the actual performance and effectiveness of the education system, as well as for revealing the real „added value“ of education [10].

The understanding of quality in education is undergoing its evolution - from the quality of the educational product, through the quality of education processes to the quality of management of the education process.

For quality in education I accept:

- the degree of compliance of the provided public education services with the statutory requirements – the Preschool and School Education Act, the State Educational Standards (SED), the National Qualifications Framework and other legal acts;
- satisfaction and realization of the expectations of citizens and users – students, parents, employers;
- the expectations of other interested parties – other schools, universities, the public sector, business and NGOs.

Quality education is an investment in the future and a sure prerequisite for public prosperity, which makes it a priority in the state policy at the moment. By formulating the principles and objectives of pre-school and school education, the law sets out these priorities - equal access to quality education and enhancing the quality of education.

The regulatory framework focuses on quality through the State Educational Standard for Quality Management in the Institutions - Ordinance No. 16/ 08.12.2016 and the objectives set out therein:

- Improving the quality of the education provided;
- Improving individual progress in educational results;
- Organizational development of the educational institution.

Achieving these goals is possible by application of a process approach to the quality management, covering all school activities as a whole (the Total Quality Management – TQM concept) or linked to a specific activity direction – e.g. quality management of geography education.

Teachers have a quality management instrument, adopting it in its dynamic nature, as a continuous process of organizational development, based on analysis of the achievements, planning the next stage, performance of the planned activities, evaluation of the results, and introducing improvements to the work.

The concept of overall quality management puts the needs and expectations (the satisfaction of the user with an educational service) in the highlight. It can be adapted and applied by teachers in geography teaching process on class or student level. It gives the possibility to achieve enhanced efficiency and effectiveness of the educational process. Applying the full cycle in the geography training process

„**planning, performance, verification, action**“ will allow teachers to manage the quality and achieve constant improvement. The teacher, in the role of a natural leader in the education process, should adhere to the principles of maximum coverage of the goals set, but also to provoke cooperation and teamwork, which are the basis for achieving quality performance.

„The vision of the geography education quality is in fact a vision for the development of geography, structured in university and secondary school education. Adequate understanding and functional „schemes“ for its management presuppose the synchronization of educational realities with the sustainable development of the educational system according to needs“ [4].

The ways and means of adapting the science of geography at various levels – in scientific discipline, school discipline and subject of the curriculum – is the foundation for shaping the understanding the geography education process quality.

The following factors are determining the vision of school geography education quality:

- The new educational paradigm;
- The State educational standards for the curriculum, general education and specialized education;
- The developed curricula, textbooks and teaching aids;
- The combination of traditions and the current state of geography education;
- Integration of information and communication technologies in the geographic education;
- The geo-spatial context of geographic education [2];
- The teachers in geography and economics with their professional profile and personal qualities;
- The expectations of users of educational services and the requirements they place.

Under the new educational paradigm, the processes of decentralization are intensified. The educational institutions acquire greater autonomy and more responsibilities regarding the requirements of all interested parties. The geography teachers in educational institutions have a key role in achieving the goals of geography education. They balance between norms, virtues and the constant changes and expectations in society [1].

Geography teachers face many challenges:

- The reduced number of hours in the curriculum - insufficient • The imposed „catching up“ of the teaching material for grades VII and VIII within one school year, due to the completion of primary education after the 7th grade in the Pre-school and School Education Act..
- Convincing the schoolmaster, the pedagogical council, the public council to the importance of geographic knowledge and the integrative role of the subject
- The lack of a comprehensive innovation process even in schools, approved for innovation. The existing disproportion between school digitization and teachers' competencies.
- Determination of the substantive parameters of evaluation and achievement of unity regarding the class/graduation level criteria.

The applied quality assessment approaches based on user satisfaction or state standardized evaluations are external to the system. They present a picture at the entrance and exit of educational stages or grades, without taking into account the processes that take place inside the system. The internal approach assesses the classroom processes, ongoing interaction, and teacher-student communication. The application of such an assessment approach is an extremely difficult task, „highly dependent on the individual roles of the actors“ and a great challenge for the teachers [6].

The modern education faces the challenge to change the traditional concept of quality – from the idea of those who provide service in a quality such as it is perceived by the user. A user-centric vision is needed, satisfying the citizens and other interested parties.

The concept of overall quality management implies a process of continuous improvement by application of the „**planning, performance, verification, action**“ cycle that can be transformed and applied to geography education at school level by each teacher.

