HEADTEACHERS AND THE DECENTRALISATION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN POST-COMMUNIST ROMANIA

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ABSTRACT

The project outlined in this thesis examines the ways in which headteachers position themselves as professionals following the shift from communism to neo-liberal markets and the decentralisation of the public education system in post-communist Romania. Following this shift, Romanian headteachers faced new accountability frameworks and witnessed a reconceptualisation of their professional responsibilities. The methodology adopted is policy scholarship because, by looking at decentralisation through a historical-cultural lens, i.e. Romania's recent history of communism and transition to a more democratic state, it best addresses the three key-research questions. The methods used are official policy documents and interviews with different stakeholders located at three different levels in the Romanian education system. These were: secondary heads and county school inspectors. Four key national policy-makers were also interviewed. In the thesis, the Romanian situation is presented (as captured) in the period 2009-2011. The decentralisation of Romanian education is dichotomous. It is a hybrid between neo-liberalism and communist throwbacks that I call *politicised decentralisation*. On the one hand, decentralisation and quasi-markets are being introduced into public education at the recommendation of international donors (the World Bank, the European Union). On the other hand, the endurance of communist practices makes it difficult for professionals to adapt to new professional responsibilities and accountability frameworks. A new conceptual framework emerged from the international literature, national policy documents and empirical study and was used to explore the findings. This examines the components, levels and dimensions of decentralisation in education in Romania. The key-findings show the complexities of decentralisation in headteachers' professional activity. Importantly, the politicisation of the education system is the biggest challenge faced by the interviewees. For example, in 2012 alone there have been three different cabinets and seven ministers of education in the last five years. This has resulted in instability in post at all three levels, not least because with each change in minister both county school inspectors and headteachers are usually replaced. The findings show that new accountability frameworks emerged and impacted upon headteachers' relationships with different stakeholders such as inspectors, local authorities, as well as parents and students as consumers of education. This thesis is important in showing how policy implementation and enactment differs depending on the socio-economic, political and cultural context. The conceptual framework developed in the thesis and the findings have relatability for educationalists, policy-makers, practitioners and researchers, both nationally and internationally, especially since the existing empirical base predominantly refers to liberal democracies.

DECLARATION

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

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DEDICATION

In loving memory of my mother Angela 1957-2006.

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GLOSSARY OF ACRONYMS

Central Eastern European Countries (CEECs)

County School Inspectorates (CSIs)

Department for Education (DFE)

Department for International Development (DFID)

Education Reform Project (ERP)

European Union (EU)

Government Decisions (HG)

Government Ordinances (OG)

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Know How Fund (KHF)

Ministry of Education and Research (MER)

Ministry of Education, Research and Youth (MERY)

Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports (MERYS)

National Assessment and Examination Board (NAEB)

National Curriculum Council (NCC)

National Assessment and Examination Service (NAES)

Programmatic Adjustment Loan (PAL)

CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1   Focus, Aims and Research Questions

The project outlined in this thesis examines the ways in which headteachers position themselves as professionals following the shift from totalitarianism to the decentralisation of the public education system in post-communist Romania. By exploring the insights and challenges of their current headship, I am also taking into account the influence of their communist past on their profession. In this way, the continuities and changes to their roles and how they experience their professional practice following the decentralisation of education can be better understood. The key research questions that will form the study are:

1.   What is decentralisation in the context of state restructuring and the provision of public education in Romania?

2.   Why and how is decentralisation taking place in public education in Romania?

3.   What are the implications of decentralisation for headteachers in Romania?

These are important questions because they enable the accounts by headteachers in local policymaking settings to be set against the wider reform and restructuring processes. The methodology I adopt is policy scholarship because this approach illuminates stakeholders' lived experiences of the policy of decentralisation whilst taking into account historical and cultural background factors. This is in line with the research questions as headteachers' experiences of decentralisation are explored in relation to Romania's recent history of communism and transition to a post communist state. In the thesis I outline and explore strategic and implementation issues related to the decentralisation of education

internationally, in general, and nationally in Romania, in particular that lead to the development of a new conceptual framework. This framework looks at components, levels and dimensions of decentralisation.

Whilst addressing general strategic questions about the purposes, rationales and narratives of decentralisation, my prime focus is on the specific implementation issues related to decentralisation in relation to headteachers' professional lived experiences. In doing so, I am asking specific questions about the practicalities of implementation and enactment of decentralisation by headteachers and explore areas such as accountability, managing school budgets, hiring and firing of staff, market forces and competition, and the politicisation of education.

The methods used are an in-depth examination of primary sources such as key official policy documents as well as in-depth interviews. I interviewed twenty different stakeholders located at three different levels in the Romanian education system: twelve public school heads at the *micro* level interviewed twice over an eighteen-month period and four inspectors at *meso* level from two counties in the same region. In addition, four key national policy-makers at the *macro* level were interviewed.

The focus of the interviews is on the perceived effects of educational decentralisation upon headteachers' professional practice. Their practice is based on their agency and how they inter-relate with the other professionals in the system such as national policy makers and county school inspectors. In decentralisation, Romanian headteachers' roles have also been reshaped by new accountability to other stakeholders such as local authorities and students, parents and staff.

1.2 Rationale

The rationale for this research is located in my positioning in the field as an educationalist and researcher in Romania. The gap in national literature and research plus the novelty of the research subject matter in a former Eastern Bloc country represent the underlying reasons for doing this study. There is an acute need to examine this important change in the structuring and practice of public provision of education in Romania.

1.2.1 My background

Having worked in the Romanian field of education for seven years, first as a teacher (2000-2007), and then as a consultant (2005-2007), and also as the daughter of a former deputy head and national inspector, I noticed the rapidity with which reforms were introduced in the education system from mid-1990s. In spite of adapting to the changes imposed by the new legislation, some of my colleagues were still drawing on communist practices and ways of responding to legislation. I was interested to find out more about the relationship between political background, reforms, and professionals' responses to change.

The first step undertaken in this direction was in September 2007 when I enrolled for a Masters in Educational Leadership and School Improvement in the University of Manchester, School of Education after winning a studentship offered by the Romanian Government in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, 2005). For my M.Ed. dissertation (Popescu, 2008) I looked at Romanian women in headship. In that study, I explored their professional experiences and how these intermingled with their personal lives (Popescu and Gunter, 2011c, Popescu, 2012a). As decentralisation was gaining more prominence in Romanian education and having previously interacted with headteachers in my capacity

as teacher, government consultant and researcher, I wanted to find out more about headteachers' professional experiences in decentralisation.

I took this forward in my PhD project which was initiated in September 2008. For the past four academic years I have been actively involved in undertaking and reporting about this project with presentations to national (both in the UK and in Romania) and international conferences on the topic of educational decentralisation (Popescu, 2009a, 2009b, 2009c, Popescu 2010a, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c), as well as published in academic journals (Popescu 2010a, Popescu, 2011a, Davies, Popescu and Gunter, 2011b, Popescu, 2011c, 2011d, 2012a, 2012b, 2012c). In Romania, I organised a national conference on decentralisation in May 2011 and May 2012 and plan to organise the third edition in October 2013.

1.2.2 The policy and research context internationally

In the 1980's the policy of decentralisation came to the forefront of public policy agendas in western democracies, such as Australia, Italy, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America (Chapman et al., 1996, Abu-Duhou, 1999, McGinn and Welsh, 1999). A decade after the initiation of reforms in these countries, a policy transfer was noted in other contexts, such as in former communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe as well as in developing countries in Africa and South America (McGinn and Welsh, 1999).

In general, decentralisation is a means of shifting power from the centre (national or federal government) through forms of state or regional or local government (smaller administrative units) and down to the community level such as schools. Decentralisation is closely linked to economic decline (Daun, 2007), political change (McGinn and Welsh, 1999) and globalization (Burbules and Torres, 2000, Daun, 2007). The reasons, forms and degrees

of decentralisation adopted depended on socio-cultural, political and economic contexts of implementation across the different countries in the world. In this respect, a description of the level of decentralisation of a country or where it sits on the continuum from centralised to decentralised depends on the aspects of the system that are being examined. Understanding what components are centralised and which are decentralised and at which level is key to the thesis and will be developed further in the conceptual framework in the chapters to come.

Despite the widespread adoption and implementation of decentralisation, there is still a gap in knowledge as to how and why decentralisation was implemented in education systems in former communist countries in Eastern Europe. By addressing my first and second research questions - what is decentralisation in the context of state restructuring and the provision of public education in Romania, and why and how has it been implemented in Romania, I examine decentralisation literature in order to then illustrate the Romanian case of decentralisation in education.

It is important to research how the policy of decentralisation has been interpreted and implemented as a global phenomenon. After examining decentralisation of public services in the states that introduced this policy in state restructuring, I am giving particular attention to the field of education and the effects of decentralisation on professionals in various countries. The aim of looking at decentralisation theory and practice is to identify and address the gap in research with the aim of then making a contribution to knowledge.

Whilst the international body of literature has looked at the decentralisation of education and its impact on professionals' practice and policy development in westernised contexts for the past two decades or so, there is no similar development for countries in Eastern Europe or other former communist

countries in the world. Therefore, with this study I am addressing a gap in research while building on and being informed by previous research in western democracies. This study is timely as it is referring to Romania, a former communist country that is *now* implementing decentralisation. In this case, post-communism, a reconstruction of the state and the remodelling of civil society's roles in public participation occur in parallel with the concept of privatisation across all sectors of the economy.

1.2.3 The policy and research context in Romania

The research project has taken place in Romania as an important site for the study of decentralisation. Communism ended after forty-two years in December 1989, and by 2012, in spite of the apparent communist legacies, Romanian people are "striving to 'deconstruct' a national identity created during the four decades of Communist rule" (Light and Phinnemore, 2001:59). The various governments that ruled the country for the last two decades set about a reformation of the state that involved massive structural changes in all fields, including education.

Specifically, this has meant a long process of transition from a totalitarian (Finer, 1974, Giddens, 1989) centralised state, to a capitalist one encompassing market forces and privatisation. Consequently, the former centralised and traditionalistic public education system (Fretwell and Wheeler, 2001) has been subjected to a series of reforms not least of which is decentralisation (Birzea et al., 1993, Birzea, 1996, Marga 1998, 1999, 2000).

In some countries, decentralisation emerged as a result of the local communities' wish for autonomy and localism, while in others, and this is the case of countries in Europe (Eurydice, 2008), there has been a top-down approach to decentralisation. While Romania is not any different in that respect, it does differ from other former communist countries (such as Poland and Macedonia) in that there has not been an internal political

imperative for decentralisation, but rather an externally imposed one from the European Union, and World Bank. In response to the suggestions of the international community, the Romanian Government decided to transfer some power to local communities, i.e., the local communities themselves had not been asking for more autonomy (OECD, 2000). As I show in this thesis, this will have important consequences for this policy's outcomes in the education sector.

As opposed to the westernised contexts where decentralisation has mainly focused on bringing markets into the public services, in Romania, a former communist state with centralised public services and no private sector, there has first been an impetus to reform all public services as part of the transition from communism to post-communism (Birzea et al., 1993, 1997, Birzea, 1996, Marga, 1998, 1999, 2000). Then, in the 1990s, an incipient market economy and a private sector emerged as part of transition. By markets I understand the enabling of 'consumers' of services to have some say or choice in their provision and/or the enabling of providers to determine what products/services they can offer and promote themselves accordingly. This can include some private sector provision (though not necessarily, and in Romania, not at all).

In communist times, in Romania, there was a typical vertical hierarchy, with people at the top setting directions and giving orders and then actors at the other levels implementing, executing, and reporting back to their superiors. In education, the necessity of post-communist reforms has been widely acknowledged by the national stakeholders and their appetite for reform applauded by the external actors. OECD (2000) appreciates it is now completely up to the Romanian people to advance with the implementation of these ambitious reforms. Context is very important and so it should be taken into account before embarking on any transition and reconstruction process, especially in Romania's case:

> …The post-communist reconstruction of Romania has had to take place not only within the context of state socialism, but within a context of even greater and more general historical,

political and economic legacies, and specific geopolitical conditions… (Keil, 2006: ix).

In Romania, the decentralisation of education was first proposed as part of a comprehensive pack of educational reforms introduced by Andrei Marga - minister of education in the period 1997-2000 (see Popescu, 2010 for a detailed description of the origins of educational decentralisation in Romania). The decentralisation of the school system is part of the national strategy of decentralisation aimed at financial autonomy and administrative decentralisation (Rondinelli et al., 1983) at all levels of public administration. It represents "the transfer of authority, responsibility and resources to the schools and local authorities in regard to the process of decision-making and general and financial management" (MERY, 2006:1).

The first small steps towards the decentralisation of the entire system of education were undertaken under Marga's mandate until the early 2000s. However, the fluidity at the political level and the politicisation of the civil service has limited "the ability of the country to formulate and execute coherent strategies for structural change over time" (OECD, 2000:3). In short, this translates into the country's incapacity to implement reforms and might be one of the best explanations for the continuous delay of the school reform through decentralisation. Through this research, I reflect on the process of decentralisation with the aim of unveiling the challenges experienced by Romanian headteachers and by taking into account the political background in which educational reforms are taking place. I am looking at this through the lens of stakeholders at three different levels: macro - national policy-makers, meso - county school inspectors and micro - headteachers.

As opposed to the communist past in which Romanian headteachers used to have a purely instructional role, in decentralisation, headteachers assume the executive leadership of the school (MERY, 2012). Due to the complex new patterns of interaction in Romanian education following the decentralisation of education, headteachers are currently accountable to

multiple stakeholders. They are accountable to the Local Authorities with regard to most of the finances, County School Inspectorates and Ministry of Education with regard to education policy, curriculum, instruction, evaluation and assessment; to students and parents as 'consumers' of education; and to teaching and non-teaching staff as employees.

I will argue that the decentralisation of Romanian education is a politicised and dichotomous development and a hybrid between neo-liberalism and communist throwbacks. For these reasons, I argue this is a *politicised decentralisation*. On the one hand, decentralisation via quasi-markets (financial delegation, competition for students, amalgamation and revenue generation) is being introduced into the public education system on the recommendation of important international donors such as the World Bank, the European Union, and the International Monetary Fund. This is a neo-liberal (Ball, 1990, Apple, 2006) development, largely influenced by foreign institutions and westernised economic and policy agenda.

On the other hand, more than two decades after the end of communism, the endurance of the communist political culture and practices still resemble those of the communist era. The high level of politicisation of the education system, and indeed of the entire public administration, plus the volatility of post-communist administrations are further important factors in the development of educational reform and the implementation of decentralisation. For example, there have been eight ministers of education in the last seven years. With every change of minister, their subordinate secretaries of state, general directors in the ministry and general county school inspectors at the middle tier changed. This has also resulted in headteachers' instability in post, as some of the heads too have been replaced with new heads that were members of the political party in power at the time.

A totalitarian regime for over four decades, Romania used to be one of the most centralist states in the world. It is not surprising that, twenty-four years after the fall of communism, Romania is still centralised, resistant to change

and much politicised (Popescu, 2010b, 2011a). In spite of the administrative and fiscal decentralisation of the public administration, Papadimitriou (2003:5) notes this is: "a remarkably resilient feature of Romania's post-communist politics".

1.3   Contribution to knowledge

Internationally, the fact that this research project is located in a post-communist state makes a direct contribution to knowledge about state restructuring in post-communist countries. This is a new avenue of investigation because the existing research in the field predominantly refers to liberal westernised countries. Nationally, my study has direct implications for future policy and for heads/other stakeholders' practice and understanding of decentralisation.

It is expected that this study will make an important contribution to understanding the conceptualisation and implementation of decentralisation internationally. I develop a new conceptual framework based on the components, levels and dimensions of decentralisation. This conceptual framework can then serve as a model for other former communist countries currently undergoing decentralisation or for other countries with a centralised system of education intending to decentralise education.

In addition, the data on the Romanian case presented, will also be of interest to westernised contexts that have already decentralised education. In these countries, policy-makers can take a step back and look at their case of decentralisation through my conceptual lens and gain a new perspective.

1.4 Structure of the thesis

The thesis consists of nine chapters. In this first chapter, I have provided the background to the study, its aims, focus and the three overarching research questions. Furthermore, particular attention was given to the rationale for doing the study. Importantly, in Chapters Two, Three, Four and Five, I am building a conceptual framework based on components, levels and dimensions of decentralisation that I will then use to design the empirical study in Chapter Five and illuminate the findings from the Romanian study in Chapters Six and Seven. Specifically, in Chapter Two I explore the various meanings, forms and dimensions of decentralisation, by presenting the literature on decentralisation reviewed for the purposes of this thesis and providing empirical evidence from some states in which decentralisation has been implemented. Chapter Three presents the context in which the study is taking place, describing the past and current situation in education in Romania. In Chapter Four I explore the international literature on heads' experiences of decentralisation. I then move on to detailing the research design in Chapter Five. Chapters Six and Seven focus on data analysis and findings. Then, in Chapter Eight I present the conceptual framework that I have built and used to show the similarities and distinctiveness of the Romanian case of decentralisation. This model can be used for the conceptualisation of decentralisation in education. Finally, the last Chapter presents the Conclusions of the research, the contribution to knowledge and further research agenda.

CHAPTER TWO
DYNAMICS OF DECENTRALISATION

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to examine policy literature and research into decentralisation in education that have emerged internationally in the context of state restructuring and globalisation. I intend using this analysis to introduce a conceptual framework that I will build on and investigate the provision of education in Romania as the thesis unfolds. Specifically, I focus on research questions one and two internationally: *"What is decentralisation in the context of the state restructuring and the provision of public education?" "Why and how is decentralisation taking place?"*

I begin in sections 2.2 and 2.3 by looking at the idea, origins, basics of, and the discourses surrounding decentralisation. I do that by focusing on the role and the restructuring of the state and the definition of decentralisation. Here I discuss the interplay between hierarchies, decentralisation and markets. These are important in understanding what decentralisation is, the overall context in which decentralisation policy is adopted as well as the reasons and ways in which decentralisation is taking place. I then move on in section 2.4 to consider how decentralisation has been understood and enacted within education systems internationally, and I draw on examples to show what types of functions and decisions are moved from the centre to lower forms of government or other organisations. I then move on to the final section where this literature review is leading to the development of a new conceptual framework. Here I will point forward to Chapter Three where I examine decentralisation in Romania and the role and activity of international headteachers in Chapter Four.

2.2 State and Governance

The state is involved in the design, implementation and evaluation of public policy. Depending on the socio-cultural and political contexts, the state fulfils multiple roles through various government and governance strategies that involve different degrees of centralisation or decentralisation:

> The state is the locus of power and control but the mode in which these are expressed and the agencies through which these are mediated change in relation to wider socio-political developments (Grace, 1987:196).

The word 'governance' originates in the Classical Greek *kybernan.* It means "to pilot, steer or direct" (Bell and Hindmoor, 2009:2). Traditionally, the state's approach to governance was centric, hierarchical and bureaucratic (Ball, 1990, Clarke and Newman, 1997, Clarke et al., 2000, Newman, 2001, 2005, Newman and Clarke, 2009). In time, due to the complex functions fulfilled by the state, the term 'governance' acquired more dimensions. Governance can be looked at as comprising many components. It:

> …refers to ways of governing, whether of organisations, social systems or the state itself. It embraces not only the actions of government but also the wide range of institutions and practices involved in the process of governing (Newman, 2001:4)

In other words, the state has complete control over governance through creating a complex corpus of legislation, law, policies and implementation guidelines. Following Rondinelli et al. (1983, also see Cheema and Rondinelli, 2007) there are four areas of governance, which may be more or less centralised, or decentralised:

- *Administrative*: this is concerned with the delivery of services;

- **Political**: this is concerned with the location and legitimacy of decision-making;
- **Fiscal**: this is concerned with budgetary issues of resource allocation;
- **Economic**: this is concerned with the generation of income as a means of investing in services.

Depending on the political system, there are different ways in which states operate and higher or lower levels of centralisation/decentralisation of roles and functions. While some countries are liberal-democratic, such as England, others are totalitarian and/or communist-socialist, such as pre-1989 Romania. A state is considered democratic if three categories of rights are established and respected in regard to the three areas of change: civil, political and social (Giddens, 1989). As opposed to liberal democracies where the scope and authority of government is limited, in states with a totalitarian regime, governments exert total authority and control (Finer, 1974). If in a democratic country, the power is shared between the president or monarch and the state's institutions, in totalitarianism there is often a single authoritarian leader - a dictator orchestrating all state affairs. In Friedrich's (1954, pp.52-53) view, totalitarianism involves four elements:

1. A totalist ideology - a political doctrine to which all citizens adhere
2. A single party - the Communist Party, led by a dictator
3. A secret police – that punishes the enemies of the regime
4. Monopoly control of economics, media and military

Finer (1974) identifies two main conditions that a political regime needs to fulfil in order to be totalitarian: the entire society is politicized and there is no tolerance of dissidence whatsoever. The second is a corollary of the first. Barghoorn (1986) emphasises a different angle and argues that totalitarianism is related to the wider socio-historical context of a country more than a political system. This has implications for the ways in which

decision-making processes occur and the enactment of policies by the society:

> Totalitarianism describes not so much a type of political system, as a historical situation in which a dictator integrates and mobilises the society beset by a crisis that threatens disintegration, barring emergency measures. (Barghoorn, 1986:13)

In line with these definitions of a totalitarian state, after more than four decades as a totalitarian regime, former Eastern Bloc states such as Romania are in the process of developing a more democratic society by changing governance arrangements. This could be through forms of devolution where local (sometimes called regional or state) governments take over responsibility for certain functions, or through the rolling back of the state where private companies or individuals/groups within civil society provide services. Hence by 'democratic', I hereby understand a legal system in which such pluralism is allowed, where citizens have the right to freedom of speech as it is not illegal to disagree with the regime, to have more than one political party to compete for power, an elected president, members of parliament and local authorities, etc. The former totalitarian – communist background of states such as Romania means a different starting point for the implementation of decentralisation than a state with a longer tradition in democracy - such as the UK, USA, or Australia. Consequently, this impacts on processes and outcomes.

In building a conceptual framework I will need to investigate the relationship between centralisation and decentralisation in post communist Romania, and will need to ask strategic questions regarding, first, how centralisation and decentralisation are understood in relation to the provision of public education, and, second, why and how the starting point for change impacts on the progress and professionals in the field.

Before moving on to explore why and how decentralisation is implemented in education in section 2.4, it is necessary to understand what decentralisation is and how it is represented in discourses and policies. Generally speaking, there is no universally accepted definition for the word "decentralisation". The meaning differs from author to author and from one context to another. In essence, decentralisation is a top-down policy orchestrated by the state and directed to its inferior levels. According to Rondinelli, decentralisation is a

> …transfer of authority for planning, management, resource-raising and allocation and other functions from the central government and its agencies to field units of central government ministries or agencies, subordinate units or levels of government, semi-autonomous public authorities or corporations or nongovernmental or voluntary organisations (Rondinelli, 1986:2).

Similarly for Lauglo (1997:3), decentralisation is "a shift in the authority distribution away from the 'top' agency in the hierarchy of authority", and is a movement to de-centre power to the periphery (Brown, 1990). For Simkins (1997a:20), decentralisation implies a "redistribution of power within a school system in ways which enhance the importance of the individual school vis-à-vis the wider school systems, national and local". Karstanje (1999:29) frames it in a direct or prescriptive way by describing decentralisation as "a shift in decision-making powers from central government to local council level".

Note that in these definitions, whilst there is some flexibility in terms of the entities to which authority is transferred, the scope of the authority itself is all encompassing. It is implied that decentralisation occurs against a background of more or less centralisation in the past. In other words, authority can be decentralised only if it was previously centralised (the hierarchy model). This is clearly compounded by the fact that *prior* to decentralisation different countries employed different levels of centralisation in their existing structures and systems. In attempting to clarify the meaning of the word 'decentralisation', authors have created various models for its

understanding. Without a deep understanding of each context and a good definition of decentralisation though, it is difficult to analyse one case study of decentralisation in progress, let alone compare the experiences of educational decentralisation between various countries.

I showed in this section that it is important to first identify the context in which the decentralisation of public education is taking place. The type of state, its history and the governance mechanisms are key to this understanding and the implementation processes later on. In the next section, I continue this analysis and explore in more depth the reasons why decentralisation has been implemented internationally and how it was accompanied by changes at several levels of governance and public administration.

2.3 The shift from hierarchy to decentralisation and markets

In this section, I continue to unveil the discourses surrounding the idea of decentralisation through an in-depth exploration of governance arrangements. Specifically, I focus on the relationship between *hierarchy* - representing the traditional state, and *markets* – representing the restructured, decentralised state. In doing so, I am drawing attention to the role of various stakeholders in these arrangements, with an emphasis on participation in policy design and implementation.

Pierre and Peters (2000) argue that steering and coordinating are now only parts of governance as a "process". Because of the trend to decentralisation, governance needs to add a new dimension – that of providing a framework or "structure" for governance. Pierre and Peters (2000) developed a model with four elements: hierarchies, markets, networks and communities. Of these four, hierarchies and markets are particularly relevant to the discussion here.

The restructuring of states in regard to the location and distribution of functions and decision-making can best be understood by examining the relationship between hierarchy or the formal system of central regulation and governance, and local and/or private interests in the form of market provision and civil society consisting of individuals, families and groups (e.g. religious groups).

In relation to education, this means whether the formal system of government delivers educational services, and if so, what is centralised in relation to, for example, the curriculum, staffing and testing, and what may be delivered locally. Alternatively, such provision may be provided through private companies with or without fees, or through home schooling where parents may educate their children at home and/or private interests may be involved such as religious organisations. In liberal democracies there has been a shift away from government provision towards a mixture of hierarchies, markets and private interests. The challenge for post totalitarian states is how to learn from and respond to such developments.

Importantly, there is a need to take on Pollitt (2008) and Newman's (2001) arguments about the question of *time* (my emphasis) in public policy development and its implementation, whereby Pollitt and Bouckaert (2009) examine 'continuity and change'. They compare a series of public services in Britain and Belgium and show how they have been shaped by change in the period 1965-2005. Therefore, the authors cover both the periods well before and after the introduction of decentralisation and market mechanisms into the public services. In addition, Pollitt and Bouckaert (2009) uncover the subtleties of different layers of change in policy-making in two different political systems (Britain and Belgium) as well as the national-local government dimensions. This example is important as it shows the complexities of decentralisation in public administration, and how the

structuring and shaping of a system is located in time and also takes time to show visible changes. I now intend developing these issues with two sub-sections where I look at how and why decentralisation is introduced in public services in general and the importance of the relationship between hierarchy and markets. Then, in section 2.4 I begin analysing the introduction of decentralisation and quasi-markets in public *education* and provide international examples.

2.3.1 Why the change from hierarchies to decentralisation and markets?

At the end of the 1970s and beginning of the 1980s, the role and responsibilities of the state in liberal democracies have been changing rapidly as the hierarchical, centralised state has reinvented itself. The idea of decentralisation whereby the state either (a) devolved powers from central to local or regional governments (e.g. Scotland in the UK); or (b) privatised the system of education (e.g. Charter Schools in the US; Free Schools in Sweden and England; Academy Schools in England) quickly became a global phenomenon in countries such as the UK, US, Australia, New Zealand, Italy. It was implemented against a background of global political change (McGinn and Welsh, 1999:27), economic decline and globalization (Daun, 2007, Burbules and Torres, 2000). A priority on public administration agendas in these countries, decentralisation was the result of a shift in state governance, from hierarchies to markets (Ball, 1990, 2008, Gewirtz et al., 1995, Clarke et al., 2000, Pierre and Peters, 2000, Newman, 2001, 2005, Clarke and Newman, 1997). In the light of economic challenges and globalisation, governments have sold off, privatised and marketised public services.

There are a number of reasons *why* decentralisation was implemented internationally. Some of these refer to economic pressures and globalisation

whilst others tend to focus on the advantages of subsidiarity and how decisions should be located close to the site of implementation. The discourse is often about efficiency and effectiveness, with claims made that services such as education would be better delivered through operating as small businesses in a competitive market place. Subsidiarity also provides those most closely affected by the decision-making, for example, local authorities and parents, with a say or representation in its implementation.

Whereas governance as hierarchies was seen as an "idealized model of democratic government and the public bureaucracy" in the past (Pierre and Peters, 2000:15), Newman (2001) considers changing accountability and democratic channels are a natural step in the modernisation of the state and are beneficial to the public by providing it with more choice and responsibility. The aim of introducing market forces in public services was to increase the quality of public services by creating opportunities for stakeholders to contribute to decision-making processes (Chubb and Moe, 1989). As a result, public institutions such as schools became "businesslike" (Clarke and Newman, 1997:75). The supporters of markets (e.g. Chubb and Moe, 1989) argue that market mechanisms are beneficial as they regulate public services and empower local people with choice over various services and economic activities (Miller and Rose, 2008).

There are others, however, who argue that decentralisation can lead to increased inequity in the provision of local services, the creation of local elites and some diseconomies of scale. It can also mean that local implementers do not have the ability or training to deliver on the promise of decentralised benefits. Rondinelli (1986) summarizes many of the pros and cons of decentralisation from above (see Appendix A).

Regardless of the arguments for and against, there is no doubt that a trend towards decentralisation has become a reality. However, the process is not

that straightforward as it seems at first glance. It is not a simple case of decentralise or centralise, market led or hierarchical decision-making:

> …competition and contracting co-exist (not always easily) with forms of partnerships, collaboration, and cooperation in pursuing the business of the public (…) these processes are dominated by … privatisation, outsourcing and models of private finance. (Newman and Clarke, 2009:178)

In most cases, there are complex hybrid arrangements between the public and the private sectors, the central and the local forms of government. This mix of shared involvement in decision-making needs to be recognised and explored in more depth.

With the growing influence of superstructures such as the European Union and the World Bank and their belief in decentralised public services, there has been a trend towards 'policy migration' between nation states. In many cases, membership of these supranational bodies, in turn, often required new governance arrangements such as a shift from hierarchy to decentralisation and markets at national and/or local levels. For Romania, the reasons behind this major structural change in public administration lie solely with the conditions imposed by international institutions such as the European Union and the World Bank. In Romania, the adoption of decentralisation emerged on the background of state reconstruction following communism. In that sense, in the two decades since the fall of communism, the World Bank played a major role in reshaping public policies and reorienting them towards achieving a market economy. Moreover, in order to join the European Union, the Romanian state had to reorganise its public administration and the education system. Contracting important loans from the World Bank (attached to which were repayment conditions) and in order to comply with the requirements of the European Union, and after more than four decades of communism, the Romanian government did not have much choice in the adoption and formulation of decentralisation policy (see Chapter Three).

There is a different way of looking at the 'why' decentralisation is happening, distinct from the proposed advantages and disadvantages. It relates to the state's ability or intention to govern its affairs centrally. Here, there are two views. On the one hand, the traditional, hierarchical state is believed to *no longer be able* to control contemporary issues in all their complexity and starts de-centring some of the powers and responsibilities to other organisations down the line. The state rolls "back the frontiers" (Thatcher, 1993:744-5) as it became "too big to solve the small problems in life and too small to solve the big problems" (Pierre and Peters, 2000:16). And so, through retreating and 'hollowing out' (Newman, 2001, 2005, Bell and Hindmoor, 2009) the former hierarchical state is actually *losing* control.

On the other hand, by *intentionally* letting go of the power and controlling exactly what responsibilities and roles are de-centred and to whom, the state actually remains a "critical player in governance" (Bell and Hindmoor, 2009:10). While devolving power and responsibilities to local government, the market or other institutions, states kept all of their powers intact by remaining the representative of collective interests. The role of state is "transforming from a role based in constitutional powers towards a role based in coordination and fusion of public and private resources" (Pierre and Peters, 2000:18). Hence, local forms of government and public agencies gain more authority over their own public institutions, but in a controlled and deliberate manner. This took the form of "localism" (Newman, 2001), decentralisation and market forces. Still intentional, but from a different angle, in Whitty's (2000) view, the reason why the state retreats is, in fact, so as not to be held accountable for all of its services anymore.

In changing governance arrangements from hierarchies to decentralisation and markets, the increased participation of the public (Cheema and Rondinelli, 2007) has been added to the equation; Newman and Clarke call

this the 'remaking of public in public services' (2009). I have noted earlier that increased local participation is one of the key proposed benefits of decentralisation. With the changing nature of the state and the introduction of decentralised governance arrangements in westernised countries, the role of citizens and local community has also been reshaped. Taking into account that public services were a public good, citizens' voices increasingly came to the fore. While at first, civil society was invited in public consultations over public matters, later on, members of the public got more and more involved in decision-making processes (Pollitt and Bouckaert, 2009). For instance, in education, local public authorities and parents started playing an increasingly important role in school governance (see Chapters Three and Four for details).

In time, the participation of various kinds of stakeholders in public services (including education) in decision-making generated new 'power assemblages' (Newman and Clarke, 2009) such as networks, partnerships and collaboration between various public and private institutions that acquired a formal role in public participation. In liberal democracies such as the UK, USA, Australia, Belgium, etc, the local government started focussing on 'the four Cs': clients, customers, consumers, citizens (Burns et al., 1994). Burns and colleagues (1994) looked at how decentralisation worked at local levels in the UK and at the reinterpretations of democracy and civil society in context. In providing two specific examples of 'decentralised democracy' in the London Boroughs of Islington (Labour government) and Tower Hamlets (Liberal government), Burns et al. (1994) concluded that transferring power to local government and enabling local participation provided valuable lessons in political education and exercising civic rights. Overall, in the UK, decentralisation had provided a platform for civil society to participate in public policy implementation. However, Burns et al. (1994) argue that while it did empower people, the decentralisation of public services as introduced by Margaret Thatcher, also led to tensions between central and local government.

By contrast, in a totalitarian communist state such as pre-1989 Romania, civil society used to play a completely different function than in a western state. In a communist state, civil society is directly integrated into the state apparatus as part of the egalitarian principles of the communist/socialist doctrine. Delivery on this is through the Communist Party, where access to and provision of education was a centralised state function. Although considered equal and many of them members of the Party, citizens in Communist states such as China, Cuba, and the Eastern Bloc do not have any apparent power to take decisions. Instead, they have to execute decisions taken by the elites of the Communist Party - found at the superior level of state hierarchy (see Giddens 1989, Finer 1974). In post-communist Romania, the gradual involvement and later on, empowerment, of various groups of stakeholders to public policy was an important development in the democratisation of the Romanian state (see Chapter Three).

Internationally, the decentralisation of public education meant that, by deciding the school to be attended by their children, parents became consumers of education, i.e., quasi-markets. At the same time, they started playing a more active role in school life with some of them becoming governors and regularly attending meetings: "markets are also believed to empower citizens in the same way as we exercise powers as consumers" (Bell and Hindmoor, 2009:115). And so, they would have more choice and in the long term, would give their children access to a better education. However, Ball (1990, 2008) criticises this principle, stating that in reality, the application in practice of Thatcherism involved "possessive individualism and personal initiative" (Ball, 1990:33) by giving more choice and so better chances to a better education to middle class families (also see Ball, 2008 and Gewirtz et al., 1995, Smyth and Gunter, 2009 for a critical perspective):

> The parent's duty is to ensure that they choose the best education for their child, even if that means that the children of others will have less than the best education. In this

> condensation excellence is a competitive acquisition; it is a form of differentiation, of comparison (Ball, 1990:33).

The debate between the supporters of the marketisation of education in the US (Chubb and Moe, 1990), Australia (Caldwell and Spinks, 1988, 1992) and UK (Tooley, 1992) and educational researchers and policy-makers evolves round the concept of parental choice which "is one of the most contested and most difficult of concepts" (Ball, 2008:126). It challenges the actual choice that parents have (Ball 1990, 1993, 2003, 2008, Gewirtz et al., 1995, Ball and Gewirtz, 1997, Raffo et al., 2007, Gunter et al., 2010). The former argued education would become classless and children would have equal access to education following the implementation of decentralisation. On the other hand, the latter argued this would work if all educational settings, localities and students would be the same. For example, in a small rural or economically deprived locality where there might be one school only, market principles would not stand a real chance. In the first instance, parents would not have a real alternative, and secondly, even if there were another school in a neighbouring village/town, parents might not be able to afford to drive their children to that school every day. The principles of decentralisation through the marketisation of educational services do not work the same in practice across the board: "In effect, in theory and practice, the poorer groups within the population are left behind by others' choices and excluded from choice by transaction choice" (Ball, 2003:113).

Following the same line of argument, not only would educational opportunities be differentiated through the way class advantage and disadvantage work, but the differences between classes would become bigger. Some schools would be more appealing to the 'consumers' (better schooling conditions, a good position in the league tables), while others (even though not as appealing or as good as the former), would be the only real 'choice' of parents and their children in socially deprived communities. Ball (2008:134) quotes Burgess et al.'s work (2006) that sees the system of education as "…a modified game of musical chairs: there are enough chairs

for everyone, but some are more desirable than others… one person's choice of chairs has implications for the chairs available to others". The issue of local authorities and parents' participation in education is very important in understanding the Romanian case of educational decentralisation later in the thesis. Notably, following the international examples, it is very interesting to find out if, the adoption of the policy of decentralisation in Romania is also bringing about the empowerment of Romanian parents as consumers of education in an emerging educational market.

2.3.2 The dynamic interplay between hierarchies, decentralisation and markets

In considering the shift from hierarchies to decentralisation and markets I have therefore showed that: first, the state is restructuring by letting go some of the power in the public sector and the main emphasis is on bringing in market principles, decentralising decision-making and allowing new provision from the private sector; second, the ways in which the shift from hierarchies to markets plays out depends on the type and background of the state implementing this change; third, the complexity of this shift requires a deep understanding of the layers and levels of decentralisation plus the hybrid arrangements within public administration; fourth, supranational agencies, such as the European Union or the World Bank, can have a major impact on governance policies; fifth, this new restructuring requires civil society to engage with educational provision in new ways, particularly as consumers where as experts they exercise choice.

What this means is that in order to build a conceptual framework to examine decentralisation in Romania I need to ask additional strategic questions about: first, how and why the *idea* of centralisation and decentralisation is impacting on education; second, how and why decentralisation and markets are adopted and interpreted; and third, how Romanian headteachers' work

has been reshaped through the adoption of new roles by parents and local communities. As stated earlier, whilst the general discourses of decentralisation are important in understanding the background of this policy, it is the realities of decentralisation in education and effects on headteachers that represent the prime focus of my thesis and shall be further explored. I begin this analysis by presenting examples of educational decentralisation in other countries. Each of the examples provided represents an important lesson for the Romanian case of decentralisation according to legislation presented in Chapter Three. Chapter Four looks at decentralisation through the lens of international heads in preparation for the analysis of the findings from the empirical study in Romania in Chapters Six and Seven.

2.4 The Move from Hierarchies to Decentralisation and Markets in Education

The idea of decentralisation has been and continues to be a global phenomenon. It is to matters of implementation that I turn in this section, where I consider the various examples of decentralisation in the provision of *education* in embedded contexts and over time. Arnott and Raab (2000) edited a collection of papers exploring comparatively the changing landscape of educational governance in a variety of countries. While the first part of this book focuses on the Scots - as an example of devolved management from the UK government to the Scottish Parliament - in the second part, other examples are provided: England and Wales (Martin et al., 2000), United States (Wohlstetter and Bender Sebring, 2000), New Zealand (Jacobs, 2000) and Denmark (Gronnegaard Christensen, 2000).

In spite of great differences in the social, economic and political contexts, decentralisation has been implemented in westernised (United Kingdom, USA, New Zealand, Australia, Italy, and Sweden) as well as in former

communist states in Central and Eastern Europe (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Romania, etc) and in Latin America, Africa, Asia, etc (Rondinelli et al., 1984, Cheema and Rondinelli, 2007). Although the reasons for introducing decentralisation differed from one context to another, there are similarities in the decentralisation policy texts in various countries. Some suggest decentralisation of public services such as education is a "travelling policy" (Ozga and Jones, 2006), a "global phenomenon" (Whitty et al., 1998).

Rose (1991) warns against the pitfall of transporting policies and the inherent risk of "false universalism". Therefore, reforms and policy initiatives should not be seen as fixed recipes (Gordon and Pierce, 1993, McGinn, and Welsh, 1999) as "there may be several ways to structure the governance of education that are effective" (McGinn, and Welsh, 1999:51). In an international survey of the "roots of reform" in education, Lawton (1992) draws parallels on the reforms in the UK, Australia, New Zealand and the USA and Canada. In a response to Lawton's paper, Gordon and Pierce (1993:180) argue there is no point in comparing educational reforms in different states, other than for the purpose of "enriching our understanding of our own national context". As policy is embedded in a country's values, aspirations, culture and practices, elements of localism often make the difference in implementation outcomes:

> It is important to bear in mind that, with subjects like education and social development, the most subtle and sensitive aspects of a country's character and aspirations are involved. The goals must be set in terms of local ideology by local people (Benveniste and Ilchman, 1969:51).

The national, socio-political and economic contexts of reform implementation differ greatly. And so, markets and decentralisation need to be understood around national borders. Karstanje (1999) has looked at both Western and Eastern Europe's policies of decentralisation in education. In acknowledging the merits of western models of decentralisation, Karstanje (1999) built a conceptual framework for understanding school autonomy in Central and

Eastern European countries. Following his analysis of various education systems in the cited countries, he came up with a new model for decentralisation and deregulation in CEECs (see Table 1 in Appendix B). According to this, and taking into account elements of school management (such as teaching and curriculum, staff, school organisation, finances, buildings, facilities), CEECs in 2001 were either:

- *Centralised and regulated*
- *Moderately centralised and moderately regulated*
- *Decentralised and deregulated*

Considering that it was communist for over four decades, it is not surprising to find Romania in his first category. In the same category other countries that were included were the former Eastern Bloc countries, but also France, Germany and Italy. At the other end of the continuum, countries like England and the Netherlands (and Hungary to a lesser extent) can be found.

Looking at educational governance in Western and Eastern Europe, Halasz (2003) put together a theoretical framework in which he identified forms and targets of responsibility transfer. His forms of responsibility refer to different definitions or degrees of decentralisation, such as deconcentration and school autonomy. His targets introduce the levels of responsibility transfer and the scope of decision-making, which can be decentralised (see Table 2 in Appendix B). Both Halasz (2003) and Karstanje's (1999) models were used as inputs to my conceptual framework later in this Chapter.

2.4.1 Examples of Decentralisation in Education

According to the body of literature consulted, the most decentralised systems of education in the world appear to be in the State of Victoria (Australia), New Zealand and England and Wales (Chapman et al., 1996, Abu-Duhou, 1999, McGinn and Welsh, 1999). However, the U.S.A (Chicago, state of

Illinois), and Italy also provide interesting examples for different reasons. In the latter's case, I want to explore how Italy, a country labelled as both centralised and regulated in Karstanje's analysis (1999) above, is dealing with the complexities of decentralisation in education.

The most important features of the educational reforms in each selected country are presented in five short vignettes below with an emphasis on centralisation/decentralisation features (see Appendix B for other more information on the countries presented in these vignettes). At the end of the vignettes, I present a short summary table, highlighting the centralised and decentralised features in each country or context. For each country, I will focus on the elements that inform my thinking of the Romanian case of decentralisation, either by being similar, or by being different to it. Particularly, I am interested to explore the interactions between the various layers (macro - the state, meso - local forms of government and micro - schools) within the nation state from policy design to implementation and its effects on professionals. It is often the case that there are splits between policy *intentions* and implementation *outcomes* (Newman, 2001).

England - "The 1988 Education Reform Act" (1988)

Successive governments from the mid-1980s onwards accepted that by placing responsibility for the design and implementation of policy at micro level, i.e. individual schools, decision-making processes would be more efficient and tailored to those institutions' needs (Turner, 2006). The 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) introduced radical changes in England by moving the locus of control from local administration to schools. The 1988 Act was intended "to mark a radical shift in direction" (Maclure 1989: vi) and led to numerous controversies. Some of the major areas of change included:

a. Competition between schools;
b. Increased role of governors;

c.   The tension between "parent power" (Maclure, 1989: x) and the providers (LEAs and the Churches);

d.   The impact on planning of the change in the distribution of power.

For instance, one form of decentralisation, known as site-based management, adopted in England as from 1988 is known as Local Management of Schools (LMS). Another form was Grant Maintained Status (GMS). GMS represents the most decentralised form of education in that a GMS school opted out of local authority control and has full responsibility for finances that come directly from central government. Overall, the change in the power structure in English schools was highly controversial: more power for the Secretary of State, increased autonomy of the schools, new power roles for school boards and heads "and a little bit of it goes to the parents" (Ball, 1990:69).

In essence, while some components of education such as parental choice, marketisation, decreasing the roles of the LEAs, financial delegation for the LMS have been decentralised, others like the introduction of a National Curriculum, national assessment, performance standards - called 'Attainment targets' were centralised. In the 25 years since the ERA, the process of decentralisation has continued (Academies and Free Schools) although there has also been an increase in centralised regulation. In centralising some elements of education and decentralising others, as well as empowering school governors, England's experience of educational decentralisation raises very important questions regarding the simultaneous centralisation and decentralisation that relate to the Romanian context. For example, it would be interesting to see if in Romania, the decentralisation of finances would co-exist with the centralisation of national curriculum, student assessment and inspection. Similarly, I shall determine whether changes to the role and composition of the school board, parental choice and competition between schools have been reflected in Romania.

New Zealand- "Tomorrow's Schools" (1989)

"Tomorrow's Schools" (1989) was the New Zealand government's response to the Picot Report (1988) and implemented throughout the country from October 1989. It introduced measures of free market ideology and new devolution arrangements were immediately put in place.

One of the most important responsibilities devolved to schools was with regard to finances (Lauder and Wylie, 1990) and schools could now run as private enterprises. Codd (1993:169) argues strongly against the introduction of these self-managing schools:

> New Zealand education has experienced a crisis of confidence… in its politicians and policy-makers. Not only has the pace of reforms been frenetic, but the process at times has been a travesty of democracy, and there has been almost no concern to evaluate the effects of change. If New Zealand schools are to become democratic, open and self-reflective communities in which an ethics of justice can prevail, then the current forces of managerialism and market liberalism must be defeated. Only their defeat can avert the educational tragedy that is looming.

An element of novelty resides in the complete disappearance of the intermediate level as a result of devolution. By closing down regional offices, important financial savings were made. Consequently, 95% of the budget was transferred directly to schools.

A Curriculum Framework was also introduced, but it mainly provided general guidance and focused on the minority Maori interests. The Education Review Office (ERO, an equivalent of OfSTED in the UK context) was set up to investigate and publish the performance of schools and an outcome-based national assessment was introduced.

This example demonstrates that decentralisation can be successfully implemented nationally at a very rapid pace. By eliminating the middle tier, the New Zealand government shows how education system can work effectively without the meso level if a clear strategy is implemented. This raises questions for the Romanian system regarding the speed and nature of the radical restructuring of education: How fast are educational reforms implemented? How radical is the change in the restructuring of education? In addition, when analysing the Romanian case of decentralisation, I will look at the role played by educational authorities (in Romania called County School Inspectorates), if any, in decentralisation and why. The decentralisation of budgets directly to the school level is another important facet of educational decentralisation in New Zealand that provides a lesson for Romania. If Romania decentralises budgets, what institutions are involved in the process and what are the financial flows?

State of Illinois, United States of America-"Chicago School Reform Act" (1989)

The United States of America runs a federal system. This means that the states are simultaneously independent in terms of local and micro-policies and coordinated (if referring to macro-policies). Chicago (State of Illinois) is the most decentralised big city system in the United States of America (Moore and Merritt, 2002).

In 1985, Designs for Change and Chicago Panel research reports revealed worrying data on the state of public education in Chicago. That, together with the impetus for educational reform state-wide in response to 'A Nation at Risk' (National Commission, 1983) and three annual education summits, led to the 1988 Chicago School Reform Act.

One of the most important measures proposed in the Act was the establishment of school-based management councils at every school. In October 1989, 313,000 people voted to elect 5,420 members of Local School Councils (LSCs) to begin school-based management at 542 Chicago public schools (Hess, 1990). Unique among education in the U.S., Chicago's local school councils were given powers in the following areas (Moore and Merritt, 2002):

- The Selection and Evaluation of Heads - LSCs appoint the school's head to a four-year contract. There is on-going evaluation of the head and at the end of the four-year period, the school council decides to rehire or replace him/her.
- School Improvement Planning - through developing and approving an annual school improvement plan that focuses on achieving the student learning standards set state-wide.
- School-Based Budget - through developing and approving the school budget, with major control over an average of $500,000 per year in flexible funds from the state.

This example shows that educational reforms can be bottom-up and originate at a local level, rather than being imposed by the central government i.e. beginning with those that know best their context and needs, the ones that are most affected by the top-down reforms. As mentioned earlier, this is in stark contrast with the origins of decentralisation in Romania in which the government adopted decentralisation in order to comply with the conditions imposed by external institutions such as the European Union and the World Bank. The fact that the members of the LCSs were elected by the citizens of Chicago and not by schools was also novel in Chicago. That is a clear example of political decentralisation (Rondinelli et al., 1983), and

scores high on the centralisation-decentralisation continuum from the civil society's empowerment point of view. The fact that School Councils are managing very limited funds is an indication of a low decentralisation of finances. This raises questions for Romania in terms of how political and financial reforms take place at the level of locality, how school board members are selected, heads are appointed and finances managed.

State of Victoria, Australia- "Schools of the Future" (1992)

Until the 1970s, education in all six states and two territories in Australia was centralised nationally. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, administrative decentralisation to regional units proceeded in Victoria. The incoming Whitlam Government commissioned the Karmel Report (1973), which established the basis of Commonwealth provision for school education on the principle of 'need'. Education was initially decentralised from national to regional or state level.

The election of the Australian Labour Party in 1983 led to "substantial commitment to decentralisation" (Caldwell and Spinks, 1988:13) from state level further down the hierarchy. The government accepted the need for schools to have control over the allocation and management of resources that were formally assigned by the states. Consequently, the self-management of schools has been institutionalised at a quick pace.

Due to the rapid implementation of reforms, the state of Victoria is considered one of the most decentralised systems of public education in the world. Note that the state of Victoria became "Australia's flagship for many of the moves towards a fully decentralised system of education" (Townsend,

1997:199). Decentralisation is well advanced. In terms of individual schools' budgets, 90% of expenditure is made at school-level (Caldwell and Hill, 1999). This is an example of extensive financial decentralisation, and as such it raises questions for Romania regarding the exact location and control over financial decisions.

Italy (1999)

In Italy, the reforms in education were part of a larger framework of reorganising the Italian public administration. In the period 1996-2001, the centre-left government introduced a series of educational reforms through Law 59/97, D.P.R.227/99 in order to respond to the European trends towards school autonomy (Barzano, 2007). The decentralisation of Italian education has been characterised through: "site-based management, decentralisation, localism, emphasis on partnerships and local authorities' role" (Grimaldi and Serpieri, 2010:1). Partly, the functions of the Ministry of Education have been decentred towards local authorities (regions, provinces and municipalities).