The first phase of planning (design) is provided by the geographic and economics curricula. They feature areas of competency as an expected result of the training to achieve general education at the end of

the class and competencies as expected results on subjects of the curriculum. Teachers should plan and set their goals at the teaching content level - themes in line with the expected results, but also with the specificity peculiarities of the users. Proper planning should be based on analyses and conclusions of the achievements.

The second phase of performance is related to the qualities of the pedagogue's research activity - internal (innovation, intellect) and external (career development, motivation, satisfaction) [7]. The performance is related to the teacher's ability to update the curriculum, to apply a variety of methods, to manage the education process, to achieve change in attitudes, relations, etc. This phase depends to a large extent on the basic training of the geography and economics teachers, as well as on their personal qualities and competencies.

The phase of verification and evaluation of geographic learning results ensures sustainability – comparability of the results with those of controls during teaching. Here, in order to identify the quality, clear and precise criteria must be selected. „Evaluation as an activity is at the core of the assessment and improvement of the curriculum itself. As a systematic process of collecting, interpreting and using the information on student education, it can be an instrument for improvement of the education,, [3].

The adaptation phase follows, corrective actions. Teachers need to perform a thorough analysis of the results, so as to create constructive feedback, aimed at planning support and increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of learning in the following cycle.

The systematic implementation of these successive steps as a quality management model in the geography education process can be measured by:

- Achievement of the set goals;
- Sustainability of the result achieved;
- Positive comparisons to other organizations.

The question arises – is the quality character objective or subjective. The points of view regarding „quality“ differ in different users (students, parents and employers), as well as between the different teachers and structures in the education system. I accept that it can only be determined if the system of assessment of the person, who uses the product and who is estimating its quality [11]. Thus, by taking into account the different positions, it is possible to determine the overall multi-faceted picture of the abstract term „quality“, i.e. the approach of unification should not be sought, but rather the one of the coordination of the different points of view.

Facing the challenge of educational realities the necessity of geographic knowledge quality, geography and economics teachers must.

- .. apply alternative approaches in the education process;
- .. find opportunities for activating the students;
- .. introduce an interactive and innovative learning environment;
- .. apply active / interactive training methods;
- .. provide an upgrade of their professional competences;
- .. stimulate the students to become co-authors and creators of their own learning;
- .. provide a friendly relationship in the learning process.

### **Conclusions:**

Teachers can achieve quality management through a targeted application of the cycle: planning, performance, verification, monitoring and process analysis, improvement action, so as to allow new planning to be effected.

To achieve quality management in the geography and economy education process, teachers are required to apply the systematic approach and plan their work on the basis of adequate measurable indicators.

It is necessary to analyze the results of each student, to be linked with activities on improvement of the quality of the educational product, of the process of geography education and the system as a whole.

### **References**

[1]. Vasileva, M. An attempt to construct a model for the functioning and management of geography education. Autjor's paper, Sofia University „St. Kl. Ohridski“, 2015.

- [2]. Dermendzhieva, S. et al. Geography and education. Methodology of Geography Education, Part One. TI „St. St. Cyril and Methodius“, Veliko Tarnovo, **2010**.
- [3]. Dermendzhieva, S., B. Dimitrova. On the benefit of uniform standards for current evaluation. -B: Bulgaria, Bulgarians and Europe - myth, history, modern times, V. Tarnovo, TI „St. St. Cyril and Methodius“, **2011**, pp. 449-461
- [4]. Dermendzhieva, S., P. Sabeva. Socio-cultural roles of educational geography. - B: Intercultural Dialogue and Education in the Balkans and Eastern Europe - Second Scientific Conference with International Participation, ed. „IVIS“, V. Tarnovo, **2012**, p.138
- [5]. Duchenjiev, G., R. Yordanov. Quality control and management, „Softtrade“, S., **2012**, p.12
- [6]. Ivanov, Iv. Theories of Education - Shumen, TI „Ep. K. Preslavski“, **2004**, p.129-138
- [7]. Krusteva, A. Quality of Education - Reality and Perspectives, Pedagogical Almanac, № 1-2, **2006**, p. 49.
- [8]. Hegel, G. V. Fr. Encyclopedia of Philosophical Sciences, Vol. 3, S., LIK, **1998**.
- [9]. <http://tuj.asenevtsi.com/TQM2009/TQM02.htm>, 22.10.2017
- [10]. [http://ime.bg/var/images/secondary\\_education\\_Adrian.pdf](http://ime.bg/var/images/secondary_education_Adrian.pdf), 22.10.2017
- [11]. <http://deming.eng.clemson.edu/>, 22.10.2017