Another important feature of the educational reforms in Italy is represented by the creation of a national evaluation system in 2000. It is run by a deconcentrated body of the Ministry of Education (INVALSI- *Istituto Nazionale per la Valutazione del Sistema Educativo di Istruzione e Formazione)* and staffed with subject-experts (Fabbricatore, 2004; Losito, 2007). However, the evaluation and assessment projects have been mainly focused on student performance, teachers' attitudes and other educational issues: they have monitoring aims but this has never resulted in accountability practices (Ministero della Pubblica Istruzione, 2007, Grimaldi and Barzano, 2011). Some of the issues encountered in Italy relate to the discrepancy between policy text and its implementation and are relevant to my examination of the Romanian case in Chapter Three. For example, in Italy, whilst finances have to some extent been decentralised to school level,

control or choice of spending has not, i.e. heads have little decision-making authority over the areas in which to spend funds for example. In addition, heads and teachers are still appointed nationally. For my own context in Romania, how and by whom heads and teachers would be hired and fired is key to my thesis.

Finally, there is the fact that, although a liberal-democracy at the initiation of decentralisation, Italy is the only country in the five presented that has a recent history of totalitarianism. The legacy of this history in addition to the reforms of public administration raises issues for Romania about how radical change takes place in the context of a shift from totalitarianism to a fully fledged democracy.

2.4.2 Using these examples to think about decentralisation

After examining the change from hierarchies to decentralisation and markets above and exploring the various models of decentralisation adopted internationally, I conclude that, due to the complexity of decentralisation and its dynamics over time, decentralisation in its purest form does not exist. There will always remain that interplay between hierarchical government and different forms of markets and autonomy. The key is in identifying what elements have been decentralised and to what extent. And, understand that while there is policy borrowing from one state to another, the embedded context means that policy is implemented and enacted differently.

The key features of decentralisation in embedded contexts in different nation states as resulted from this analysis are synthesised in Table 2.1 below. In spite of the existence of a variety of centralised features together with different forms/degrees of decentralisation, all the five countries presented have a national curriculum, a national inspection system as well as national

evaluation standards. Examples of features, which tend to differ, include the level of financial decision-making at local level and the hiring and firing of staff.

Table 2.1: Examples of decentralisation in education

Country	Main decentralised features	Centralised features
England	Finances. Per capita funding, with formula taking into account the number and age of students. Governing bodies can hire and fire staff.	National curriculum National standards National Inspection (OfSTED from 1992)
New Zealand	Financial decentralisation from the national level to schools, with the complete disappearance of the middle tier of responsibility Formula funding	National curriculum framework (minimum guidance) Education Review Office (ERO); the Review and Audit Inspectorate (national bodies) Teachers' salaries and central support services
Italy	Localism, emphasis on partnerships and local authorities' role in the governing of education	National curriculum framework National evaluation system National inspection system National selection of heads and teachers
Victoria (Australia)	Formula-based funding model - per-student funding	Curriculum: 8 learning areas Standards framework Office of Schools Review Quality assurance (external evaluation every 3 years)
"Chicago school Reform"	LSCs select and Evaluate heads (ongoing evaluation of the head and at the end of the four-year period, the school council decides to rehire or replace) School Improvement Planning School-Based Budget (with limited flexibility)	National curriculum framework National Education Standards and Improvement Council National Skill Standards Board

These examples show the complexity of decentralisation as it plays out differently, in different parts of the world. This is due to the political context and governance arrangements of the respective states, as well as to the global tendencies in politics and economics.

For the purpose of building the conceptual framework, it is useful to look at the international examples by focussing on the real decision-making

authority, (whether it is school, localised or centralised) and across the various fields of influence (budgets, formula funding, hiring and firing staff, heads' roles, curriculum, evaluation and assessment). This allows me later to gauge the level of educational decentralisation that is intended or has been achieved. Table 2.2 summarizes the international examples.

Table 2.2: International examples by area of decision-making

Area of decision-making	Country/unit in chronological order of reforms				
	England	New Zealand	Chicago	Victoria	Italy
Budgets	School level	95% of budgets controlled at school leveL	Small amount of flexible funds to control at school level.	90% of expenditure made at school-level	Some decentralised fund management at school level
Formula funding	Yes, per student funding (number and age of students)	Funding formula based on teacher-student ratio and actual teacher salaries.	No. See above	Per-student funding formula	
Staff salaries	School level	National level.	School level	School level	National level
Hiring and firing of teachers and by whom	Selection at school level	Selection at school level	Heads appoint teachers to open positions	School Councils hire non-teaching staff and teaching staff on short term contracts;	National selection of teachers
Heads roles/powers and appointment	Increased leadership in staffing, curriculum and discipline		Lifetime principal tenure eliminated	Heads on limited-tenure contracts	Heads appointed nationally
Curriculum	National curriculum but some schools can opt out	Minimum guidance at central level with emphasis on Maori culture	National curriculum	National curriculum of 8 learning areas	National curriculum
Inspection	OfSTED (inspections)	Education Review Office (ERO); the Review and Audit Inspectorate	National	Office of Schools Review	National inspection system
Assessment and evaluation of students	National standards and exams		National Education Standards	Quality assurance (external evaluation every 3 years)	National evaluation system

What all this means is that in order to answer the three research questions posed at the beginning of this study, I have to build a conceptual framework to examine not only the idea, but the actualities of decentralisation of decision-making in Romania. I need to look at the areas of decision-making and ask questions about: the funding of education and fiscal arrangements for schools; the arrangements for securing quality through inspection and testing; the way local management operates in relation to the role of professionals such as the school principal, political control and the laity on school boards; and the arrangements for the hiring and firing of staff.

2.5 Introducing a Conceptual Framework

This Chapter is important in that it enables me to start building a conceptual framework that will later be used to guide my empirical study and make sense of the findings in Romania. It is also key to addressing the three research questions posed in this thesis. In subsequent Chapters I continue to develop this framework, which is then completed in Chapter Eight.

The literature on decentralisation presented in the first part of this chapter (section 2.2 and 2.3) has highlighted the need to focus on *strategic* issues regarding the ideas underpinning decentralisation and the definitions thereof, before going into depth and analysing *tactical* issues related to its implementation and enactment (section 2.4).

The key strategic questions that need examining in order to explore the Romanian context in Chapter Three are:

- *What is the background to educational change?*
- *In what ways is the public education system centralised?*
- *What was the starting point for educational change?*

- *Why is the public education system being decentralised?*

- *What progress has been made?*

- *What form(s) is decentralisation of public education taking?*

- *How are headteachers' professional responsibilities changing as a result of decentralisation?*

These strategic questions enable an understanding of the theoretical idea, origins, and general features of decentralisation. Addressing these questions illuminates the type of state and legislative framework in which decentralisation is implemented, the forms of decentralisation in existence and the aspects of education to which decentralisation applies, e.g. finances, human resources.

In addition, the examples of decentralised education systems around the world illustrated in section 2.4 provided me with an understanding of the practicalities of decentralisation when implemented. This set the scene for an in-depth exploration of the practical issues related to the implementation and enactment of decentralisation in Romania and takes the form of tactical questions:

- *What are headteachers' responsibilities in the decentralised public education system?*
- *What is the composition and role of the school board in staff (and head) selection and appointment?*
- *How does teacher tenure affect the hiring and firing of staff?*
- *How are salaries of staff determined and by whom?*
- *To whom are heads accountable and for what?*
- *How are markets affecting the competition for students?*
- *What are their relationships with other heads?*
- *How has decentralisation affected headteachers' family and professional commitments?*

- *How are schools funded, closed or amalgamated if unviable?*
- *What responsibility and flexibility do heads have for budgeting?*
- *How is curriculum determined and by whom?*

The response to both sets of questions will illuminate the Romanian context. The first step in introducing a conceptual framework to respond to these questions was to identify the key areas of decision-making in education that can be decentralised (budgets, formula funding, staff salaries, hiring and firing of teachers and by whom, heads' roles/powers/appointment, curriculum, inspection, assessment and evaluation of students).

Figure 2.1: Components and Levels of Decentralisation

Components of Decentralisation

Political	Administrative	Fiscal
Budget allocation Heads appointment Curriculum Assessment	Hiring & Firing of staff Inspection Testing	Funding formula Staff salaries

Levels of Decentralisation

Central	Local	School
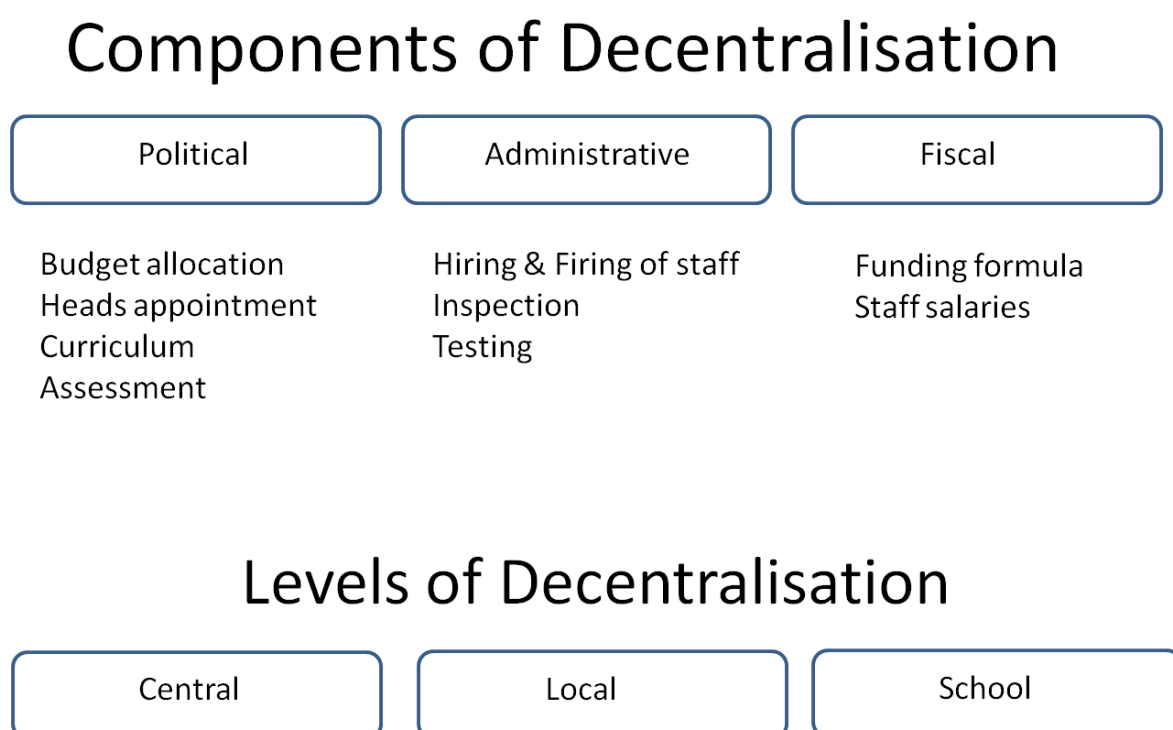
Then, I categorised these areas (that I will call *components* of decentralisation from now on) according to Cheema and Rondinelli's (2007) Political, Administrative and Fiscal labels and represented them in the model.

In order to understand how responsibility is divided between various levels of government and public administration three *levels* of decision making are also added to the model: centre versus local versus school.

Figure 2.2: Dimensions of Decentralisation

Dimensions of Decentralisation

Time

Legislated vs Implemented
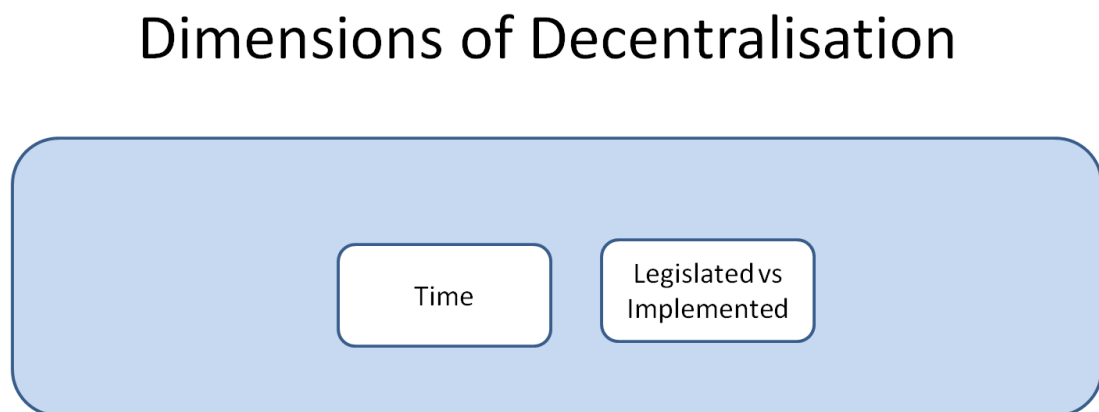
Expanding upon this analysis of levels and components of decision-making, my conceptual framework examines further the following *dimensions* of decentralisation:

- How decentralisation varies over time. As illustrated in the five vignettes above, reforms happen at various times and at different speeds. It is also an ongoing process in many contexts.

- The differences between policy and its implementation. It is clearly possible for discrepancies to appear between policy text and policy implementation. It is often the case that legislation needs to be modified during implementation. So this dichotomy generates a dynamic context.

More dimensions will be added in later chapters as my conceptual framework develops.

In the next chapter, I aim to provide a picture of the current system of education in Romania. I show the background to centralisation and decentralisation in the Romanian education system and develop the conceptual framework introduced here (see Figure 2.3 below).

Figure 2.3: Introduction of a Conceptual Framework

Introduction of a Conceptual Framework

Research Questions

RQ1 What is D?

RQ2 How & Why?

RQ3 What implications for heads?

Strategic Questions

Starting point for change?

Background to change?

Progress made?

etc

Tactical Questions

Who/How appoints heads?

Who heads accountable to?

How are schools funded?

etc

Conceptual Framework

Components

Levels

Dimensions
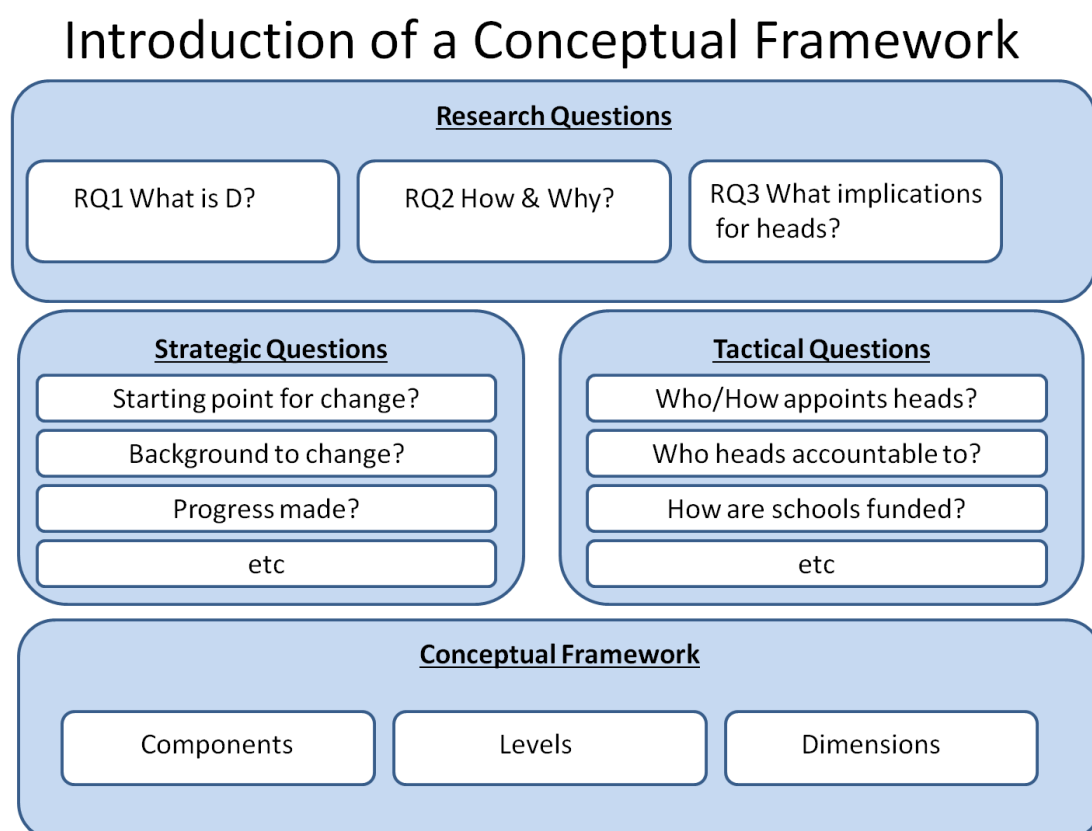
Then, in Chapter Four I highlight the international heads' experience of the implementation of decentralisation and emphasise some of the differences between legislated decentralisation and implemented decentralisation. I then present the research methodology and design for the fieldwork in Chapter Five, and elaborate on policy scholarship.

In Chapters Six and Seven I examine empirical evidence from the Romanian heads, inspectors and national policy makers. This then leads to my contribution to knowledge by presenting a model of decentralisation in Romania in Chapter Eight. When finalised, this model can be used to understand the context in any country undergoing the decentralisation of education.

CHAPTER THREE
ROMANIAN EDUCATION: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

3.1 Introduction

The pre-tertiary system of education in Romania has been systematically reformed and restructured in the last two decades through a transition from a totalitarian regime to the introduction of decentralisation and markets in a more democratic society. This meant the introduction of a plethora of new initiatives, education acts (the 2011 and 1995 Education Acts) and secondary legislation, a National Curriculum (1998) followed by new textbooks and national examinations both for students and for teachers. As part of these reforms, decentralisation has also been introduced in the public education system. The ways in which decentralisation has affected upper secondary school heads and reshaped their professional practice lie at the centre of my research. Consequently, I will focus my discussion on this area hereafter.

In this chapter, I am setting the context in which the empirical study is taking place and address research question 2: "*Why and how is decentralisation taking place in public education in Romania?*" The ideational strategic questions raised at the end of Chapter Two will structure the discussion for the first part of the chapter:

- *What is the background to change?*
- *In what ways is the public education system centralised?*
- *What was the starting point for educational change?*
- *Why is the public education system being decentralised?*
- *What progress has been made?*
- *What form(s) is decentralisation of public education taking?*

- *How are headteachers' professional responsibilities changing as a result of decentralisation?*

In sections 3.2 and 3.3 I am looking at the background, origins and reasons for adopting this specific policy in Romania and the transition from centralisation to decentralisation. This process begins with the first ever education act in Romania in 1864, continues with the first education act (1948) after the instauration of the communist regime, and resumes with the acts (1995, 2011) adopted after the fall of communism. This discussion will reveal some of the ways in which the dominant ideas about society, education and economy changed, especially over the last six decades.

Then, in sections 3.4 to 3.6 I get into more detail about when, why, and how decentralisation was implemented in Romania and so begin to answer some of the tactical questions. I place the initiation of decentralisation against the background of political, economic and cultural transition (Birzea, 1994) from a post-communist totalitarian state to a state with more democratic features. There are further sections dealing with specific tactical issues such as the Funding Formula, County School Inspectorates, School Based Management and Curriculum (sections 3.7 to 3.10).

The components, levels and dimensions of decentralisation identified are described according to the official legislation. At the end of this chapter, this will contribute to the new model of conceptualising the decentralisation of education. In all these sections, I am particularly interested in how headteachers participate in and are affected by educational policy.

In section 3.11 I summarise the chapter and show how it contributed to my understanding of decentralisation. In the final section of this chapter (3.12) I represent the Conceptual Framework by adding the Romanian case based on legislation.

3.2 In what ways is the public education system centralized?

The aim of this section is to clarify how the centralisation of public education is explicit in communist Romania. This will then enable me to understand the decentralisation of education initiated in the late 1990s in further sections. Historically, the Romanian system of education has been extremely centralised culminating with the communist period. It was only in the late 1990s that the first ideas about a decentralisation of the public system of education emerged. Before exploring the decentralisation of the education system, it is necessary to first discuss the educational reforms during the excessive centralisation of the state in order to then understand what the transition period entailed.

During communism, the Romanian education system was *the* most centralised in Central and Eastern Europe (World Bank, 2002). Four distinct educational reform phases can be distinguished. Each of them was associated with changes at the level of the Romanian society caused by the totalitarian regime. The first and fourth introduced the most radical ideas in education. In brief, these are:

1. Soviet style education reforms 1947-1963
2. Romanian nationalist communist education reforms 1964-1967
3. Ceausescu - early reforms 1968-1977
4. Ceausescu - later reforms 1978-1989

Shortly after the establishment of Communism in December 1947, the <u>first</u> communist reform in education was undertaken under Decree No. 175 from August 1948. The purpose of this decree was to re-organise Romanian education after the model of the Soviet Union. This was to be achieved by:

(A) "Nationalisation of all educational institutions
(B) Adoption of Marxist-Leninist principles of education

(C) And adjustment of educational policies to the changing requirements of the planned economy".

<div align="right">(Braham, 1978:2)</div>

Accordingly, education became a 'property of the state', highly centralised and under the close scrutiny of the Romanian Communist Party (PCR) through the line ministry. The 1948 reform in education served to complete the transformation of Romanian education, culture and society. Importantly, seventy-five percent of high school graduates were encouraged to study in technical and engineering universities to comply with the forced industrialisation of the country, one of the communist objectives (Toma, 2008). The outcomes of this reorganisation are summarised in Table 3 in Appendix B.

A second set of changes followed in education, economy and industry, when, in 1964, Dej, the then Romanian president, issued a 'declaration of independence' after deciding to distance Romania from the Soviet Bloc by focussing on the country's own national interests. A new reorganisation followed, this time though, meant to de-Russify and de-Sovietise Romania. Again, this impacted upon the entire society and consequently education. The communist programme continued, but took a new direction towards nationalism. As opposed to the previous period in which education policy followed the Marxist-Leninist doctrines, the emphasis in educational policy now fell on the values of Romanian communism. This was a similar form of communism as the one experienced before with the addition that anything foreign was now rejected (authors, books and textbooks, foreign languages taught in schools, etc). Tismăneanu (2003:32) makes a clear cut distinction between National Communism that "encouraged intellectual creativity and theoretical heresies…favoured revisionist alternatives to the enshrined Stalinist model" and National Stalinism that was "a critical reaction to Soviet imperialism, hegemonic designs, and rigid ideological orthodoxy". In effect, as ties with the Soviet Union were cut, there was a re-centralisation of power within the Romanian Communist Party. After Dej's death in 1965, Nicolae

Ceausescu, a young communist, little known at the time, stepped in. Under his rule, Romania became one of the most totalitarian regimes in the world. This has important consequences for education as it will become even more centralised than before.

In terms of foreign policy, Ceausescu continued to distance the Romanian Communist Party from the Soviet Union. Taking on the Soviet model of state organisation (Finer, 1974, Giddens, 1989), under Ceausescu, power was concentrated at state level. A clearly organised hierarchical state apparatus was created which introduced egalitarianism between the Romanian citizens (that had to be members of the Communist Party). A secret police service meant to punish political dissidence was also introduced.

In line with the new directions in politics, new legislation also emerged in education in 1968 - Law No. 11/1968 (the third wave of educational reforms in communism). Romania returned to a Stalinist path in the 1970s and became a very repressive totalitarian regime. In doing so, another Cultural Revolution started. This meant that Romanian citizens, and, among them, headteachers and teachers, lived in fear of the authorities. This communist past duly impacted upon their profession after the fall of communism.

The fourth and last communist educational reform was enacted under Education Law No.28 from 21st December 1978. The novelty in this act consisted of adding new technical specialisations (that were piloted in the previous academic year) to the traditional ones so as to be in line with "the requirements of labour force' training" (Art. 36). The strong character of communist ideological propaganda is of note here. It was officially regulated through Art.12 b) stipulating that in all its forms, the process of instruction had to ensure:

> The pupils and students will be provided with the politics and ideology of the Romanian Communist Party, the scientific socialism, the historical and materialist-dialectic view towards world and life; they will be shaped into advanced citizens, active constructors of socialism and communism.

In short, this meant blending education with industrial production. As a result, while still at school, all students received production quotas for the practical hours they did in state companies in order to help repay Romania's foreign debt of 10.2 billion USD (Keil, 2006) ahead of schedule.

To keep in line with the Romanian Communist Party's centralist agenda promoting the hierarchical state, efforts were made to prevent any state reforms or plans for decentralisation allowing the creation of a market (Keil, 2006). Therefore, throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the strengthening of the totalitarian regime meant that Romania became a strongly centralised state that allowed no room for disobedience or alternatives.

There is no educational research data available during communism. There is indication that in the period 1985-1989 (the final years of communism) the Romanian state allocated 2.49% of the GDP (Eurydice, 2009) to education from the general budget. School inspectors, directors and teachers' appointments were state-centralised and so too were educational policy and student examinations. As mentioned in Chapter Two, most professionals were members of the Communist Party.

3.3 What was the starting point for educational change? What progress has been made?

A former totalitarian regime for over four decades, Romania has made constant efforts to move towards a democratic society since the fall of communism in December 1989. In Romania, as well as in other Central and Eastern Europe Countries (CEECs), the transition from communism to capitalism meant a thorough restructuring of the state, in many cases with the aid of supranational structures such as the European Union or international western institutions such as the World Bank. As stated earlier in the thesis, in Romania, by suggesting policies, the international bodies

encouraged a 'westernisation' of the former communist states' undergoing transition. International institutions' aid is usually accompanied by certain conditions (i.e. financial aid is dependent on the implementation of the policy of decentralisation). With little or no prior experience in state restructuring and policy design, and wanting to benefit from the experience of the western institutions, former communist countries (including Romania) can fall into the trap of transferring or borrowing policies that might not be suitable for them (Ozga and Jones, 2006, Barzano, 2007).

Policy design and implementation are contextual. They depend on a country's values, aspirations, history, socio-political and cultural backgrounds. Whilst it is important to look at the policies adopted by other states, simple policy transfer from elsewhere is not a solution. The aim of foreign policy analysis is to enable a better understanding of one's own national context (Gordon and Pierce, 1993).

In order for the same policies to work everywhere, homogeneity is needed on two different fronts: one refers to western states in which policies originate and the second one refers to all the former communist states (CEECs) to which policies are transferred. All western countries have their own legislation, market principles, cultures and a different combination of centralisation and decentralisation, public and private sectors. In addition, all former communist states in Europe are also heterogeneous. There is a great diversity of ethnicities and languages spoken, histories and starting points or degrees of centralisation as well as different types of communist regimes. If, for example, the Romanian regime under Ceausescu was oppressive, the former Yugoslav regime under Tito was characterised through both keeping good relationships with other communist countries and developing relationships with the West. There are some CEECs which share some common features and indeed, they have been categorised into four types by Cerych (1997 - see Appendices for more on CEECs categorisation). However, even within his four categories each and every country within these groups is still heterogeneous and displays its own national character, culture and values.

As a consequence of this lack of homogeneity any policy borrowing in Romania should be performed with care. This country is quite different from western states (and also many CEECs). Even if intelligently 'borrowed', the transition process from an ex-communist to a westernised state takes time. Birzea (1994) considers that any former communist state experiences not one, but three interdependent transitions with separate aims and timelines. These are *political transition* (five years), *economic transition* (ten years) and *cultural transition* (twenty five years). I analyse Romania's experience of transition from a communist state to a more democratic state through these three lenses and present them below, from the one with fastest pace on the time continuum to the one with the slowest:

1.   *Political* transition can be achieved in approximately 5 years.

In Romania, the first protests against the totalitarian regime started in Timisoara, located in the west of Romania, one week before Christmas 1989. It is estimated that in that following week, a few thousand people died in the 'revolution', making the Romanian fall of the Iron Curtain the biggest bloodshed in the region.

The beginning of political transition was marked by the National Salvation Front (NSF), a group of neo-communists taking power before the first democratic elections in 1992. Winning the elections, they stayed in office until 1996. Nowadays, Romania is a semi-presidential republic led by a social-liberal government.

Therefore, the greatest shifts noted in Romania immediately after the fall of communism were political - "moving from a totalitarian to a democratic government" (Eurybase, 2009:9). On the national political scene, one of the first steps undertaken in the transition from communism to the establishment of a more democratic society was the restoration of the so-called 'historical political parties': the National Liberal Party, and the National Peasant Christian Democrat Party. These were the most prominent political parties in

pre-communist Romania and had been silenced during communism. Additionally, approximately two hundred new political parties appeared in the early 1990s (Keil, 2006, Eurybase, 2009).

With respect to external policy, after the overthrow of the communist regime which caused four decades of isolation from the West, the Romanian Government's main priority was to join the supra-national structures. In 2004, Romania joined NATO and following the Copenhagen Council of June 1993, Romania was invited to start the process of joining the European Union (EU). Preparations for EU accession took over a decade and entailed major reforms in all sectors, a special emphasis being put on reforming public services – including education.

With regards to education, in the first instance, political transition translated into the removal of communist ideology from the curriculum (see section 3.5). Due to the slow pace of reforms, Romania and its southern neighbour Bulgaria were the last of the Central and Eastern Europe countries (CEECs) to join the enlarged European Union in January 2007 (Keil, 2006) that now consisted of 27 member states.

2.   *Economic* transition can reach its aims in about 10 years.

Economic transition depends on the level of centralisation and degree of collectivisation (the appropriation of the lands by the communist state in order to be administered centrally) prior to transition. For example, countries in the former Soviet Union under Stalin and Romania under Ceausescu reached a high level of collectivisation.

In Romania in the 1990s, notable economic changes emerged by moving from a planned economy to the beginnings of a market economy (Eurybase, 2009). The main aims of reforms were to reduce the role of the State and to introduce private initiative into public life through structural reforms (Birzea, 1996, 1997, Marga, 1998, 1999, 2000, Eurybase, 2009, Popescu, 2010a). This was a particularly challenging endeavour both for the post-communist

governments, and for the population in the first decade after the fall of communism. Considering the country entered transition at very low baseline economic indicators, "the pace of democratic reforms has been faster than that of the economic ones" (Eurybase, 2009:10). The collapse of industry and the privatisation of state-owned enterprises led to tens of thousands of redundancies, a decrease in the GDP and an economic crisis.

3   Cultural transition is the most complex of the three and can take up to 25 years to be completed.

Cultural transition involves major changes of "lifestyle, values, attitudes, skills, and social relationships" (Birzea and Fartusnic, 2009:71). The resistance of the first post-communist governments to western ideology led to delays in democratisation (Linz and Stepan, 1996) and marketisation (Pop, 2006). In addition, the post-communist instability caused by the large number of political parties allowed for the strong politicisation of communist times to continue in post-communist Romania and was a key-factor in Romania's slow and challenging transition. This political instability also translated into frequent changes of ministers of education and other top level civil servants. Earlier in the thesis I stated that the endurance of communist practices and other cultural factors are the most important causes in the delays of the decentralisation of education in Romania. I will come back to this later.

So far in the Chapter, I looked at how the education system was centralised in communist times in section 3.2. This was important for understanding the initial steps in transition and educational change in Romania in section 3.3. The time dimension introduced in Chapter Two is not just a snapshot, but a constant in my research. Birzea's typology of transition is particularly important in understanding the Romanian case of educational decentralisation by bridging the past, present, and future. In its turn, this is contributes to the understanding of policy transfer. The next two sections

cover the decentralisation of the public sector in section 3.4 and public education in section 3.5.

3.4 How has decentralisation been introduced in public administration in Romania and why?

In this section I will detail the introduction of decentralisation in public administration in Romania. This is important to establish the background to educational reform which follows in 3.5. It is now relevant to look at the composition of the public administration in Romania as local public authorities play an important role in the funding of education.

In Romania, public administration consists of central and local administration. While the former is comprised of the government, line ministries, state agencies, central autonomous institutions and deconcentrated bodies, the latter consists of the city council, county council, and mayor (elected locally). Local prefects, nominated by the Prime Minister, make the link between central and local administration. There are 42 local authorities in total in Romania, one for each county. Local authorities do not enact any laws as such, but do administer local affairs and collect local taxes.

After the fall of communism, the Romanian state lacked the necessary financial resources to undergo the comprehensive process of public administration reform. Therefore, it contracted loans from external financial institutions. This first loan post-communism took the form of the Programmatic Adjustment Loan (PAL). Specifically, the PAL in Romania focused on public sector decentralisation and infrastructure (World Bank, 2002). It operated in the period August 2003-December 2006, and had 104 actions coordinated by 9 Ministries, aiming at reforms of both public and private sectors.

In preparation for accession to supranational structures such as the European Union (EU), Romania needed to adapt its system to meet the accession requirements in all areas. New legislation needed to be developed in various areas. One of the conditions agreed with the World Bank in view of the PAL arrangements was with regard to the decentralisation of public services (Schroeder, 2005). The EU express its concerns that in order to achieve this decentralisation of public services, there would need to be some form of administrative overview, especially at regional level:

> Romania does not have a specific regional development policy (…) the effective administration of the acquis in this area will require significant work in various areas, including the creation of an appropriate administrative structure. (European Commission, 1997b:4:1)

However, Romania's case was not singular, as other post-communist states in the area were confronted with the same issues:

> The reform of local and regional governance has been one of the most confrontational aspects of post-communist politics in Eastern Europe and a major EU conditionality within the context of its forthcoming enlargement. (Papadimitriou, 2003:1)

In order to comply with the European Union's requirements in the area of regional development, eight development regions were set up after the fall of communism, each comprising four to seven counties (see Map 3.1 below).

Despite setting up the eight development regions, the Romanian Government did not create a regional government as such. In effect, the creation of new regions was a paper exercise and the power still rests with the 42 county local authorities. Regions "are not administrative-territorial entities and do not have legal entity status" (Eurydice, 2009:12, Papadimitriou and Phinnemore, 2008). In consequence, and as Profiroiu and Profiroiu noted in 2006, public administration was still highly centralised. The establishment of regional authorities in accordance with EU guidelines was largely symbolic.

Map 3.1: Development regions in Romania

↓

COUNTIES GROUPING, BY MACROREGION AND DEVELOPMENT REGION
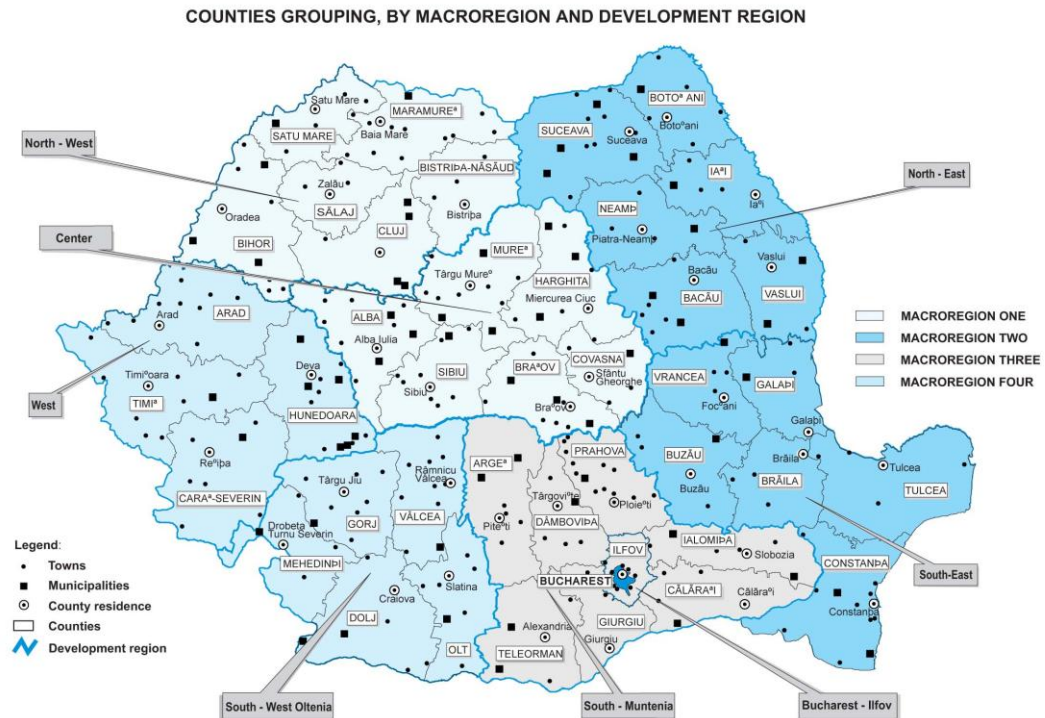
Source: National Institute of Statistics, 2011, p. 5

To implement the new decentralisation policies required by these international bodies, in the mid-2000s, the Romanian Government commissioned a white paper with the aim of creating a framework for the decentralisation of financing and delivery of public services. That would then form the basis of future appropriate legislation meant to facilitate the implementation of decentralisation. The report called "*The Decentralisation Strategy in Romania: An Analytical Framework"* was delivered by USAID (Schroeder, 2005). One of the key things identified in the *Framework* was with regard to the lack of clarity of the public administration and the relationships between various bodies that led to a dysfunctional system:

> The current structure of intergovernmental relations and assignment of functional responsibilities in Romania are far from ideal. Structurally, local autonomy is hindered by the roles of the prefect, secretary and, in some instance, the deconcentrated

offices of line ministries. The Local Public Administration Law (No.215) is extremely vague with respect to the assignment of competencies and is not built on a coherent framework. (Schroeder, 2005:1)

In 2006, a new Law was enacted to enable real administrative decentralisation in public administration. Law no. 195/2006 on the Decentralisation of Public Administration adopted by the Romanian Parliament on 22nd May 2006 constitutes the framework of the decentralisation of public administration by "establishing the principles, rules and the institutional framework that regulates the financial and administrative decentralisation" (Art.1). In theory, this new legislation should address the issues raised by Schroeder (2005). In practice, when implemented, this Law neither clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the public administration, nor the terminology used, that continues to be vague. This might have to do with the fact that, beyond knowing there had to be a decentralisation of public administration the Romanian Government did not decide exactly what this would entail. The definitions set up in Art. 2 of this Law (see Table 3.1 below) are of particular importance in showing this.

Table 3.1: Definitions

Article 2 Law no. 195/2006	Definitions
f) *Shared competences*	The competences exerted by the local public administration authorities together with other levels of public administration (county or central), with a clear separation of finance and decision-making power.
j) *Deconcentration*	The redistribution of financial and administrative competences by the ministries and other authorities of public central administration to their own specialty structures from the territory.
k) *Delegation*	Exerting certain competences by the local public administration authorities or other public institutions in the name of central public administration, within the limits established by this.
l) *Decentralisation*	The transfer of financial and administrative competences from the level of central public administration to that of local public administration or to the private sector.

These are very important for understanding the language used in the Romanian context. Note that while there is an attempt to define terms such as decentralisation, delegation and deconcentration, they are often used interchangeably in education policy documents. One example is that of the role of County School Inspectorates in Romania. Whilst in the 1995 Education Act, County School Inspectorates are described as

deconcentrated bodies of the Ministry of Education, they became 'decentralised' bodies in the 2011 Act. A lack of clarity on definitions makes it difficult to understand the real powers transferred from the centre to the regions, counties (or in the case of education as I shall show later, to schools).

In this section I showed that the Romanian government introduced the decentralisation of public services in order to align itself to the European Union and to comply with the requirements of the World Bank loan. In addition, in order to be able to decentralise administrative power from the central to public administration and/or the private sector, the Romanian government created eight development regions without creating a regional government. Therefore, right from the outset, the decentralisation of the public services was a haphazard process. Even when a Review (Blendea et al., 2008) identified the issues such as overlapping and vague roles or relationships between the various central and local authorities, unfortunately the subsequent legislation did not manage to solve the issues. Moreover, some of the language used in decentralisation policy making is confusing and unhelpful. Terminology and definitions of what decentralisation is or should be are not at all clear. This makes it even more difficult for the actors involved (i.e. headteachers) to interpret their new job specifications in a decentralised system. This issue will be further explored in Chapters Six and Seven where I analyse the findings from the empirical study in Romania. I shall now carry on addressing the strategic questions and examine the process of decentralisation as it is applied to education in Romania.

3.5 What forms is the decentralisation of public education taking?

In Romania, the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports (MERYS) centrally administers education and professional training. At central level, MERYS collaborates with other Ministries and institutional structures subordinated to the Government such as the Ministry of Public

Finance, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family, etc. (a comprehensive list is provided in Eurydice, 2009:17). After the fall of communism, the legal framework for education in Romania has been established through the Constitution, Education Acts (organic laws), Government Decisions (HG), Government Ordinances (OG) acting as Acts of Parliament over a short-term period, and Orders of the Minister of Education, Research, Youth and Sports (OMECTS).

Post-communism, a new Constitution was adopted on 8th December 1991 by referendum. Article 32 from Chapter II - entitled "Fundamental rights and liberties" ensures the right to education:

> The right to education is ensured through general compulsory education, high school (*Liceu*), vocational education and training (*Scoala de Arte si Meserii*), higher education, as well as through other forms of instruction and professional development (The Constitution, Art. 32).

In CEECs, including Romania, in the first decade after the overthrow of communism, educational policy agendas focussed on four "breaking points" (Cerych, 1997:76). These were:

- The depoliticisation of education, i.e. removing the ideological communist texts from the curriculum
- "the breaking down of state monopoly" (p.76), i.e. establishing of private and denominational schools
- allowing students and parents the right "to choose their educational path" (p.76), i.e. the role of parents and local authorities
- Decentralising school management and administration.

I shall now focus on how, chronologically, Romania has addressed these breaking points in education. I have identified post communism, four key stages of education reform:

- 1990-1995
- 1995-2005

- 2005-2010
- 2010-present

This chronological flow is important in understanding why and how decentralisation was implemented in Romanian public education and the time dimension. They are detailed below.

1990-1995

The first stage corresponds to the period 1990-1995. Given that the 1978 Education Law was outdated after the fall of communism, a new Education Act was needed. Before the new Education Act (1995), the system was generally based on the 1978 Education Law and the provisions of numerous Government Ordinances and Government Decisions (Eurydice, 2009) passed by the Romanian Government in the early 1990s. At this stage, the reform of education mainly consisted of curriculum restructuring and the reduction of compulsory education from 10 to 8 years. It focused on the "depoliticisation of education", i.e. removing all ideological content related to communism. The allocation for education was 2.5% - 3.5% of GDP only. This was partially due to the need to repay the extensive loans contracted by the Romanian Government for the education sector from the external donors (OECD, 2000).

Consequently, in the first five years after the fall of communism, the management and administration systems remained highly centralised (OECD, 2000, World Bank, 2002, Eurydice, 2009). Power was concentrated at the level of the Ministry of Education and then downwards to County School Inspectorates (CSIs). Parents, local authorities and schools remained largely uninvolved in decision-making. This made imperative the adoption of a new legislative framework (Birzea, 1996, Marga, 1998).

1995-2005

This period is particularly important for educational reform in Romania as it marks the introduction of new legislation and the initiation of external intervention in public education. The Romanian government asked for international assistance in dealing with the reform process. Consequently, several international organisations had an input and in exchange, imposed conditions. Among these, the World Bank came to play an especially prominent role in education.

a)   World Bank

As mentioned earlier in the thesis, in the transition from communism to post-communism, Romania decided to apply for external funding in order to assist with the financing of extensive structural reforms. The result of this funding was a second stage in education legislation called the Education Reform Project (ERP). It was the most important intervention in the area of pre-university education in the first decade after the fall of communism. ERP was launched at the beginning of 1994 for a 5-year period and then extended to 7 years due to various implementation issues (see Robinson, 2006).

The project was funded through a US $50 million loan from the World Bank (WB) and a US $23.50 million Romanian Government contribution (WB, 2002b, Implementation Completion Report). The Education Reform Project was seen as an ambitious endeavour (World Bank, 2002a) and made the transition to the second stage in post-communist reform (see Appendix B for a list of World Bank's loans for education in Romania).

Major changes occurred in all areas of pre-tertiary education, from occupational standards and teacher training, to student evaluation, national exams, the introduction of a new National Curriculum in 1998, and management and financing of education. ERP aimed at improving "the quality, content and delivery of compulsory education (grades I-VIII), and reforming the secondary vocational education" (WB, 2002b:2). Consequently, ERP had two main components (WB, 2002b:3):

1.	Raising the Quality of Basic and Secondary Education (US $65.6 million)

2.	Improving Education Finance and Management (US $7.8 million)

It was within this second main component of this project together with the provisions of the 1995 Education Act - republished, subsequently amended and completed- that the decentralisation of the administration in the pre-university sector can be historically traced (also see Popescu, 2010a). In its turn, the second Component had two sub-components (WB, 2002b:4):

•	Resource Allocation, Management and Mobilisation (US $ 6.0 million)-among which training for local inspectors and headteachers

•	Reform Co-ordination and Implementation (US $ 1.8 million)

I now expand on the areas of the ERP that are most relevant to the discussion about decentralisation.

Inspection and head teacher training

A new Inspection system and the National Program for Headteacher Training - approved by the Ministerial Order No. 5283/21.12.1998 were considered "vital for the success at management level" (WB, 2002b:59). Approximately twenty thousand stakeholders were trained nationwide to support the implementation of the Headteacher Training Program, out of which: 32 inspectors' trainers, 150 national headteacher trainers, 1,000 inspectors (on the new inspection system) and 8,000 headteachers (on school management), 500 financial experts (on the new financial formulae) and approximately 10,000 secretarial staff (on data collection). Consequently, these were some of the most notable outcomes of the Education Reform Project (ERP) - Component 2.2- Finance and Management.

Another outcome of the implementation of ERP was the establishment of a dozen new institutions and structures adjacent/external to the Ministry of

Education with the aim of ensuring sustainability of some of these sub-components. Among these were: the National Curriculum Council (NCC) in sub-component I-A, the National Assessment and Examination Service (NAES) and the National Assessment and Examination Board (NAEB) in sub-component I-C (WB, Robinson, 2006). To date, all of these still exist albeit with some name changes.

Legislation

The legislation heralding the second stage alongside ERP was the Education Act of July 24 1995 - Law 84/1995, republished and subsequently amended and completed. The new law provided the framework for the organisation, management and administration of the Romanian pre-university education. It also established the structure, objectives and contents of education of all levels (Eurydice, 2009). In line with the provisions of the 1995 Education Act, public education was to be funded from the state budget at a minimum of 4% of GDP. However, although clearly stipulated in the Act, this provision has been disrespected until 2001 (see Tables 3.2 and 3.5 for a clear picture of education funding).

Table 3.2: Education* expenditures by source 1993-1998

Total	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
As % of GDP	3.20	3.10	3.47	3.65	3.66	3.64
Source						
State budget	96.1	96.7	82.6	82.0	79.7	81.6
Local budget	-	-	13.4	14.7	11.5	9.2.
Other	3.9	3.3	4.0	3.3	8.8	9.2.

Source: WB, 2002, p.100

*These apply to the whole education sector and so include higher education. There is no data available to show the expenditures for pre-higher education only.

First changes in the role of local public administration in education

The 1995 Education Law brought significant changes in terms of the maintenance, management and financing of schools (Robinson, 2006, Eurydice, 2009) as well as the first small steps towards the decentralisation of the school system. This Act enabled for devolution of authority from the state to local public authorities with regard to school maintenance. Also, the Ministry of Education deconcentrated some decision-making at County School Inspectorate level with regard to national exams and teacher selection. In spite of these developments though, the Ministry of Education remained in charge of most of the issues related to the education system such as: teacher salaries, student textbooks and scholarships, etc. With regard to headteachers' roles, at the time, headteachers were still taking few decisions in their schools. Their role was mainly in following the administrative requests and legislative provisions set by the Ministry and checked by County School Inspectorates. According to the 1995 Act, heads should have become responsible for managing their schools' budgets, but this did not happen until many years later. As opposed to the previous stage though, local authorities became more involved in education. By the end of this stage, parents remained largely uninvolved in decision-making in schools other than being formally represented in administrative boards.

b)   Know How Fund

In the period 1997/2003, the British Government through the Know How Fund (KHF) and the then Department for International Development (DFID) played an active role in the implementation of post-communist reforms in Romanian education. In total, DFID has contributed to the reform of the Romanian education system with approximately 5 million GBP (Faint, 2004). Importantly, for the first year (1997-1998), the British Government Know-How-Fund (KNF) offered a grant of approximately 800,000 GBP to support the Management and Finance component of the ERP (Component 2.2) – the component aiming at the decentralisation of the public education.

c)   EU

In the early 2000s, in preparation for accession to the EU, the Romanian Government through the line ministry, aimed at a decentralised system of education organised, administered and financed in line with the European requirements of quality assurance, free, equal and full access of all children to education. This signalled the third stage of educational reform:

> The decentralisation of educational services is based upon a system of shared responsibilities, a participatory decision-making process, and very intense vertical and lateral communication within the educational administration or with actors outside the administration. (OECD, 2000: 33)

In order to do that though, the Romanian Government first needed to demonstrate a commitment towards fulfilling the goals of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. This had already been ratified by the Romanian Government in 1997. Within this broader framework, one of the key political objectives of the Ministry of Education at the time was to decentralise education to comply with the Programmatic Adjustment Loan (PAL) agreement conditions (World Bank, 2002, Herczynski, Report I, 2005).

At the end of this stage of reform, well into a market economy and in spite of a very fructuous first post-communist decade in terms of educational projects, education was still a very hierarchical and nationally centralised system: "The overburdened and excessively centralised system is overwhelmed with operational decisions and cannot focus on strategic planning and national policy issues" (OECD, 2000:47). Educational policy was still nationally dictated, and so were entry exams into the teaching profession, and student examinations. Formerly school directors, heads have now become 'managers' of their schools, but only in name.

In the next few years, the projects initiated with international donor support were completed. This was immediately followed by two successive changes in government (1996-2000 and 2000-2004). These two governments did not show much interest in resuming the policies proposed by the previous

governments, but instead in initiating various other projects of their own. And so, the very few initial steps taken towards the decentralisation of education in the first decade after communism were largely forgotten.

Note that education is still highly politicised in Romania. Unfortunately, many of the heads and inspectors trained through the ERP and expected to gain responsibility through the 1995 Act left their posts because of the change in government in 2004. And so the expertise, skills and knowledge acquired in the late 1990s and early 2000s has remained largely unexploited by the field of education. Moreover, the funding of ERP also ended in 2002. All of this has meant that the process of decentralisation came to a halt.

2005 – 2010. The pilot of educational decentralisation

The third stage of the post-communist reformation of education began in the mid-2000s. After a new change in government in 2004 and given the close date to EU membership (December 2006), the decentralisation of the public services and indeed of education became one of the openly stated priorities of the Romanian Government and took central stage. The three fundamental features of the educational policies designed by the Ministry of Education and Research are: quality, equity and efficiency. These are directly correlated with the material state of play in schools, both in terms of infrastructure and in terms of inputs (MERYS, 2009).

Local public administration takes on further responsibilities

One important change was noted in legislation. In line with Law No. 354/2004, the local public administration has become the administrator of the schools' buildings as of 2005. This new Law had amended the 1995 Education Act (Law 84/1995) and acting together with Act No. 349/2004 modified the Statute of Teachers. It also established new directions in the financing of education, making this process one of shared responsibilities between the state and local public administration (also called local authorities). The state was still responsible for the vast majority of expenses,

covering 81.08% of the funds needed for national examinations, teacher training and student bursaries from the national budget. Local authorities contributed 16.36% from the locally collected VAT and were only responsible for the maintenance, equipment and capital investments (Robinson, 2006). And the schools themselves were to contribute the remainder or 2.48% for the first time in the history of Romanian education. Moreover, schools started looking for what was called extra-budgetary funds. This system has not worked effectively, however, due to the lack of appropriate financial legislation to support the education legislation.

The Strategy of Decentralisation of Pre-Higher Education was adopted through governmental memorandum in December 2005. It represents the framework for the decentralisation of education and sets the key priorities and timelines in the field of educational policy. The pilot programme for the decentralisation of education was initiated by the establishment of the legal and institutional framework and by the training in management of the educational personnel and that of the local public administration in Romania. Educational decentralisation was aimed at shifting decisions from the national to the local level of public authorities and then to schools. In order to achieve these goals, the educational offer needed to be consistent with the interests and needs of both the direct and indirect beneficiaries (MERY, 2007). According to the *Strategy*, the decentralisation of education should have been implemented nationally by 2010 (MERY, 2007:1) as follows:

- The administrative phase: 2005-2006
- The initial phase: 2007-2008
- The final phase: 2009-2010

The pilot programme is defined at Art. II from Law 349/2004 that represents an amendment to Law 128/1997 regarding the statute of teachers (Herczynski, 2005). Eight counties of forty two in total were selected to pilot the principles of financial delegation based on per capita formula funding implemented by the local authorities and schools through the enactment of

Government's Ordinances No. 1942/2004 and 2192/30th November 2004. In the period December 2005-2006, schools in these eight counties were meant to apply the new student-based formula, which was intended to replace the then current funding scheme based on historical costs (see section 3.6 for more details).

In addition to this, for the first time in the history of Romanian public education, heads in the pilot counties were to become responsible for the executive leadership of the school together with the new Administrative Board (Art. 2 from Government Ordinance 2192/30th November 2004). The school governance changes and school board (called administrative board) membership in pilot counties are described in Tables 3.3 and 3.4 below.

Table 3.3: School Governance in Pilot Counties

Bodies
The administrative board, heads and deputy heads lead schools. *The administrative board* consists of the head and an even number of members (see table below)
The headteacher provides the executive leadership of the school.
The teachers' board consisting of all teachers

Table 3.4: Administrative Board in Pilot Counties: Membership

Art. 4- Government Ordinance 2192/30th November 2004 In fulfilling their roles, the administrative boards work together with the teachers' board, the parents' committee and local public authorities.
The administrative board is responsible for the leadership of the school. In public education, the administrative board comprises between 9 and 15 members as follows: • The Head • 1 Deputy Head • 1 representative of the Local Council • 1 representative of the Mayor • 1-2 representatives of the parents • 1-5 teachers (elected by the Teachers' Board) • 1 representative of the local business community • 1 student in upper secondary schools as an observer • 1 representative of the teachers' union as an observer.

Note though, that despite this increase in real decision-making, headteachers and deputy heads in pilot counties were still hired by the County School Inspectorate based on national guidelines. For the first time in education, school directors - now called managers - sign an educational

contract valid for a period of four years between themselves and the General County School Inspector (Art. 6 from Government Ordinance 2192/2004). Annually, a committee appointed by the General County School Inspector evaluated the quality of the managerial act. In line with Article 8 from the same ordinance, heads were now accountable to more stakeholders than ever before:

- To local authorities with regard to finances (basic funding only)

- County School Inspectorate for educational management and their own appointment

- School Administrative Board for administrative issues

With added responsibilities came added pay for heads in pilot counties. Headteachers in the eight pilot counties were now paid based on the highest pay for a teacher (over 40 years in post and with all the upgrades). Up to 50% of this salary was added for leadership responsibilities and other benefits. While this happened in the eight pilot counties, heads in the 34 non-pilot counties continue to be paid normal teacher salaries according to their time in post and a small increase for taking on leadership responsibilities. In short, heads in non-pilot counties earned at least 50% less than their counterparts in pilot counties. In addition, heads in pilot counties no longer had to teach full time and, in fact, could only teach a maximum of 6 hours per week. I will talk more about all this in Chapters Six and Seven when I present and analyse the interview data.

The 2005 *Strategy of Decentralisation* has not achieved its goals due to the slow pace of the appropriate legislation and changes in financial legislation, lack of political will and support for the heads (i.e. financial management training): "…the new funding mechanisms have never been applied in practice" (Herczynski, 2005:49). The *Strategy* was evaluated mid-term and updated in March 2007. Following the joint decision between the Ministries of Education and Research and Interior, a second *Strategy* containing the calendar of the second pilot programme came out on 31st August 2006. The main decision taken in the second *Strategy* referred to limiting the pilot to 50

schools in 3 out of the initial 8 pilot-counties. Therefore, it became a pilot within the pilot.

The *Second Strategy* also proved to be unsuccessful, even though new financial legislation had been adopted from the first *Strategy* (i.e. the 2006 Law of Public Decentralisation). In his report, Herczynski (2007) criticises the limitations posed by the selection of only 50 schools to test the funding formula in Romania. Given that the formula would have then been used on a national scale, it was both insufficient and inadequate to test it on such a small scale:

> The pilot programme does not test a per capita funding formula (…) The sample consisting of 50 pilot schools is not representative in order to draw conclusions regarding the future of per a capita formula in Romania. (Herczynski, 2007:1)

Then, the Ministry of Education commissioned from the Institute of Educational Sciences a study aimed at analysing the impact of the pilots on education after the initial stage of implementation of decentralisation - *The Strategy for Improvement of the Implementation of Decentralised Competencies in Pre-university Education, 2008-2013* (Blendea et al., 2008). Due to the delay in the implementation of decentralisation, the team of researchers re-thought the aims of the study and instead focused on the communication between the various types of stakeholders in education. In addition, the authors Blendea and colleagues (2008) made recommendations with a view to further developments in financial delegation and other areas. For instance, they identified the following problems in the area of educational management:

- Lack of consistency and coherence in the design and implementation of policies and strategies
- Lack of transparency of decision-making and public responsibility
- The overlapping of managerial statuses and roles at central and local levels caused by the lack of coherence and administrative practices

- The lack of professionalization of managerial positions at all levels
- The preponderantly administrative management over proactive management, organisational culture, quality culture, (self)-assessment culture

(After Blendea et al., 2008:19)

These should have been all addressed in the new legislation. However, improvements in these areas failed to materialise. By the end of this third stage in 2010, the administration of education was now distributed between the local public administration and the county/local tiers of pre-university education (Blendea et al., 2008). While County School Inspectorates kept their educational function, the role of local authorities is in the area of administration of funds and investments, with no or very little role in public policy design in general and educational policy design and implementation in particular (Blendea et al., 2008:8).

2010-present

The latest legislative development was the 2011 Education Act. This came after more than two years of political struggle, debates and various amendments to its contents and names (MERY, 2009, 2010), different government administrations and ministers of education. This is the second education act (after Act 84/1995 that abrogated the acts from the communist era) adopted in Romania after the overthrow of communism.

The 2011 Education Act represents a commitment to the implementation of decentralisation in education in that it re-emphasises the fact that decentralisation is one of the principles governing the system of pre-higher education in Romania. In line with the provisions of Article 3, letter e) from the Law of National Education (Act no.1/2011), the main decisions are taken by the actors directly involved in the process. Act 1/2011 is an organic law complemented by approximately 100 detailed implementation guidelines. These started coming out in the Official Journal in October 2011.

In the previous Act (Law 84/1995), public education was alleged to be financed at a minimum 4% and in communist times the stated percentage was just 2.48%. In reality though, legislated percentages had varied significantly from what was achieved. In the period 2006-2009, overall expenditure did exceed 4%. Until that time, the intended 4% had not been reached. Even though the percentage of budget spent on education has increased since communist times, Romania is one of the few countries in the EU that spends less than 10% of its GDP on education (Eurydice, 2009).

According to the 2011 legislation, at least 6% of each year's GDP will be allocated for education from the state' and local authorities' budget (Art.8 of Law 1/2011). The new 6% figure in 2011 demonstrates a major attempt to prioritise education. Even though it is unlikely that the 6% figure will be achieved, it is designed to signal higher spending overall on the education sector. Unfortunately, and largely due to the economic crisis, in the last couple of years and especially in 2011, the achieved percentage of GDP has dropped back to just over 3% (see table 3.5 below).

Table 3.5: Education* expenditures by source 1996-2011

Year	Total as % of GDP	Source %					
		State budget	Local budget	External loans	Own revenues	Non-reimbursable external contribution	Special funds
1996	3.6	3.0	0.5	0.0	0.1		
1997	3.5	2.8	0.4	0.0	0.2		
1998	3.5	2.9	0.3	0.0	0.3		
1999	3.3	2.6	0.4	0.1	0.3		
2000	3.4	2.5	0.3	0.0	0.3		0.2
2001	3.6	0.8	2.2	0.1	0.4		
2002	3.6	0.8	2.2	0.1	0.4		
2003	3.5	0.8	2.2		0.4		
2004	3.3	0.8	2.2		0.3		
2005	3.5	0.8	2.2	0.1	0.3		
2006	4.3	1.3	2.6		0.3		
2007	4.7	1.6	2.6		0.4		
2008	4.5	1.5	2.5		0.4		
2009	4.1	1.1	2.7		0.4		
2010	3.5	0.8	2.2		0.4		
2011	3.3	0.8	1.9		0.5		

Source: Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports, October 2012

*These apply to the whole education sector and so include higher education. There is no data to show the expenditures for pre-higher education.

Interestingly, Table 3.5 above shows that as from 2001, the percentages allocated from the state and local budgets are reversed. This is a direct consequence of administrative decentralisation (Rondinelli et al., 1983), in other words, of local public administration becoming responsible for funding schools.

Some of the key components of the new Act refer to decentralisation and its implementation:

- The funding formula and source of the budget (% determined/managed/allocated by the state and the increased role of local public authorities in funding education
- The role of County School Inspectorates
- The new governance patterns in education
- The composition of the National Curriculum.

These areas are directly related to the technical questions about decentralisation in Romania listed at the end of Chapter Two:

- *What are headteachers' responsibilities in the decentralised public education system?*
- *What is the composition and role of the school board in staff (and head) selection and appointment?*
- *How does teacher tenure affect the hiring and firing of staff?*
- *How are salaries of staff determined and by whom?*
- *To whom are heads accountable and for what?*
- *How are markets affecting the competition for students?*
- *What are their relationships with other heads?*
- *How has decentralisation affected headteachers' family and professional commitments?*

- *How are schools funded, closed or amalgamated if unviable?*
- *What responsibility and flexibility do heads have for budgeting?*
- *How is curriculum determined and by whom?*

The next four sections of this chapter develop some of these components as reflected in the legislation in turn to better understand the process of decentralisation in Romania and contribute to the development of the conceptual framework. After the analysis of findings from the Romanian study (Chapters Six and Seven), I show the difference between the intentions of decentralisation in education (as resulted from policy acts and legislation) and the real outcomes of decentralisation up to present (as resulted from the fieldwork). The Romanian situation is presented in this thesis, as captured at a particular moment in time: the period 2010-2012.

3.6 Funding formula

The "money follows student" principle of financing is a significant development in the reform of education through financial delegation. Although mentioned for the first time in the 1995 Act, it was only regulated through Government Ordinance 138/1999. A series of Emergency Orders and Government Ordinances were passed in the 2000s to support this, though without any actual change happening. Then, at the end of the decade, in 2009, Government Ordinance no. 1618/2009 stipulated that formula funding would be replacing historical funding nationally as from January 2010. However, the implementation of this was only applied in 2012 (not 2010 as intended). Per capita funding is a mechanism based on a standard cost per student and was intended to be used in the pilot counties in the same 2005-2009 period.

According to Government Ordinance no. 1618/2009 and the 2011 Education Act, the current per capita formula uses lower secondary schools in urban areas as its baseline (see Appendix B). It further takes into account and adapts the coefficients according to:

• The level of schooling – adapted formula for primary or high school, for example,

• Curriculum profile: theoretical/classical, vocational, technical/vocational schools (e.g. more per student for technical/vocational courses even if not much more).

• Language of instruction (e.g. more per student for minority languages because of the need for more teachers),

• Geographical factors – changes to the formula to reflect rural/urban differences or to help schools out located in remote areas (e.g. schools in the Danube Delta receive more funding).

Once established on the criteria above, this funding formula is taken into account for the types of funding (a development of the previous Government Ordinance 2192/2004) available for all schools in pre-university education (Art. 101, Law 1/2011):

• *Basic funding (Art.102-104)* - is provided through the State budget (though administered through the local authorities) for all students enrolled in pre-university education (both public and private). This is calculated by multiplying the standard cost per student with coefficients specific to the type of school, level of schooling and number of students enrolled in that school. The state portion of the budget is intended to cover the salaries of personnel, periodical evaluation of students and general maintenance costs (utilities). This is approved annually by the Government and allocated to all villages, towns, and sectors (in Bucharest's case) through the General Directorate of Public Finances at the level of each county.

• *Complementary funding (Art.105)* – is that allocated from the local authorities' budgets through the collection of VAT. It covers capital, social and other expenses associated to schooling. Among these are: investments, capital refurbishments, grants for student accommodation and canteens, and

expenses related to the participation in European projects in the fields of education and training. Complementary funding is annually approved by the Government and allocated to all villages, towns, and sectors (in Bucharest's case) through the General Directorate of Public Finances at the level of each county. In line with the provisions of Art. 103, Local Councils and County Councils can contribute to both basic and complementary funding costs. Both basic and complementary funding is ensured through an agreement signed by the head of school and the mayor of the locality in which the school is located (Art. 106).

- *Supplementary funding (Art.107)* - takes the form of a fixed global amount and is provided again by the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports' budget but this time is allocated to individual schools through County School Inspectorates. It is meant to award schools that have obtained outstanding results in the field of educational inclusion or performance.

- Additionally, individual schools can generate their *own revenues from specific activities, donations, or other legal means (Art. 108).* The Administrative Board decides on how to spend these funds. These revenues complement the three types of funding described above. This is slightly different to the previous act whereby schools were *expected* to contribute to their budgets in that they are now *encouraged* to do so but this is now an optional component.

- *Art. 111* stipulates that the Ministry of Education is now responsible only for funding student competitions, the so-called 'Olympiads'. It does not do that directly, but through County School Inspectorates.

In this section I showed that funding has clearly been decentralised, at least to local authority level (see Appendix B for financial flows). However, schools are still accountable to the state, Ministry of Education and local public authorities for the various kinds of funding received.

3.7 County School Inspectorates

The second area that I shall focus on at the end of this Chapter is that of the role of County School Inspectorates throughout the period 1990 to 2012. They are of key relevance to the process of decentralisation and are also part of my fieldwork (see Chapter Five for research design).

The 1998 Law of Regional Development establishes there are 42 counties in Romania, including the municipality of Bucharest, acting like a county. Hence, there are 41 County School Inspectorates plus a further 6 corresponding to six administrative sectors in Bucharest. The number of schools allocated to a County School Inspectorate depends on location and school population and it ranges from one hundred to some five hundred schools. The structure of the County School Inspectorates is established through an Order of the Ministry of Education and they are financed by the state, through the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports (see Appendix B for the structure of the Ministry).

It is important to note that County School Inspectorates during communist times were subordinated both to the Ministry and to local authorities. Post communism, they have been subordinated not to the local or county level authorities, but only to the Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation. In this sense, it could be argued that post communism, their role has been more centralised than decentralised. County School Inspectorates represent the middle tier of authority in the system of education hierarchy and bridge communication between the national - Ministry of Education - and local - individual schools (both urban and rural). From communist times to present, County School Inspectorate's roles were in inspection, assessment, guidance and control. These have largely remained unaltered throughout time (see Appendix C for more details), from communism (Braham, 1978), to the transition phase to post-communism (Romanian Parliament, Law of

Education No. 84/1995), as well as to the present day (Law of National Education No. 1/2011).

Their role, however, with regard to the allocation of finances has changed. Following a number of Government Ordinances in 2005, local authorities became responsible for the allocation of funds at local level, to schools. This had been previously the remit of County School Inspectorates. This is a direct consequence of decentralisation, in that the funds allocation role is now subdivided between the ministry and local public administration. In this sense, the decentralisation process in Romania is a complex one, where I need to look at which specific responsibilities have been decentralised (from and to which level in the system), and which have not (e.g. finance versus curriculum etc.).

The selection of inspectors within the inspectorate is done at county-level, but in line with the Ministry of Education's regulations. In each county, there are subject inspectors (including an inspector for national minorities), management inspectors and general inspectors selected from the educational staff in the county. County school inspectors provide general operational supervision (Braham, 1978), "guidance and control" of the educational process in the county, periodic evaluation of teachers' performance in class, both as a means of quality assurance as well as for teachers' upgrade (that consists of classroom observation for 2-3 times throughout one to three academic years, depending on the "degree" teachers are eligible to apply for) and written examinations (held in Regional Centres within Universities upon completion of teaching observation). The support for teachers' professional development was largely ignored before mid-1990s, when a new inspection system was approved through Ministerial Order No. 5283 from 21st December 1998 and implemented starting with the school year 1998-1999.

In each Inspectorate there are subject, management and general inspectors. The main role of Subject Inspectors is in leading the inspection process for their respective subjects in the county as well as having been allocated a so-called "sector" (five to ten schools in the county) for more general issues, representing the person school heads and teachers contact in case they need assistance. Hence, both in their role as sector inspectors, and subject inspectors, they are the voice of the County School Inspectorate in the county.

Management Inspectors are a more recent category within the inspectorate (from 2005) mainly dealing with institutional development and assessment issues. They work closest with school heads. They also organise the examination for heads and are part of the selection committee for heads. Generally, there are one or two management inspectors in the county. Sometimes this figure also includes one of the deputy general inspectors.

General Inspectors coordinate the educational activities at county level. While subject and management inspectors are appointed by the General Inspectors, the General Inspector is appointed through a nominal Order of the Ministry of Education. Then, she/he proceeds to select and appoint the deputy General Inspector(s) (depending on the size of the county and number of schools). One of the deputy general inspectors coordinates the management and institutional components of the education system in the county. The other one's main attributions are in the area of curriculum and assessment (students and teachers).

According to Article 142 of the Law of Education No. 84/1995 County School Inspectorates were "*decentralised* bodies". County School Inspectorates' status is somewhat dual: "they are detached units of the central administration, but they also act as decentralised specialised bodies" (Roma Education Fund, 2007:25). To add to the ambiguity and ambivalence of their

role, in the new Education Act (Romanian Parliament, 2011) "*decentralised*" is being replaced with "*deconcentrated*" (Article 95, 2011 Education Act). This example show that even within Romanian legislation, terminology is being adapted or applied differently from one Act to another. This makes the definition of decentralisation in Romania challenging.

3.8 School Based Management

This is the third topic of particular focus for the understanding of decentralisation. Traditionally, headteachers' main role was to implement education policies on behalf of the state, local councils or County School Inspectorates. When the initial steps of decentralisation were made (1998-2002) their titles changed from school Directors to Managers, but their responsibilities were largely unchanged. From 2011, however, legislation is now in place that places far greater responsibility on these 'managers'. Local authorities have delegated certain financial powers to schools that could now manage their own budgets. This form of decentralisation can be described as shifting the power to the school unit in terms of managing human (firing and hiring teaching staff) and financial resources. This implies changes in school governance arrangements resulting in increased roles for heads and school boards (see Tables 3.6 and 3.7 below).

In this new endeavour, headteachers are helped by administrative boards. In line with the 2011 Education Act, the membership of the school board changes to a tri-partite system (teachers-parents-local authorities) in which the local community and parents represent two thirds. This is an important improvement to the role of civil society in education as compared to the previous Act and a complete novelty in Romania. Although still at an early stage, parents have come to play an important role in school life for the first time. However, the parents and local authorities' gain, is the teachers' loss. In recent years, both before and after the adoption of the 2011 Education Act, the composition of the Board was the apple of discord between various ministers of education, Parliament, teacher unions, etc. Previously

representing 50% of the board apart from the head in the 1995 Act and various versions of the new Act, teachers are now in the minority.

Table 3.6: Current School Governance Arrangements in Romania

Bodies and membership
The administrative board consisting of: one third teachers (including the head), one third representatives of the local community, one third parents; the representatives of the teacher unions attend all the meetings; their statute is that of permanent observer. In upper secondary education, one representative of the students also attends the meetings as an observer
The teachers' board with attributions in designing the school charter and sending it to the administrative board; proposes teachers' CPD
The headteacher ensures the executive leadership of the school; s/he draws the Institutional Development Project and Annual Operational plans.

Table 3.7: Current Administrative Board Membership

Art. 96- Act 1/2011
The administrative board, heads and deputy heads lead schools. In fulfilling their roles, the administrative boards work together with the teachers' board, the parents' committee and the local public authorities.
The administrative board ensures the leadership of the school. In public education, the administrative board is a leading body and consists of 7, 9 or 13 members as follows: •   In secondary schools with one group of students for each age group, the administrative board comprises of 7 members: 3 teachers including the head; 2 representatives of the parents; 1 representative of the mayor; 1 representative of the local council. The provisions of this article are equally applied to primary and pre-primary education.   •   If the administrative board comprises 9 members, 4 of these are teachers, 1 representative of the mayor, and 2 representatives of the local council and 2 representatives of the parents. The head and the deputy are members of the board as part of the teachers' quota in the school.   •   If the administrative board comprises 13 members, 6 of these are teachers, 1 representative of the mayor; 3 representatives of the local council and 3 representatives of the parents. The head and the deputy are members of the board as part of the teachers' quota in the school.   Generally, a student is attending the meetings of the administrative board. S/he is an observer.

The provisions of the 2011 Act regarding the Administrative Board and extended role of heads and governors have been applied as from the 2011-2012 school year. In the light of these developments, heads have also experienced an important role change. They now ensure the executive leadership of the school (according to Art. 97 in the 2011 Act) and manage school budgets. Together with the board, heads are responsible for the selection of both teaching and non-teaching personnel, even though they are not the Presidents of the school board any more, as used to be the case before the 2011 Act. All this has notable effects on headteachers.

According to the legislation in use, all heads are supported by between one and three deputies (depending on the number of students in school) and a number of subject leaders. In spite of delegating tasks on a daily basis,

Romanian heads tend to concentrate power at the very top level. Apart from being a cultural post-communist issue, this is also the case because headteachers and administrative boards are formally accountable for the running of the school. I shall focus on headteachers' professional roles later in Chapters Four - the international perspective, and Six and Seven - the Romanian case.

Appointment of Headteachers

The legal framework for the appointment of headteachers and deputy heads is represented by the 2011 Education Act (Art. 246, paragraph 3, Art. 257, paragraph 1) and the secondary legislation. One methodology that was long awaited was the one detailing heads' appointment. Before the adoption of the 2011 Act and indeed at the time of the first interviews (2010), the headteacher selection and appointment process was centralised. According to national legislation and guidelines established at the time by the Ministry of Education, County School Inspectorates were responsible for organising the open competition for heads and deputy heads. This was a two-stage selection process. In the first stage, prospective eligible candidates applied for a position in headship and took a written examination. In the application file, they included proof of experience, qualifications and a four-year management plan. The candidates for headship had to score at least 70% in order to proceed to the interview stage. In the second stage, the candidates for headship went to the County School Inspectorate for an interview. The aim of the interview was to establish whether the prospective heads had thorough knowledge of legislation in education as well as having a good medium-term institutional development plan for the school.

Nowadays, heads are meant to be appointed by the School Administrative Board following national guidelines (Art. 257 paragraph 2/2011 Education Act). The Administrative Body also holds responsibility for leadership development and training. It is now the case that the new heads should be

Members of the National Body of Experts in Educational Management (see Table 3.8 below). Interestingly, the National Body of Experts in Educational Management was founded after the adoption of the 2011 Act. This is why, before this body and all the guidelines were set up, the selection of heads continued to be done by County School Inspectorates (as per the previous Act) despite legislation saying Administrative Boards would do so.

Table 3.8: Requirements for the head position

Extract from the (draft) Methodology for the appointment of heads and deputy heads
Art. 2 Candidates for the position of head and deputy head shall cumulatively fulfil the following conditions: Paragraph 1 a)   Be university graduates b)   Be members of the National Body of Experts* in Educational Management in line with Art. 246, paragraph (3) and Art. 257, paragraph (1) from the 2011 Education Act; c)   Hold tenure in the respective school and teach for at least five years d)   Show professional, moral and managerial skills, reflected in the assessment of their teaching or managerial activity as "Very Good"** for three consecutive years. Added to that, the candidates should have not been disciplinarily sanctioned in the current academic year e)   Have not been condemned for criminal offences f)   Be medically fit g)   Have not been involved in Political Police activities h)   At the time of application, are at least four years younger than the retirement age
Paragraph 2 If the school has a technical-vocational profile, it is recommended that one of the heads and deputies be specialist in the area (engineer, economist, doctor). It is also advisable, that in other vocational and special schools, the head or one of the deputies to be specialised in that area.
Paragraph 3 In schools with over 20 groups of students, it is recommended that one of the head and deputies be a pre-primary or primary school teacher.
Paragraph 4 In schools in which there are student groups that study in a different mother tongue than Romanian, either the head or the deputy/one of the deputies has to be a teacher from that respective minority.

Moreover, despite the selection criteria legislated, as mentioned earlier, headteachers are removed politically if the government or coalition in power changes. This raises issues about accountability at the macro and meso levels. In addition, these are clear examples of discrepancies between what is legislated and how it is implemented, thus contributing directly to the *legislated versus implemented* dimension of the Conceptual Framework.

Staff Remuneration

When compared to their international counterparts, heads' salaries in Romania are very low as are those of teachers. The minimum teacher salary in Romania is approximately £130 per month and the average teacher salary in Romania in 2012 is approximately £300 per month. The highest teacher salary is around £500 whilst the average head in 2012 earned around £700 per month. According to the 2011 Education Act, there is a formula which prescribes how much heads and teachers are paid, i.e. national payscales. One of the main issues associated with school based management in liberal democracies refers to decision-making at school level in relation to human resources and remuneration:

> We define a self-managing school as one for which there has been significant and consistent decentralisation to the school level of authority to make decisions related to the allocation of resources. This decentralisation is administrative rather than political, with decisions at the school level being made within a framework of local, state or national policies and guidelines. The school remains accountable to a central authority for the manner in which resources are allocated. (Caldwell and Spinks, 1988:5)

Where there has been a shift from the national/regional/local level to schools for determining remuneration in some other countries (see examples in Chapter Two, section 4), in Romania, these decisions continue to be made at the national macro level despite the decentralisation of finances.

Before the financial crisis hit, it was intended for Romanian school boards in the newly decentralised system to have a small amount of flexibility to award teachers and heads salary bonuses (on top of the national payscales). However, the dire state of the economy meant that the public sector was hard hit by pay cuts. Across the board, the pay of all public sector workers

was cut by around 40% and the flexible bonus structures were not introduced. Consequently, not only did headteachers' salaries not increase as a result of school based management, but they decreased due to public sector cuts.

Teacher tenure

In Romania, it is very common for teachers to have tenure, i.e. a permanent position. In communism and post-communism pre-decentralisation, teachers could apply for tenure provided that they fulfil the following conditions: be qualified teachers in that respective subject, and score at least 70% at the national examination for teacher tenure. Teachers were then allocated to schools in decreasing order of their grade to the national tenure examination, based on the number of positions available in each county for each subject. The scarcity of posts for tenure (available for at least four years) meant that in practice, teachers not getting higher grades than 70% would not get tenure. They would then apply to be supply teachers and go to the national examination for teachers in the forthcoming years to better their mark.

The decentralisation of education meant that issues were raised with regards to teacher tenure. The Ministry of Education was asked what will happen to teacher tenure both with regard to teachers that had tenure pre-decentralisation as well as how this could be obtained in decentralisation. As of the time of writing the situation is still unclear, not least because, although in theory the school boards are responsible for hiring teachers, in practice this has not yet happened. The issue of tenure is still a live one. It is important in the context of decentralisation because it affects what powers headteachers or school boards really have with regard to hiring and firing their own staff. For more details on the tenure process, see Appendix C.

Assessment of students and allocation method to schools

In Romania it has traditionally been the case that students entered national examinations at the end of each education cycle. The results of these exams and their preferences determined what school they could later attend. This situation has not yet changed under decentralisation in Romania. In this sense, the idea of market forces and competition only work within the limits of the grading/exam system. For example, a fourteen year old student aiming to move to a new high school would take exams. He would also list the high schools in the county in order of his preference. Based on his exam grades, he might be allocated to his first choice or maybe, if his performance were weaker, to his tenth choice. In this sense, parents and students under decentralisation are able to list their preferences but will not necessarily have a free or real choice between schools.

I will get back to the implementation issues in Chapters Six and Seven where I present and analyse the findings. The situation is complex in Romania in that both forms of decentralisation *and* centralisation are occurring at the same time, depending on which components of education are being examined.

3.9 Curriculum

The final component of note with regards to decentralisation in Romania is that of the curriculum. Traditionally (from communist times to 2011), there was a national curriculum in place decided upon nationally. The curriculum was restructured immediately after the fall of communism in order to remove the material referring to communist ideology. A new National Curriculum was introduced in 1998 as part of the comprehensive set of reforms that also introduced decentralisation. The 1998 curriculum was 85% decided nationally and 15% decided at the school level. The rhetoric around the 15%

was that schools would provide students with extra tuition in the subjects that students chose. In practice, the curriculum at the school's discretion (CDS in Romanian) was decided on more pragmatic reasons by the schools, such as for example, if one of the teachers of Mathematics could not fill his teaching quota, then students in one year group would have an extra class of Maths per week.

As of 2012, new changes in curriculum were introduced as a result of decentralisation and the adoption of the new Act. In upper-secondary education (post-16), the new proportions are as follows: 60% core-curriculum (decided nationally); 20% differentiated curriculum (decided by the teachers at the school level, depending on the students' needs and attainment levels); 20% local curriculum (decided following consultations with the local stakeholders and the region's economic development goals).

3.10 Summary and contribution to the understanding of decentralisation

In this chapter I have presented the general context of the study, and by addressing the ideational questions, I have illuminated how and why Romania decided to adopt decentralisation in public education. Earlier, I stated that the historical differences between states in the West and those in Eastern Europe show different patterns in the origins, implementation and enactment of the policy of decentralisation (Karstanje, 1999). I showed in this Chapter how decentralisation is taking shape in Romanian public education and emphasised the distinctiveness of the Romanian case. When relating the Romanian case to the international body of research and also the vignettes in Chapter Two, there are many aspects of decentralisation which are shared with other countries but also many which are peculiar to the Romanian case, including:

- In the majority of the countries presented, decentralisation was a top-down decision. Exceptions: Chicago (Illinois, USA) and New Zealand. In Romania, the decision to decentralise education has been a political one taken at top Government level but was prompted by supranational bodies, such as the EU (part of the accession requirements included decentralisation) and the World Bank (as part of the consultancy for which loans were granted).

- As seen in Table 2.2 of Chapter Two, decentralisation was initiated in different countries at different times. It ranged from the late 1980s (England, New Zealand) to early 1990s (Illinois, Victoria) and late 1990s (Italy and Romania). A very rapid pace from policy and reform design to implementation of reforms was noted in most of the cases presented, but especially in New Zealand, England and Wales, and the state of Victoria (Australia). This was not the case of Romania, where the decentralisation of education is not yet fully implemented, fifteen years after the initiation of the first steps. There are many possible reasons for this, including politicisation of education, political fluidity/volatility, the economic crisis and the socio/political environment.

- Each country/region has started from very different socio-economic and political conditions and different degrees of existing educational centralisation. Romania undoubtedly had more to achieve than other countries because of its starting point (historical high levels of centralisation, concurrent policies of privatisation, devolution, deregulation in other areas, communist mentality etc.).

- As mentioned above, the degree of decentralisation achieved varies, depending upon the components examined. One of the common features of decentralisation in education in all of the countries presented (except for Italy) is that the Governments implemented a dual decentralisation and centralisation policy: while devolving financial resources, for example, they centralised curriculum and assessment. There is a National Curriculum in

place in the countries reviewed. While in some countries, it only provides minimum guidance (New Zealand), in others, it is much more structured (State of Victoria, Chicago). In many respects this is true also of Romania, although it is not as simple as stating that all of curriculum is centralised and all of funding is not. For example, nowadays, 20% of the curriculum is decided upon at school level and 20% and local authority level. With regards to funding, the position is even more complex.

I have also examined the technical implementation issues by presenting how and why decentralisation has been applied, with specific focus on the field of Romanian education and the legislation associated with educational decentralisation. A summary of the components of education that are centralised/decentralised is given in Table 3.9 below.

Table 3.9: The Romanian case based on legislation

Components	Romania
Budgets	There were 2 strands in the development of school finance: financial delegation to schools and the allocation method. Schools now manage their budgets and more than 60% of their budget is allocated from local authority funds,
Staff salaries	National pay scales with local authorities funding
Formula funding	Per capita funding
Governing bodies	Administrative Board (see above for composition)
Hiring and firing of teachers and by whom	The Administrative Board is responsible with hiring and firing of teachers (based on national legislation and guidelines).
Appointment of Heads	The Administrative Board is also responsible for the appointment of heads
School accountability	To multiple stakeholders depending on the type of responsibility: For finance- local authorities For education- County School Inspectorate
Curriculum	National curriculum (60%), part of which is now decided at local (20%) and part at school level (20%).
Inspection	National inspection framework implemented by County School Inspectorates
Assessment and evaluation of students	National standards and National student examinations implemented by County School Inspectorates

Note that this table illustrates the legislative framework of decentralisation, not necessarily the reality on the ground. Later Chapters will investigate any

differences between the two. In the next section of this Chapter I develop further my conceptual framework first introduced in Chapter Two, as it applies to Romania, paying attention to some of the comparisons with the vignettes above.

3.11 Contribution to the Conceptual Framework

The analysis of Romanian policy documents has enabled me to continue developing the conceptual framework set up in Chapter Two to address the strategic and implementation questions raised. This framework is based on the components, levels and dimensions of decentralisation.

Table 3.10: The relationship between research questions and the development of the Conceptual Framework

RQs	Conceptual framework	Strategic questions about the idea of decentralisation: what, how, why, in whose interests	Tactical questions derived from strategic questions. They explore in detail the realities of decentralisation in its implementation
What is decentralisatio n in the context of state restructuring and the provision of public education in Romania?	COMPONENTS: what exactly is decentralised? LEVELS: at what level? RELEVANT DIMENSIONS: what is influencing the adoption or implementation of decentralisation? Here: time/stage of transition and legislated vs implemented;	In what ways is the public education system centralised in Romania? What form is decentralisation taking in Romania? What is the background to change?	How are schools funded, closed or amalgamated if unviable in Romania? What is the composition and role of the school board in staff (and head) selection and appointment? How does teacher tenure affect the hiring and firing of staff? How are salaries of staff and headteachers determined and by whom? How is curriculum determined and by whom?
Why and how is decentralisatio n taking place in public education in Romania?	COMPONENTS & LEVELS: What is decentralisation is similar to how decentralisation is taking place. Requires an understanding of the components that have been/are being decentralised. RELEVANT DIMENSIONS: Drivers of policy; legislated vs implemented; time/ stage of transition;	Why is the education system being decentralised? What was the starting point for educational change? What progress has been made?	
What are the implications of decentralisatio n for headteachers in Romania?	RELEVANT DIMENSIONS: Perceptions of stakeholders; legislated vs implemented	How are headteachers responsibilities changing as a result of decentralisation?	What are headteachers responsibilities in the decentralised system? To whom are heads accountable for and for what? How has decentralisation affected headteachers' family and professional

			commitments? How are markets affecting the competition for students? What are their relationships with other heads? What responsibility and flexibility do heads have for budgeting?

In section 3.3 of this Chapter, I have since shown how the transition in Romania has evolved over time by using Birzea's (1994) three-transition model (political, economic and cultural). Birzea's (1994) model is particularly important in understanding the Romanian case of transition and decentralisation of education. Beginning with the economic transition phase, the decentralisation of education has still not been completed into the cultural transition phase over two decades later. The Romanian experience of *political* and *economic* transition was more challenging than in other former communist countries in East-Central Europe such as Hungary and Poland (Cosea, 1994, Campbell, 1996). The explanation for this is the former tyrannical and oppressive communist regime on the one hand and the neo-communist orientation of the governments in the period 1990-1996 on the other:

> It was only in Romania where a totalitarian, unipersonal, despotic and absurd communist regime existed…based on the principle of excessive centralism…the violent revolution meant… the disintegration in a few days only …of the hierarchical structures and of the balance of values which…led to a total political and social void. This is why Romania started to move to transition with a considerable lag, over two years being necessary for the settling and stabilizing of society and economy within a structure able to be reformed. (Cosea, 1994)

In the model in Chapter Two, the dimension of *time* was introduced. Section 3.3 contributes to that dimension by adding the type or stage of transition. Stage of transition depends on time and so, this is clearly a key factor in understanding why and how decentralisation has been implemented in Romania and the obstacles it has faced. At another level, Birzea's (1994) conceptualisation of transition is useful and relates well to the notion of policy scholarship (see Chapters One and Five) in that it is necessary to take into account historical, socio-economic and cultural factors when analysing

policy. Therefore, from now on in the thesis the dimension of time is called *stage of transition/time*.

The model introduced in Chapter Two is useful to set out which components of decision-making are carried out at what level in the administration. In this chapter, I used the components of decentralisation as identified previously and looked at them through the lenses of Romanian legislation and policy. Table 3.10 below gives an overview of how decision-making is split between schools, local authorities and national bodies in Romania according to legislation. In Chapter Seven I will have another look at it in light of the implementation of decentralisation (as there are some key differences between policy, legislation and implementation).

Table 3.11: Levels and components of decentralisation in Romania

Components	What is done at school level?	What is run by local authorities?	What is national?
Budget allocation	School managed, but with clear specifications over the destination of funds (what prescriptions etc are there? e.g. tradeoffs between salaries and other categories etc.?) Possibility to generate revenues and accept donations	Complementary funding	Basic funding
Staff salaries	N/A	Funding for staff salaries comes from the state budget via local authorities	National pay scales
Funding formula	N/A	N/A	Established nationally based on school and local government data
Hiring/Firing of staff	School managed only by HTs via the administrative boards, but have to be done in line with national requirements	N/A	Employment Law and regulations provided nationally National pay grades Tenure rules
Curriculum	20%	20%	60%
Inspection	N/A	N/A	National inspection system run at local level by School Inspectorates
Testing	Organised in schools	N/A	National exams

This table shows that in the context of a public administration apparatus subjected to politicisation, educational governance in Romania is moving from a completely hierarchical to a somewhat decentralised system. When analysing the Romanian literature and legislation I needed to update the model to reflect two more components of decentralisation that make a

difference to the powers of decision making at the various levels of the education system: student/ teacher assessment and teacher tenure (see Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1 – Levels and Components of Decentralisation

Components of Decentralisation

Political	Administrative	Fiscal

Budget allocation
Heads appointment
Curriculum
Assessment of teachers and students

Hiring & Firing of staff
Inspection
Testing
Teacher tenure

Funding formula
Staff salaries

Levels of Decentralisation

Central	Local	School
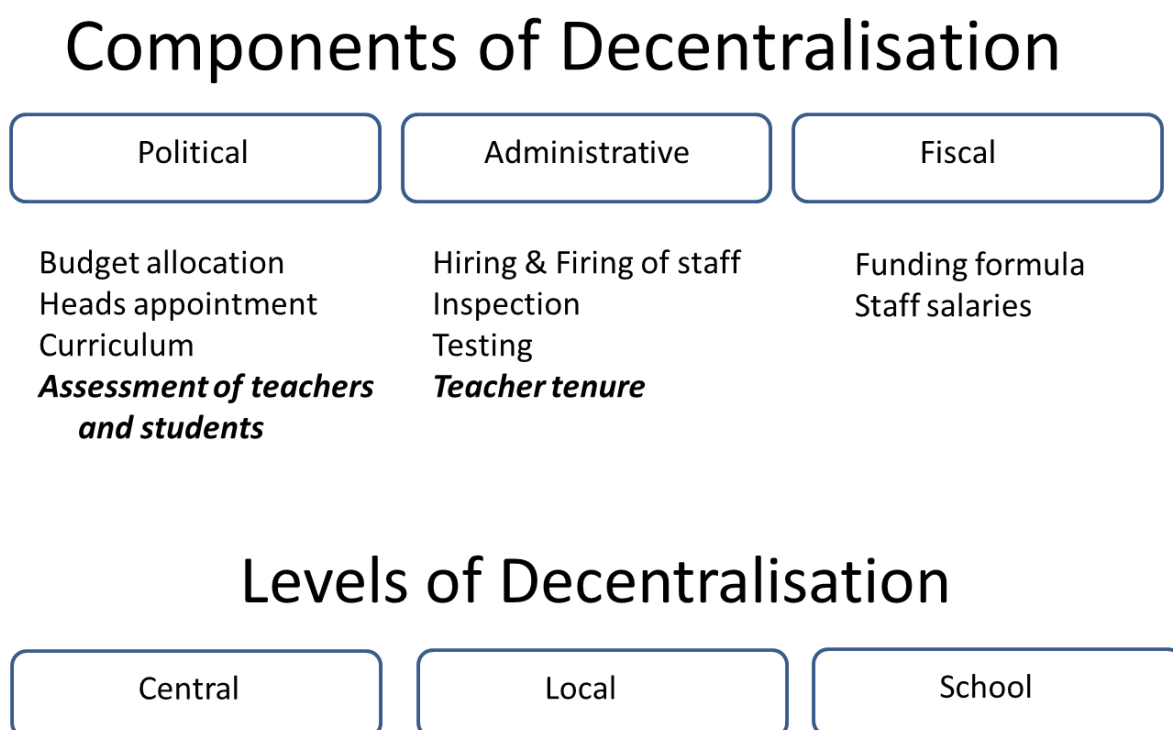
The model from Chapter Two introduced two dimensions of decentralisation: time and legislated versus implemented. By giving details on which components have been legislated and why, I hinted at some of the discrepancies between *legislated and implemented (i.e. the appointment of headteachers)*. In this respect, I use the term 'politicised decentralisation' in Romania. The politicisation of the Romanian system (e.g. frequent changes of government and Ministers of education plus political appointments at County School Inspectorate level and schools) mean that to some extent, decentralised decision-making continues to have a centralised character. External influences such as the EU and World Bank also comprise a politicisation of decentralisation but at a different level.

Finally, in this chapter I looked at why and how decentralisation was implemented in Romanian education. A new dimension is added to the conceptual framework called *drivers for implementation* which covers the reasons for decentralising. In Romania's case I have shown that this was largely as a result of external influences.

Figure 3.2: Dimensions of Decentralisation

Dimensions of Decentralisation

Stage of transition / time	Legislated vs Implemented	*Drivers of policy*
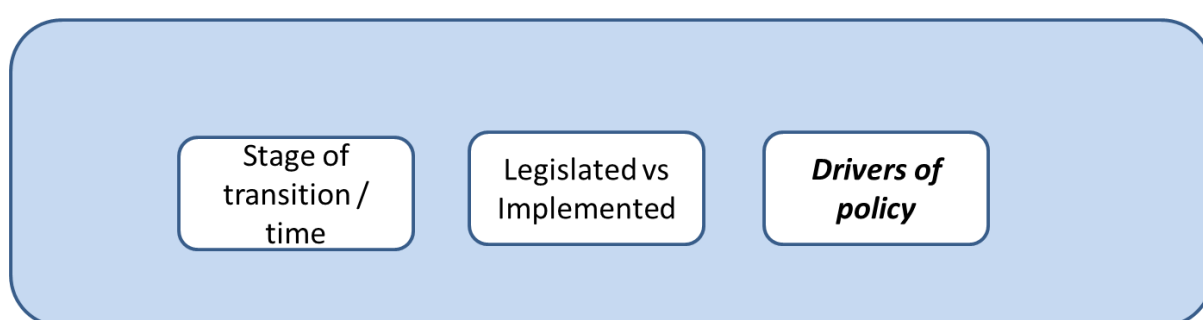
Romania is still implementing decentralisation in education fourteen years after the first steps were undertaken. There is no doubt that decentralisation in Romania, though incomplete, has given schools some autonomy regarding the management of finance and human resources, i.e. financial management, hiring and firing teaching staff, etc - although my research later shows that this has often been more theoretical than practical.

The shift in power from central to local level has brought important changes into the lives of professionals. Consequently, the policy of decentralisation needs to be examined more deeply and in relation to its effects on their roles (see Chapter Six for the Romanian case).

In the next chapter, I will be looking at the professional role changes experienced by headteachers in various countries that have implemented decentralisation in education around the world. In doing so, I will address in

more detail implementation and technical issues used in the description of the Romanian legislation above. This will develop the dimension of real versus perceived change in my model. The aim is to then have a basis for comparison when interrogating the data from the Romanian study in Chapters Six and Seven.

CHAPTER FOUR

HEADTEACHERS IN DECENTRALISED EDUCATION SYSTEMS

4.1 Introduction

The literature reviewed in the previous two chapters enabled me to build a conceptual framework that will later be used to explore the findings from the empirical study in Romania. After reviewing the literature on decentralisation in Chapter Two, I raised two sets of questions (strategic and tactical) that illuminated the Romanian case based on legislation in Chapter Three. At the end of Chapter Three I represented my emerging conceptual framework after modifying the time dimension in stage of transition/time (see Birzea, 1994) and adding the data from the Romanian legislation regarding the areas of decision-making (now called components of decentralisation). The conceptual framework consists of components, levels and dimensions of decentralisation.

In this Chapter, in preparation for addressing research question 3: *What are the implications of decentralisation for headteachers in Romania*, I am looking at headteachers experiences in decentralised education systems. The analysis provided in this chapter enables me to refine the conceptual framework set out in previous chapters from a head's perspective. I refine and add to the components of decentralisation set up in previous chapters and add a new dimension to reflect the aim of this chapter (i.e. implications for headteachers).

I now present the international research, which has examined how headteachers' work has been reconceptualised, following a process of decentralisation in education. I draw on research evidence from a series of

countries where decentralisation has been implemented in the past three decades. In doing so, I aim to understand headteachers' professional issues in decentralised education systems before examining the findings from the Romanian study in Chapters Six and Seven. Of interest is how Romanian heads (coming from a communist/totalitarian background) are confronted with the same issues when implementing decentralisation that their international counterparts (coming from a liberal democracy) encountered.

Besides contributing to the conceptual framework, this will form the basis for presenting the findings from my study in Romania in Chapters Six and Seven. As there is a scarcity of research into headteachers in Romania, one of the aims of this research is to contribute to the emerging empirical base in Romania. Whenever possible, I will draw on relevant studies on Romania and other Central Eastern European Countries (CEECs). I mainly refer to studies from the UK context, especially the English one (Evetts, 1990, 1994, Fidler et al., 1997, Pascal and Ribbins, 1998, Whitty et al., 1998, Whitty, 2002, Coleman, 2002, 2005) because, apart from being one of the first systems in the world introducing decentralisation, this is also one of the most dynamic contexts of education reform and a good source of empirical studies.

I also provide material on heads in Australia (state of Victoria - Caldwell and Spinks, 1988, 1992, Caldwell, 1998, Abu-Duhou, 1999, Blackmore, 1996, 1999), New Zealand (Lauder and Wylie, 1990, Wylie, 1994, 2008, Jacobs, 2000), the USA (Hess, 1990, Wohlstetter, 2000, Lortie, 2009) and Italy (Barzano, 2007, Grimaldi and Serpieri, 2010). Vignettes of these in relation to specific decentralisation issues were briefly discussed in Chapter Two. This Chapter looks at these contexts from a headteacher's perspective. In line with policy scholarship, the specific background factors in which policy design and implementation occur contribute to policy enactment. The effects of these factors are best witnessed by looking at headteachers' experience of the decentralisation process. This will

> …have a role in illuminating the connection between the microcontext of lived experience and the macropolitical, ideological and structural dimensions in the construction of headteacher's practice and identity (Tomlinson, Gunter and Smith, 1999: xi).

I present the research evidence thematically, supported by quotes from authors and heads in different countries. The themes that lie at the centre of discussion describe and detail what headteachers do in decentralised education systems. They all relate to research question 3 and the tactical questions reflected in the *components, levels and dimensions* of the Conceptual Framework. The five themes are:

- New professional responsibilities (4.2)
- Juggling multiple activities and accountability systems (4.3)
- Professional identity (4.4)
- Budgets (4.5)
- Market forces and competition (4.6)

The correlation between themes and tactical questions is shown in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: The relationship between themes and tactical questions

Theme and section in the Chapter	Tactical Question(s) Addressed
New professional responsibilities 4.2	*What are headteachers' responsibilities in the decentralised public education systems?* *What is the composition and role of the school boards in staff and head selection and why?*
Juggling multiple activities and accountability systems 4.3	*To whom are heads accountable and for what?*
Professional identity 4.4	*How has decentralisation affected heads' professional and family commitments?*
Budgets 4.4	*How are schools funded, closed or amalgamated if unviable?* *What responsibility and flexibility do heads have for budgeting?*
Market forces and competition 4.5	*How are markets affecting the competition for students? What are their relationships with other heads?*

I now address each of these themes in a distinct section. Then, I will discuss the implications of these themes to the understanding of decentralisation and their contribution to the conceptual framework.

4.2 New professional responsibilities

In describing the international experience of headteachers following decentralisation the first problem is that the types and levels of decision-making decentralised from the national to the local or school level varies. For example, in some countries, full decentralisation of budgets and the curriculum is in play, whilst in others headteachers have more responsibility, yet are still restricted in what decisions they are able to take. Moreover, in some schools in some countries, which have implemented decentralisation, headteachers have been supported by the appointment of new Business Managers to take on some of the new financial responsibilities. Thus the roles of headteachers will vary by school and by country. It is still possible, however, to look at the common themes which arise under decentralisation.

The first of these is the types of definition of headteachers' roles. In his definition of SBM, Brown (1990) identifies six main features, three of which refer to heads and their new roles:

• Autonomy, flexibility and responsiveness;

• *Planning by the principal and school community;*

• *Adoption of new roles by the principal;*

• A participatory school environment;

• Collaboration and collegiality among staff; and

• *A greater sense of personal efficacy for principals and teachers*

(Abu-Duhou, 1999:93, my emphasis)

In the past three decades, various names have been used for headteachers (Green, 2000): heads, headteachers, principals, "Chief Executives", "Leading Professionals" (Hughes, 1972). These replace the traditional terms 'headmaster'/'headmistress' used in the past. To some extent the choice of title can be historical or local nomenclature (many countries have used the word 'principal' rather than 'headteacher' in the past). But it can also be a conscious decision to reflect the new responsibilities they acquire (chief executive, director, leading professional etc.).

Whatever the title is, more important is the nature of the role or roles themselves. Law and Glover use a variety of new role descriptions including: Strategist, Manager, Arbitrator, Executive Officer, Diplomat, Mentor, Educator, Advisor, Ambassador and Advocate (Law and Glover, 2000:6). It was Hughes (1972) who coined for the first time the terms "leading professional" and "chief executive" and in 1985 he set out the important attributes of the new heads (see Table 4.2 below).

Table 4.2: Leading Professional and Chief Executive

Leading professional sub-role	Chief executive sub-role
Internal 1. professional guidance of staff 2. personal teaching 3. counselling of pupils and parents, etc	*Internal* Allocative and co-ordinating functions within the school
External 1. acting as spokesperson for the school in educational matters 2. involvement in external professional activities (the cosmopolitan role)	*External* Relationships with the governing body, and with the LEA as employing authority

Source: Hughes, 1985, p.279

As *leading professionals*, headteachers continued their role pre-decentralisation. They were managing teaching, pedagogy, curriculum and pastoral care as well as representing the school in the community and in its relationship with other authorities in educational matters.

As *chief executives*, they adopted a more managerial stance for the first time. And this was new. In this role, they were preoccupied with matters such as marketing, budgets, entrepreneurialism, parents (now seen as consumers of education), quality, finance, management, administration, performance, etc. While in England Gewirtz (2002) conceptualises this new role of the head as the new type of bureaucrat and manager, now directly accountable "to their managing boards, the local school councils" (Whitty, 2002:55), Hess (1990) evaluates the impact of the 1988 Chicago School Reform Act in the United States and also describes the changes experienced by school principals. Their professional responsibilities are much more similar to that of the chief executive, more oriented towards accountability to the local community.

An attempt to make a clear demarcation between the two sub-roles is rather controversial. A study done by Hughes (1972, also see Hughes, 1985) with 72 secondary heads, teaching staff and governors suggests that most of the heads incorporate traits found in the requirements of both sub-roles: "the notional separation into distinct sub-roles proves to be no more than a convenient heuristic device" (Hughes 1985:278). Hughes (1985) combines the two and states "the *chief executive* of a professionally staffed organisation may also be considered to be its *leading professional* (Hughes, 1985:276, emphasis in original, considering that they are complementary to one another).

Others (Morgan, Hall and Mackay, 1983) call for a clear distinction between the two roles, with two different people fulfilling them as "to combine the two roles in one person is an invitation to stress" (Handy, 1984:23). Ouston (1984:54) is in favour of the two sub-roles as mutually exclusive and argues that "the head- as- professional can be left to the educational theorists, whereas the head as executive is a management issue".

In practice, many schools (especially large secondary schools) in post-1988 England have hired a Business Manager, Bursar or Financial Manager to deal with finances only. Meanwhile, the head would still deal mainly with instructional issues. In England, heads represent the pivotal figure in a school and indeed work in close collaboration with the governing body, but also with parents, students, representatives of the local community and have a higher degree of liberty in decision-making. The novelty resided in the fact that the business manager and headteacher needed to work side by side as part of the Senior Leadership Team and take decisions together. In primary and smaller secondary schools, however, in the absence of a Business Manager, the head tends to play a dual role. The seven heads in Ribbins and Marland's (2004) sample note that heads in the UK secondary schools are not the "administrators" to be found in North America (Ribbins and Marland, 2004). These US 'administrators' are not school based Business Managers but rather district level appointees who handle part of the Chief Executive/administrative responsibilities.

Back in the UK, Clarke and Newman (1997) capture the essential differences between the two sub-roles as follows:

> By contrast with the [leading] professional, the manager [read 'Chief Executive'] is customer focused and is driven by the search for efficiency rather than abstract 'professional standards'. Compared to the bureaucrat, the manager is flexible and outward looking. Unlike the politician, the manager inhabits 'the real world' of 'good business practices' not the realms of doctrinaire ideology… (Clarke and Newman, 1997:6)

Gunter and Rayner (2007) assert that, actually, the new thrust of management in England is not new at all. It reinforces hierarchies back through to the Victorian "head-master tradition" (Grace, 1995). Ball (2008) also adopts a more critical stance and thinks the focus should be on the active role played by the heads in the delivery of reforms, and less on the name used for their performance. Therefore, the emphasis is on the dual nature of their role: that of the Chief Executive/manager and deliverer of

national policy, or implementer of reforms at school-level "school reform has cast headteachers as new kinds of hybrid actors (Ball, 2008:138)." Bottery (2007b) argues that in the twenty-first century the headteacher extended its far-reaching influence at the same time as re-inventing itself. In England for instance, the post-1988 ERA head has acquired a more pivotal role than ever:

> …heads are the key to a school's success. All schools need a leader who creates a sense of purpose and direction, sets high expectations of staff and pupils, focuses on improving teaching and learning, monitors performance and motivates staff to give of their best. The best heads are as good at leadership as the best leaders in any other sector, including business, the challenge is to create new rewards, training and support to attract, retain and develop many more heads of this calibre (DES, 1988:22).

> School headship, it may be concluded, involves great responsibility, anxiety and frustration and requires stamina, versatility and mental agility. It also provides unusual but satisfying opportunities to contribute to the quality of teaching and learning in schools. (Hughes, Ribbins and Thomas, 1985:322)

Internationally, a variety of new head roles emerged following the implementation of decentralisation. Evetts (1994) noted that in England, for example, that more emphasis was needed on managerial tasks while keeping everybody engaged in the emerging corporate management (p.119):

> In terms of day-to-day work activities, [headteachers'] need to forward plan, to keep up with the mountains of paperwork (forms, reports and proposals), and the need to match up calendar, financial and academic considerations, meant that they were completely office-bound. (Evetts, 1994:119)

In the words of headteachers, "I am becoming a computer buff. I didn't think that's what headship involved." (Mr Oakes in Evetts, 1994:118) and:

> I had a complete change of perspective when I was appointed head. Before, I was used to the issues in my class, but now I have started seeing things I did not notice before…such as the roof, the state of repair of the buildings , etc…there were many

problems but I sorted them out step by step. (Anna, Primary Head, Popescu, 2008)

But it was not just a case of new administrative roles. In Ribbins and Marland's (1994) study, heads also focused on identifying future leaders, recruiting, and empowering staff. From these examples, it is clear that heads post LMS/SBM face a variety of roles, which they need to juggle:

> The 1990s' head has to relate to parents, be a public relations person, cope with uncertainty, motivate staff in the absence of substantial instrumental rewards, has to be a financial manager and be able to cope with rapid changes. (Reynolds and Parker, 1992:23)

Clarke (1994:43) expresses it differently, stating that the new managers are effective in 'sensing' the environment, acting as catalysts and 'animateurs' in schools as organisations. In Evetts' study again, heads juggled with these various aspects of their jobs:

> The new headteacher was required to be able to maintain boundaries around what were appropriate managerial work tasks and what were not; what was involved in corporate management and what was peripheral. (Evetts, 1994:119)

Two decades later, Robinson (2011) reports on interviews with 21 primary heads in England over three years (2005-2008) with regard to the impact of the changing educational agenda on the role of heads. She remarks on the emergence of new roles for heads both outside and inside the school and "an increase in the strategic role of the headteacher" that have led to "new and changing relationships with Local Authorities and other agencies…" (p.72)

The change experienced by international heads is directly relevant to the Romanian case of decentralisation as changes in both name and roles are

expected by heads in Romania. Regardless of titles and the division of the two main sub-roles (Leading Professional versus Chief Executive), there is no doubt that internationally, post-decentralisation, the day-to-day responsibilities of headteachers have both increased and changed. The role of school governing bodies has also changed. This will be explored in more detail next.

What is the composition and role of the school board in staff (and head) selection and appointment and why?

Internationally and in Romania (see Chapter Three), in decentralisation, it was not only the role of the head that changed, but also the composition and role of the governing bodies. An increased participation of parents and local community to school matters was noted in countries around the world (see Table 4.3 below).

Table 4.3: Governing bodies in the international examples

Country	Name	Membership and Composition
England	Governing body	In county, voluntary Controlled and Maintained special schools, between 9-19 members depending on the number of students (<100 and up to 600) in schools. 2-5 parents 2-5 LEA-appointed 1-2 teachers 1 head (unless he chooses not to be a governor) 2-4 foundation governors – also depending on the number of members co-opted that ranges from 1-6
New Zealand	Boards of trustees	Up to 15 members Initially parents Later on, members of the business local communities. No more than 1/3 of its members could have been teachers.
Chicago	Local School Councils	Six parent representatives, elected by parents and community residents. Two community representatives, elected by parents and community residents. Two teachers, elected by the school staff. The school's principal.

		A student elected by students (in high schools).
Victoria	School Councils.	Between 6 and 15 members. Its size and/or configuration may be changed by a Ministerial Order. Parent members >1/3 (i.e. they must have a child or children enrolled at the school). The principal is the executive officer and is included as a Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) member and has full voting rights Community members –optional membership category and persons are co-opted by school council to a Community member position rather than elected (as above). DEECD employees *cannot* be community members. Community members have the same voting rights as elected members.
Italy	School Board	14 members for schools with less than 500 pupils 19 for schools with more than 500 pupils The board is chaired by a parent elected by the other members. Headteacher Elected representatives of teachers Parents and non-teaching staff

Table 4.3 above is indicative of the diversity in the composition of the governing bodies and also shows the various roles adopted by the heads. It enables me to compare and contrast school boards in Romania and other countries. In all cases, just like in the Romanian case, the school (represented by the head and teachers), parents and local community are all involved in decision-making. As explained in Chapter Three, in Romania there is a tri-partite composition of the school boards (called administrative boards) consisting of three equal shares represented by the teachers (including the head), parents and local community. The Romanian administrative board is similar to New Zealand's board of trustees in that teachers can not represent more than a third of the members. In fact, Romania, New Zealand and Victoria (Australia) have the largest participation of the teachers on the board. When looking at the number of parents, the situation changes in that, parents seem to represent the majority in Chicago and Victoria (Australia).

Interestingly, the representatives of the local community may or may not sit on the board in Victoria (Australia) as this is the choice of other board members. In contrast, in Romania, the local authorities represent a third of the members on the board. An explanation for some of these differences lies with the type of decentralisation implemented and the level at which decision-making has been shifted. For example, in New Zealand, a country

in which local offices of education were closed down and so decentralisation involved transfer of decision-making and finances from the national level to the school level, the local administration is not at all represented on the board. In contrast, in Romania, there has been a decentralisation from the national to the local authorities' level in terms of finances. With their board representation and new financial role, it is the local authorities that gained most power through decentralisation, rather than the schools.

After the decentralisation of education, the selection and appointment of headteachers became school boards/governing bodies' new responsibility worldwide and also in Romania. This was an important task as members of school boards were now able to decide on complex matters such as who was best to fulfil the head roles and, together with the heads, school governors lead the selection process for teachers and other staff in schools.

Internationally, governing bodies are also establishing annual salaries of heads based on national legislation. In England and Wales, for example, the regulations for determining heads' salaries and the ways in which they are calculated are set up in School Teachers' Pay and Conditions Document (STPCD) 2012. Headteachers' salaries increase each year by moving one point up the scale. The amount paid to heads varies, depending on a series of factors such as headteachers' experiences, school location, school size (number of students, teachers and other staff). In England, headteachers' annual salaries range from £42,379 to £112,181 (http://www.usethekey.org.uk/popular-articles/pay-scale-determining-the-pay-of-senior-leaders). In Scotland, headteachers earn between £42,288 and £82,542 (http://www.tes.co.uk/article.aspx?storycode=6000226). This is less than their English counterparts, but considerably more than heads in other countries, such as heads in Romania (see Chapter Three, section 8).

In Romania, whilst legislation states that school boards will appoint the headteacher, this has not yet happened in practice. The same too applies to the appointment of teachers and other staff. In principle these too should be

appointed by the School boards but this continues to be done by the County School Inspectorates as before.

In addition, Romanian school boards cannot establish salaries for heads as these are prescribed in national legislation. They can, however, decide to pay the head at the maximum leadership percentage established nationally (i.e. 45% added to the equivalent salary of a teacher's salary).

4.3 Juggling multiple activities and accountability systems

The variety of activities and multiple layers of responsibility were common in international literature. The research of Ribbins and Marland (2004:23) with heads in England presents the "amazing similarity of challenges…which headteachers face even in very different political and economic context…from Ukraine to Australia, from the United States to the United Kingdom":

> I think the nature of the job had become more difficult. I think actually if you start looking at all that you are supposed to do it is impossible. But because it is so impossible, you have got to decide your own priorities. This is what I have been saying to my own staff. (Gasper in Pascal and Ribbins, 1998:126)

In the USA, the role of the head is particularly difficult if, besides implementing the new reforms and 'positioning' their school in the market-place (Hill, Oakley Smith and Spinks, 1990:67), s/he has to adapt to other requirements of the head's position.

Multiple roles need to relate to multiple stakeholders. The headteacher needs to interact with: students, staff, parents, the school board, local authorities and national authorities. There is a new level of accountability to each. The reculturing of heads' practices and performance is also closely

related to enhanced accountability mechanisms: "the buck stops here" (English head), "I'm the pointer of the scale" (Italian head) (Barzano, 2007:86):

> …the 1988 reforms undoubtedly empowered managers, repositioning headteachers and college principals as the key locus of power, running budgets, steering governors, promoting and marketing their institutions, and striving to optimize public representations of performance (…) the authority of heads and principals was sharpened by new structural divisions which positioned them unequivocally as managers, accountable to newly responsibilized governing bodies (Fergusson, 2000:210).

As shown in the vignettes presented in Chapter Two, heads' accountability took various forms. For instance, in England and Wales complex accountability frameworks have been set up. These were clearly stipulating who is in charge of what, to whom it is accountable, for what and under "what forms of control and constraint" (Simkins, 1997a:21). Post-decentralisation, heads became answerable on many fronts. On the one hand, they were accountable to students and parents. On the other hand, they accounted for budgets to local authorities, local/national government:

> I still feel privileged to be a head [after twenty years in headship]…headship is a very stressful occupation. Heads are answerable on so many fronts - financially, pupil performance, all the rest of it. Despite this, I say to my deputies and my staff 'We still have children to educate, teachers to develop, a curriculum to deliver'…but some things have changed for the worse. The stress on paper accountability, for example, has changed out of all proportion. I am not good on paper (…) in one way, the experience I had prior to the National Curriculum, prior to testing and assessment, prior to OFSTED, prior to LMS, made me able to look at it all pragmatically and say I can turn this school into a bunch of neurotics overnight if I want to but what good would that do? (Liz Paver with Peter Ribbins, 1998:181)

Or, a slightly different view:

> I feel accountable to myself to get things right. The accountability that can be in conflict with my personal belief and

with the way I work comes mostly from the DFE. I find the LEA currently very supportive…I don't care much for other kinds of accountability. (Sue Beeson with Peter Ribbins, 1998:83)

For Italian heads, accountability is mainly towards parents, teachers and local authorities. They feel accountable for the quality of educational services: "a balanced relationship with parents is welcome as an important reward and becomes an object of pride" (Barzano, 2007:173). However, the idea of "being accountable" was internalised by Italian heads as an inescapable duty embedded in the concept of autonomy itself. It sometimes resulted in an attitude towards a sort of "self-performativity". No external points of reference existed, apart from the willingness to guess and meet the expectations of parents and local authorities in particular. Except for accountability, the work of the new Italian headteacher (in the light of new public management) was characterized by effectiveness, entrepreneurship and marketing. A great deal of Italian heads' work focused on entrepreneurship (Barzano, 2007).

The role of school principals in Chicago (United States) has also been re-worked around accountability, performance and effectiveness (Lortie, 2009). In fulfilling their duties to these various stakeholders, headteachers in England address the requirements of a new performance management system. The focus is on the role of the "headteacher as leader of systems…leader of consumers…and, leader of performance" (Gunter and Rayner, 2007:51); "what gets measured gets done" (attributed to Drucker). At the same time, they complied with the nationally established policies and standards:

> The headteacher is the leading professional in the school. Working with the governing body, the headteacher provides vision, leadership and direction for the school and ensures that it is managed and organised to meet its aims and targets. With the governing body, the headteacher is responsible for the continuous improvement in the quality of education (DFE, 2004:3).

The implementation of decentralisation had an impact on headteachers' professional activities and accountability frameworks. They are now responsible for more things than before, many of them new, both inside and outside the school and have to comply with multiple accountability systems. Understanding the experiences of international heads with regards to juggling professional activities and accountability systems is helpful in examining the complex relationships between Romanian headteachers and their own multiple stakeholders. It is of interest to see if Romanian headteachers noted changes in their practice and roles and accountability to different types of stakeholders. If so, the ways in which they deal with these new professional challenges is key in addressing the third research question of the study: *What are the implications of decentralisation for headteachers in Romania*?

4.4 Professional identity

Even before educational decentralisation, headship represented a new professional stage in a career. Immediately after appointment, heads begin building a new professional identity, that of a manager: "the process of becoming a headteacher is one of adult socialization into a managerial identity" (Evetts, 1994:50). Similarly, in the United States, Lortie (2009:21) asserts that becoming a head is about "serving in another position, thus making principalship a two-stage career". When entering this new position, heads have to deal with professional re-socialisation from teacher to principal. From being in the classroom almost all the time, to being in an office and meetings with the local community and parents, principals' perspectives change. Most of the time they are now dealing with adults, as opposed to children or teenagers:

> For most of our principals, the transition from teaching to principal was abrupt…they knew practically nothing, for

example, about the new routines they were expected to carry out (Lortie, 2009:31-2).

According to Ball (1987), English heads manage their schools differently: some rely on their own leadership qualities; others emphasize their bureaucratic responsibilities. Some heads manage by means of personal influence and conviction; some others through authority and control; while another group lead their schools through hierarchies and delegation of roles to committee structures. The reason for this difference is that headteachers bring with them into this process of transformation personal features and different social histories (Gewirtz, 2002). According to Sparks, "reculturing is the main work of leadership, and it requires an underlying conceptualisation of the key elements that feed it…" (Sparks, 2003 quoted in Ball, 2008:138).

After the adoption of neo-liberal reforms in education, the heads' role has been managerialised and these styles have adapted accordingly. It has been increasingly focused around leadership of the organisation, standards, quality and efficiency (Gewirtz, 2002, Bennis 1996, Kanter 1989, Peters, Buchanan, Claydon and Doyle 1999, Paton and McCalman, 2000). These scholars have been important in enabling an understanding of the issues that range from the meaning of educational change to the conditions required for change.

For Ball (1987), the new thrust of educational management that commenced in England with the ERA in 1986 would translate into two very distinct leadership styles that were strengthened in the years to come (the 1988 ERA, etc):

- *Managerial* – "highly bureaucratized, relying on written forms of communication" (Ozga, 1992:33). For this type of head, "the system of organization as such is separate from the manager as a person" (Ball, 1987:91)

- *Interpersonal* – relying on "personal relationships and face-to-face contact to fulfil [her] role" (Ball, 1987:87). For interpersonal heads, "the school is the person" (Ball, 1987:98).

Very different in approach, some would argue (Morgan, 1986, Ozga, 1992) the two types of new leadership correspond to masculine and feminine styles of leadership respectively. While men are traditionally seen as authoritative, rational, assertive, controlling and competitive (thus 'managerial'), women are described as emotional, submissive, nurturing, cooperative (Coleman, 2002, 2003, 2005, Morgan, 1986, Blackmore, 1999), hence 'interpersonal'.

The multiple activities, high workload and new challenges such as dealing with parents as consumers, or having to implement initiatives that affect teachers in a negative way, leads to increased working hours, stress and isolation. There are many cases of headteachers struggling to cope. Most of the heads work a 60-plus hour week: "…I will be in school Saturday and Sunday as well-probably only for a couple of hours" (Michael Ashford with Peter Ribbins, 1998:69). Therefore, the workload post-decentralisation became enormous and the strain felt by some heads was overwhelming. Here is an example from Alice, a head in Australia: "I vomited every morning coming to work, I'd get up and be sick. I didn't want to come to work, I lived in dread and fear of staff meetings…" (Sachs and Blackmore, 1998:277); "Parents arrived with complaints they expected the neophyte to correct" (American head in Lortie, 2009:32 on the situation in Chicago, U.S.A.). An English head dealt with the same sort of issues and felt so pressurised by the managerial side of his role that after 17 years in the school, he suddenly became:

> …part of the problem, no longer part of the solution…I felt oppressed by the constant questioning of my faith. As a head, I had become an accomplice in the humiliation of teachers. (Barker, 1999:82)

As the level of bureaucracy and paperwork increased so too did some of the frustrations:

> I agree headship is more difficult and the amount of paper work is totally over the top. I see no need for it. The changes made over the last three years have done nothing to improve the system. They don't even know what they are trying to improve. (David Davies with Peter Ribbins, 1998:112)
>
> I think we've got so little time, we haven't even got time to think about the fact that we haven't got time. We're on automatic most of the working day, rolling from one job to the other" (Bottery, 2007b:18).
>
> I do not have a mini nervous breakdown because there's still 18 things left on my list, I just leave some of them until they are out of date and they can come off the list. (Sue Beeson with Peter Ribbins, 1998:85)

There are also, however, many examples of headteachers embracing the change. In general, the experience of LMS/SBM in England and Wales, New Zealand, Victoria and United States indicates that the majority of heads and principals feel that "decentralized management in schools promotes professionalism and a sense of job satisfaction" (Abu-Duhou, 1999:102; also see Caldwell and Hill, 1999).

The heads in Lortie's (2009:37) sample admit to having to adapt their "behaviour to succeed as principals" exercising greater self-control, making decisions and staying with them, eventually becoming an authority figure:

> I learned to bite my tongue, to think before I acted. I had to learn how to make a decision and stick to it…and I learned that most decisions are about 50% right –until you go into administration you don't really realize that".

One head in Bottery's study (1998) in the UK has described this new practice as going "from *defy* through *subvert* to *ignore*; on to *ridicule*, then to *wait and see*, to *test*; and in some exceptional cases, finally to *embrace*" (Bottery, 1998:24).

Grace (1995) looked at how 84 school heads (sixty-four men and twenty women) responded to a change of leadership culture in the north-east of England post-decentralisation. The findings revealed that headteachers fell into 3 three ideal types:

- *Headteacher-managers*

Heads in this group saw the role of the head becoming primarily managerial but "believed that greater management effectiveness would generate an improved professional performance from the school and its teachers" (Grace, 1995:73). This was a predominantly male group in which heads felt an enhanced autonomy. Secondly, headteacher-managers did not feel threatened by either the prescribed national curriculum, or the newly-empowered governing bodies.

- *Headteacher-professionals*

This group was concerned with the deterioration of "important professional relationships and values in a management and market culture of schooling" (Grace, 1995:74). In other words, heads in this group were largely concerned that the increasing managerial responsibilities would distance them from instructional leadership, teaching and learning, and collegial relations with school staff and other heads. This opinion was predominantly shared by women headteachers. Furthermore, the introduction of a national curriculum, assessment and testing were also contributing factors to a change in the school cultures and so to heads' roles.

- *Headteacher- resistors*

 A small group from the sample articulated a resistance to national curriculum and assessment. Other heads in the same sub-group objected to the marketisation of education. That was due to a lack of consultation of central government and relevant stakeholder categories in the same group. However, these heads faced a dilemma of resistance when they realised that

once adopted, these policies "could bring to their schools and their pupils considerable material and resource benefits" (Grace, 1995:74).

When moving from teacher to headteacher, there has always been a need to distance themselves from their previous peers. Post decentralisation, because of the new entrepreneurial roles, reduced resources, increased competition and the tighter prescription of the content of schooling this was even more the case. The scope for humane and integrative educational leadership was reduced (Ozga, 1992:11-2). In fulfilling their managerial positions, headteachers stopped seeing fellow teachers as peers and started acting like managers: "the headteacher had to be separated from teachers in order to lead and manage staff work and performance" (Gunter and Forrester, 2009:3, also see Barzano, 2007). In line with these, a drawback of the new role is that it "bureaucratizes the relations between principals and staff and creates a less caring environment" (Abu-Duhou, 1999:96):

> They had to learn to relate to teachers no longer as peers, but to muster the authority of the boss and use it proficiently"…there is a sadness as they [principals] talk about losing the closeness they had with former teacher friends. Promotion, it is clear, is not always free of loss" (Lortie, 2009:32, 35).

Schmuck and Schubert (1995) also refer to principals' loneliness, disappointment and isolation, in the United States. Solitude was experienced by most of the new heads (former teachers): "I'm experiencing a growing feeling of isolation" (Evetts, 1994:118). This has been reported too by Fullan (2001), Hargreaves and Fink (2006), Barzano (2007), Lortie (2009). Blackmore (1999) refers to the conflicting emotions felt by some women heads that needed to cut previous relationships with fellow teachers and students. Thus, it has contributed to changes in their communication routines: "many women have felt they must reject, sublimate or marginalize what bound them to their work as teachers - the interpersonal relationships with other teachers and children" (Blackmore, 1999:165).

Power and Whitty (1997:342) report on a research study focusing on headteachers in England, Wales, Australia, New Zealand, the USA and Sweden and consider heads are "positioned between the competing demands of the state and the market…[they] are becoming increasingly isolated from colleagues and classrooms". There is a sense of resignation over the loneliness associated with their new role (Weindling and Earley, 1987). Evetts (1994) sent a follow-up questionnaire in the autumn of 1992 to twenty secondary heads in England. This aimed at examining the changing role of headship. She summarizes the findings of the eighteen responses as follows:

> Contact with pupils was becoming minimal and contact with colleagues other than senior management, was considerably reduced. Heads were becoming isolated; a gulf was growing between manager-heads and the school organizations they were administering. In addition, they were becoming isolated from other headteachers. Competition between schools was increasing feelings of isolation… (Evetts, 1994:119)

Headteachers feel that markets in education increased competition between schools and so between headteachers. Therefore, four years later and in Australia some heads are reluctant to confide in other heads for fear that the other heads might be judgemental. They prefer to talk to their family or friends about the issues that worry them instead:

> You have to be careful about the people you ask for advice from…I wouldn't ask for advice from another principal, especially if it was a male because I would be afraid that they would be making judgements about my not coping. (Kay, a secondary school principal, Sachs and Blackmore, 1998:275)

The traditional pre-decentralisation education system in which experienced teachers climbed the career ladder gradually and achieved headship has been replaced with a managerialist one after the introduction of markets in education. In this new culture, there is no need for the heads to have been teachers. They can be 'imported' (Clarke and Newman, 1997) from "the private, public and voluntary sectors" (Gunter and Forrester, 2008:2). This

has led Pollitt (1993) to describe the new wave of heads in England as professionals 'on tap' rather than 'on top' (Bottery, 2007a:159):

> The new managerialist headteacher is likely, although not necessarily, to be a recent recruit to a position of senior management with little or no experience of educational management prior to the 1988 reforms. (There has been a concomitant exodus of pre-reform headteachers via early retirements of various kinds). Whilst welfarist managers tend to be socialised within the field and values of the particular welfare sector they are working in, new managers are more likely to be generically socialised within the field and values of 'management'. (Gewirtz, 2002:31)

The new policies that introduced increasing roles for heads meant that heads had to find strategies to combine work and family arrangements. In remembering her career pathway, Sue (Sue Benton with Peter Ribbins, 1994) says she had to accommodate family and work. Although this was quite challenging, she did not give up. She argues her career pattern was quite "normal", precisely because her children were young at the time: "and go for the top without time up" (Sue Benton with Peter Ribbins, 1994:37). However, balancing career and household responsibilities is not an easy task (Evetts, 1994, Popescu, 2008, Popescu and Gunter, 2011).

In Australia, women principals in Queensland and Victoria have also found themselves frustrated with many aspects of the job, such as constantly feeling tired or exhausted, guilty for always juggling the family and work life balance (Sacks and Blackmore, 1998):

> I have a 12 year-old at the moment who is on the verge of becoming a school refusal. I've got to think 'hey whose child is more important, my 12 year-old or somebody else's? Do I forsake my own child?' I'm driving nearly an hour each day to get to work; that means that he's at home from 7 o'clock in the morning by himself - he has to get himself off to school. I make his lunch and the rest of it and at the moment nothing has happened. But he's teased me at times, that's at 12, that's grade 7, come grade 8, grade 9, I don't really know. (Brenda, recently divorced head, Sachs and Blackmore, 1998:276)

Abu-Duhou (1999:94) considered that delegating tasks was the solution to the increasing responsibilities of the head as the "leadership role is too immense for one individual". Hence, different layers of accountability (i.e. every teacher, head of department, deputy is accountable for some of these new roles) developed in time. That was not the case of primary-school heads though. They found delegating roles more challenging than secondary heads. For the latter, "the managerial aspects of delegation may be less difficult than co-ordinating the curricula plans and ensuring participation does not lead to loss of control over expenditure" (Hill, Oakley Smith and Spinks, 1990:67). Bottery (2007b), reports that different heads have different ways of dealing with professional roles. Depending on their personalities, some of them show more flexibility than others. Therefore, individual personality traits are very important in the enactment of headship and implementation of reforms.

Overall, international heads responded to the changes in their professional roles differently. Whilst they had to adapt to the new managerial roles, headteachers have altered their relationships with the teachers in their schools. As a consequence of the new professional demands, headteachers experienced an increase in workload, stress and isolation. They have also had to find strategies to cope with spending less time with their families.

Professional identity is an important component of my research in Romania and so this theme is highly relevant to my empirical study later. In preparation for detailing the Romanian case, the findings from the international literature raise issues about how heads are experiencing the transition from teachers to heads through various career pathways; headteachers' responses to national legislation and the implications for their new responsibilities; coping strategies to deal with family and work commitments and an emerging managerial identity.

4.5 Budgets

One of the most important aspects of decentralisation in education refers to the delegation of finances. For example, under LMS in England or SBM in Victoria (Australia), individual schools manage their own budgets (discussed in Chapter Two from the ideational legislative point of view). This brought about new financial roles and responsibilities for headteachers (Simkins, 1997b). For the respondents of Hill, Oakley-Smith and Spinks (1990:68) in the United States, managing budgets was the most challenging aspect of the head's new role "establishing a realistic connection between the decisions about resources (or inputs) and the results (or outcomes)".

Headteachers learnt to allocate more time to resources and new activities of all kinds. Alongside governors they became:

> …Responsible for the school's budget and for the recruitment, appointment, payment and dismissal of the staff. Other responsibilities include staff travel expenses, funding external examinations, paying for books, equipment, furniture, stationery, postage, telephones, energy costs, internal maintenance and the community 'poll' tax. (Ribbins et al., 1991:85)

All these were challenging for all heads, but especially for those coming from a purely instructional background. Therefore, heads in England and elsewhere needed training in dealing with financial issues:

> If I think back, for example, to the start of the LMS, none of us was trained in managing budgets. None of us had come into teaching expecting that would be part of any role we would have to play as senior managers. Some of us were daunted at first to find that we had to exercise skills which our previous experience had not prepared us for. (Ribbins and Marland, 1994:25-6)

Budget responsibility inevitably changed the profile of headteachers' work. In England, some of the large, secondary schools have hired a Business Manager to deal with finances only, whilst the head would deal with instruction issues. Woods et al.'s (2010) have recently looked at School Business Managers in England and report that while approximately 75% of the appointees as School Business Managers have previously worked in education, the remainder have been recruited from sectors such as banking and finance.

In the U.S., Hill, Oakley Smith and Spinks (1990) note it was more difficult for those principals preoccupied with traditional instructional school leadership as opposed to the new Chief Executive types to adapt to the financial roles: "the role change will, of course, be dramatic for those heads who have failed or refused to recognize a managerial role in their schools" (p.66). Those unable to embrace this were replaced, both in the U.S and in England. This is what happened to Ms. English, a head in Gewirtz's study (2002). The evidence shows that Ms. English was not willing to adopt a more managerial stance and the school she led was quite uncompetitive: "We've resisted in our Senior Management Team [having] the man who walks around with computer printouts…we wouldn't want it because that's not the way we want to work…" Consequently, Mr. Jones who came in with a more market-oriented managerial approach soon replaced her. His approach was more in line with new managerialist practices than hers (Gewirtz, 2002:83).

One of the most notable changes in headteachers' roles post-decentralisation refers to managing finances when taking up the executive role in a school. With no prior or not much experience in budgets, this proved to be a real challenge for international headteachers. Consequently, heads had to attend training so as to be able to adapt to the requirements of their new roles. The ones that could not ended up resigning from headship. In Chapter Three, I noted that in Romania, the delegation of finances to local authorities and on to schools was one of the features of educational

decentralisation. The experience of international headteachers is important when looking at Romanian heads' understanding of financial delegation, especially because Romanian headteachers' background is purely instructional. The complex matters associated with managing budgets and formula funding, as well as the strategies employed by international heads in dealing with large budgets that need strict allocation represent particularly important lessons for Romanian heads.

One of the most important provisions of financial delegation was with regard to the funding formula. Per-capita funding replaces funding based on historical costs. The aim was to enhance cost-efficiency. Therefore, depending on a series of factors such as location of school, school specialism, level of education, student ability, etc every school received a certain amount of money for every student enrolled. That is why some schools have gained resources, whilst others lost. Liz, a primary school head in England (Liz Paver with Peter Ribbins, 1998:183) perceives the implementation of educational reforms as challenging. She is clearly against per-capita funding:

> I see little advantage in a system which puts us in opposition to surrounding schools and vying for pupils. The local management of schools can only work if it is based on a needs-driven budget. If a school puts up a philosophy and a policy for delivering education to a specific number of children, there should be the money to supply that. A formulae approach which cuts out the recommendations of teachers can't be the way forward. That upsets me because it is taking the professionalism away.

On the other hand, there were some heads (Thomas, 1996) for whom the innovation associated with budgets and financial management was not an issue at all. These heads felt that, apart from gaining more autonomy, they learned how to plan time and resources. In addition, the heads in Evetts' study (1994) concluded the advantages brought by LMS outweighed the disadvantages. They acknowledged having gained more freedom following LMS. However, this did not necessarily equate to more choice: "I can see the

value of the head and the governors managing their own maintenance budgets, but you've got to have those resources to manage" (Mrs. Morley, in Evetts, 1994:115). Regardless of headteachers' views on managing budgets, there is also the question in international literature of whether educational decentralisation actually delivers what it is intended to.

In the state of Victoria (Australia) and in New Zealand (Abu-Duhou, 1999; also see Caldwell and Spinks, 1992), all schools received financial software packages and specialised training in using them. This was meant to ease principals' financial management duties. However, this did not generate major innovation in relation to the more effective use of resources because the heads felt cautious and less inclined to innovate because of the burden of budget accountability (Abu-Duhou, 1999).

In England and Wales (Whitty and Power, 2002) the evidence suggests decentralisation did not bring about substantial gains and major innovation. Levacic (1995: xi) concludes there is "a lack of strong theoretical argument and empirical evidence" to show financial delegation actually improves the quality of teaching and learning as suggested by the officials. As to heads' roles post-decentralisation, and due to the complex accountability systems, Bottery's (2007b:89) research reveals headteachers still work in an "era of centralization" despite the management of finances and human resources at school level. In addition, due to the over-layered accountability framework, heads feel more centralised than before the 1988 ERA and LMS.

In Italy, the pros and cons of financial delegation are not simple to explain. This is because headteachers are not allowed much freedom and choice when making financial decisions, especially when budgets are tight. Financial delegation "is more virtual than concrete: the inflexibility of the budget headings does not leave room for relevant choices, particularly when funding is reduced" (Barzano, 2007:87). A similar situation was noted in

Chicago. In Chapter Seven, I will come back to this and show what the situation is like in Romania.

Heads generally agree with the principles of school budgets, which enable them to spend money in the areas that need more attention:

> I think it is a good principle. It gives proper flexibility to governing bodies and schools to prioritize. If the budgets were right, LMS would give you the possibility to decide how you spend what is available and to do so, on the best possible information. I am sure schools are in the best position to know whether they should spend more or less on staffing, or the buildings and grounds, or on learning resources. We should be able to make those decisions. (Liz Paver with Peter Ribbins, 1998:183)

Levacic (1995) found in an independent funded study that headteachers' perceptions of LMS in England were generally positive as they felt empowered. These heads considered that financial delegation meant an increase in localism, i.e. emphasis on the local needs as opposed to the national requirements. Thus, heads together with the school boards had more freedom in spending their own budgets. "[Heads] welcomed self-management even where their school had lost resources as a result of it" (Whitty and Power, 2002:52).

As explained in Chapter Three, Romanian heads are also becoming responsible for budgets in their schools. Most of the international literature consulted above shows that whilst headteachers do not have a say in how funds are allocated to their schools, they consider their schools would benefit from deciding what to spend the funds on. Depending on the country where empirical studies were conducted, headteachers enjoy a lesser or higher degree of freedom in how to spend their school budgets. Other issues such as reluctance to spend money for fear of making errors or various mechanisms employed to increase budgetary efficiency emerged and so, international heads felt that overall, this financial exercise was empowering.

The majority of the international headteachers benefitted from training in managing budgets and, depending on their previous background both professionally and personally, they reacted differently to financial management at school level. All these are important professional changes for international headteachers and they signpost areas of potential issues for Romanian heads.

4.6 Market forces and competition

The decentralisation of education through quasi-markets brought in a restructuring of the education system. A direct result of the market in education was the fact that schools became more customer-oriented and reconceptualised their roles. They needed to sell their 'product', i.e. education, and so produced new "visions, missions and business plans" (Clarke and Newman, 1997:60).

Pollard (1995) in the UK and Moe (1994) in the USA also argued that the decentralisation of education led to the marketisation of schools. In the new quasi-market system, headteachers' professional roles changed and parents acquired an unprecedented level of empowerment (Newman, 2001). In addition, headteachers together with their school boards employed marketing strategies with the aim of attracting as many clients as possible by finding "niches" and "competitive edges" (Clarke and Newman, 1997:60, also see Ranson, 1993), in the market: "… Heads need to be competitive in their recruitment of pupils and emphasize school achievements in their attempts to influence parents". (Evetts, 1994:121)

Whitty and Power (2002) add that the quasi-market in education has led to a more efficient management of schools and better provision of education in the context of school effectiveness:

> We fool ourselves if we think we can be a head these days and not be competitive. I don't think I have ever been anything other than competitive in some sense of the term. I have always felt my ducklings were swans, any head worth her school will always try to see their school as being something to be proud of. If you are proud of something, then you tend to go into the market-place and sell it. I have sold my schools for the last 20 years as something special but never to the detriment of other schools in terms of trying to take children from them. (Liz Paver with Peter Ribbins, 1998:186)

Competition is part of the new game. If schools are to survive in the new environment, they will conform to the new practices if not from conviction, then for their students:

> We need to market our school but haven't we always? Schools have always depended on the goodwill of their community and that requires a certain amount of marketing. It's all about educating the children and in doing so, working with their parents, understanding what they want…. But I can't bring myself to go down the road some people have of making openly derogatory remarks about other schools in the area or even just little sideswipe comments. (Sue Beeson in Pascal and Ribbins, 1998:86-8)

Sue above refers to the sometimes unorthodox practices adopted by some heads in order to promote their school by making bad comments about other schools in the area.

Internationally, decentralisation and quasi-markets introduced competition between schools. As was the case with financial management above, competition has had a notable impact on headteachers' roles. The heads learnt they had to market their schools and be entrepreneurial with a view to offering the best educational provision and recruiting the best students. In many cases, competition between schools also meant competition between heads. In Romania, pre-decentralisation, student numbers by school used to be prescribed by the County School Inspectorate and overseen by the Ministry of Education. As such, competition between schools in the sense of

an educational market did not exist. In addition, students were allocated to schools based on their results at national examinations. It is, therefore, interesting to examine the consequences of market forces and competition in Romania to see if and how Romanian heads are experiencing entrepreneurship and marketing. In addition, it is relevant to see what the educational market consists of in Romania, the degree of parental choice, and if and how competition for students impacts on Romanian headteachers' professional activities and their collaboration with other headteachers.

4.7 Summary and contribution to thinking about decentralisation

The aim of this chapter was to seek international context to the third research question: *What are the implications of decentralisation for headteachers (in Romania)?* I have examined the international empirical base to look for evidence of the reshaping of heads' professional practices in the process of education restructuring, with more attention given to the English context. Overall, in this chapter, I organised the discussion around five main themes. The key findings in each theme are significant to the positioning and position-taking by heads in Romania, i.e. how they are affected and affect decentralisation policy enactment. A summary of the key findings follows:

- **New professional responsibilities**. With the decentralisation of education, heads became responsible for managing funds and human resources in a competitive environment. Therefore, they had to think and act rather as "chief executives" than as "instructional leaders".

- **Juggling multiple activities and accountability systems**. Heads underwent a professional re-socialization due to their newly-increased responsibilities. They became accountable to a series of stakeholders and needed to build community relationships.

- **Professional identity**. The latest reforms in education also meant changing work roles, working long hours, juggling career and family, and a detachment from their peer teachers, which in some cases led to isolation and stress.

- **Budgets**. Heads started to manage budgets. This new role was perceived as challenging by some of the heads that still saw themselves as leading instruction only. While in some schools, School Business Managers were hired, in others, the head became Chief Executive and/or Leading Professional.

- **Market forces and competition**. A re-orientation towards market principles was noted in education. For heads, this was synonymous with making schools more businesslike, competing for students, increasing quality and choice. In many cases this also led to a change in relationships between headteachers of competing schools.

These emerged as common themes in the countries that implemented decentralisation in public education. The international literature on heads reviewed in this chapter contributes to the conceptual framework in that it adds headteachers' opinions on decentralisation reforms and their lived experiences. It shows the differences between the intended versus real responsibilities of heads as well as the distinctiveness of some cases – presented below.

Throughout the three Chapters on national and international literature (Two, Three and Four), I have noted that:

a) The socio-cultural and political contexts in which the decentralisation of education is implemented contribute to the uniqueness of its implementation.

For example, the highly centralised background of CEECs contrasts to the countries in the West - historically more inclined towards autonomy.

b) Decentralisation varies in terms of what decision making powers are decentralised to heads. For example, Italian heads do not have much autonomy at all in spite of legislated decentralisation and an element of localism. In Italy, not only are heads selected nationally, but so too are teachers. In addition, despite managing funds, they only have limited decision-making power as to how to spend the funds allocated to their schools. This is also the case of heads in Chicago.

c) Decentralisation is also implemented differently (in some cases more successfully than others). While some schools in England have hired Business Managers, others have left the head in charge of both Chief Executive and Leading Professional roles. Another example comes from Romania, where the 1995 Education Act came out before the supporting financial legislation, causing severe delays in implementation.

4.8 Contribution to the conceptual framework

The underlying rationale of this chapter was to set the international scene in preparation for the data on Romanian heads, inspectors and national policy-makers (Chapters Six and Seven). The conceptual framework I have built so far, through its categorisation of decision-making areas and the ability to add the 'colour' of real decentralisation, has the flexibility to present the Romanian case later in the thesis.

Figure 4.1: Components and levels of decentralisation

Components of Decentralisation

Political	Administrative	Fiscal

Budget allocation   Hiring & Firing of staff   Funding formula
Heads appointment   Inspection   Staff salaries
Curriculum   Testing
Assessment of teachers   Teacher tenure
   and students
Composition of Board
School Accountability

Levels of Decentralisation

Central	Local	School
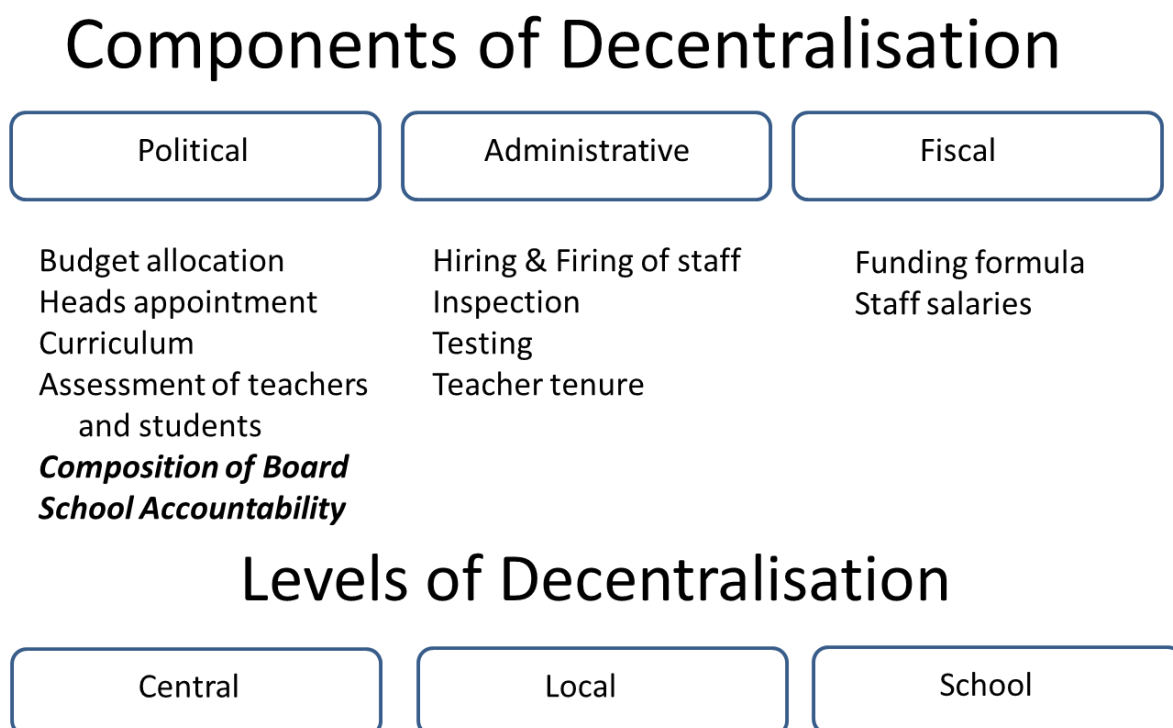
By detailing the effects of decentralisation on international heads, this chapter contributed both to the existing components and dimensions of decentralisation in the model and added new elements to both. In terms of components, in this chapter I talked about the role and composition of school boards internationally. In addition, when talking about the change in headteachers' roles, I presented the complex school accountability mechanisms in decentralisation (see Figure 4.1 above)

As in this chapter I looked at the experience of decentralisation from the international headteachers' point of view, I now introduce a new dimension of decentralisation, namely ***perceptions of stakeholders*** (see Figure 4.2 below).

Figure 4.2: Dimensions of decentralisation

Dimensions of Decentralisation

Stage of transition / time	Legislated vs Implemented	Drivers of policy	*Perceptions of stakeholders*
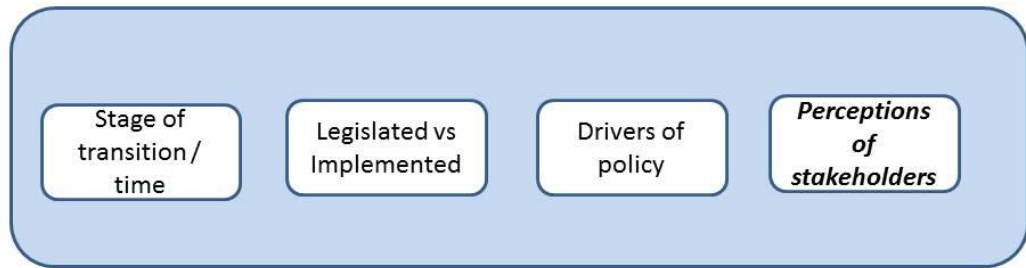
In Chapters Six and Seven I will add the perspective of Romanian stakeholders (national policy-makers, inspectors and heads). The overall focus of my PhD project is to look at how their practice has altered following the decentralisation of education. In the next chapter, I introduce the research methodology used for the purposes of this study.

CHAPTER FIVE

RESEARCH DESIGN

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I talk about how my research methodology was chosen. This is a qualitative research design that is used to explore Romanian professionals' experiences of decentralisation. Qualitative research fits well with my study in that "qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994:2). The aim of the research design is to enable me to address the study's main research questions:

1.   What is decentralisation in the context of state restructuring and the provision of public education in Romania?

2.   Why and how is decentralisation taking place in public education in Romania?

3.   What are the implications of decentralisation for headteachers in Romania?

In order to address these research questions, in Chapter Two I introduced a new conceptual framework based on the components, levels and dimensions of decentralisation which address both the idea (strategic) and implementation (tactical) issues involved. This conceptual framework has enabled me to shape the research design in this chapter and analyse the findings in later chapters.

I first explain how policy scholarship informed my thinking in relation to this research (5.2) I then turn to the methods used (5.3) in my thesis (official

documents and semi-structured interviews). I discuss how I selected and approached interviewees, gaining access and the inherent ethical and data collection issues. In 5.4 I then present some insights gained during the pilot study and main study, raising issues related to the transcription and translation of interview data. I resume by discussing validity and reliability (5.5). Finally, I summarize the Chapter in 5.6.

5.2 Methodology

Policy Scholarship and Conceptual Framework

Although the movement towards decentralisation started in the west, a decade later, these strategies were replicated in developing countries and Eastern Europe. Barzano (2007), Ozga et al. (2006) and Ozga and Lindgard (2007) argue that the global migration of policies from one country to another have created a new set of frictions. This new friction is a "globalised policy field situated between global pressures and local vernacular education policy responses" (Ozga and Lindgard, 2007:69), interacting with various local cultures and often coming up against existing national priorities and practices. In this new global environment, Ozga and Lindgard (2007) point out to the collapse of the traditional notions of "centre" and "periphery", in a scenario where communities are increasingly overlapping, complex and disjunctive. They draw attention to the need to focus on how the local and "vernacular may speak back to the global" (p.73) and warn that often:

> …the performative readings of education politics and policy are dependent on selective assessments of the global condition in education that see the world from a particular and somewhat distorted Anglo-American angle. (p.79)

In other words, in spite of the 'travelling character' (Ozga and Jones, 2006) of the policy of decentralisation, its implementation is strictly dependant on the agency of professionals in the field together with their country's history, culture, societal values and aspirations.

Policies cannot operate in isolation from their relational settings as their implementation is "socially situated and generative of critical social action" (Grace, 1984:41). This takes me to policy scholarship as a theoretical approach used to underpin the thesis. Policy scholarship looks at the personal accounts of participants in a research study by taking into account the history, politics culture and values of a country (Grace, 1995). Ball (1990) and Grace (1995) have also conducted studies following policy scholarship methodology. Stephen Ball's study (1990) explored the changes, which the 1988 Education Reform Act (ERA) brought to English and Welsh educational systems. In doing so, Ball examined the challenges posed by the involvement of politics in educational policy-making and conducted interviews with key policy-makers.

Five years later, Gerald Grace (1995) also drew on policy scholarship by critically examining the effects of the same 1988 ERA on headteachers. He interviewed 84 heads in North-East England with the aim of illuminating their new leadership and management role changes and experiences following the implementation of the Local Management of Schools.

These other studies and theoretical approaches are examples of how those implementing policies should be involved in the policy text (but usually are not), how the context varies each time and over time, and, finally, how the implementation in each context is a form of policy interpretation and thus part of policy design itself.

In my thesis, I also draw on policy scholarship and analyse the impact of Romania's history of communism and early post-1989 power relations in education policy implementation through the lens of headteachers, school inspectors and national policy-makers. Though I do refer to interviewing policy makers and inspectors alongside headteachers, Romanian

headteachers' responses to the policy of decentralisation's implementation represent the main focus of my research.

Policy scholarship examines three dimensions of a policy (Ball, 1990, 2006):

a) Text - the policy text per se

b) Ideology - the ideology that underpins policy formation

c) Practice - the ways in which policy is implemented

There are clearly some differences between the text (Education Acts, for example) and practice, i.e. the ways in which the policy is implemented. Furthermore, there is a direct relationship between policy text and ideology. In other words, the ideology informing the policy design/text will impact on the policy practice. For example, the policy of decentralisation emerged against the backdrop of neo-liberal ideology in western-type democracies. In theory, public policy is influenced by "anything and everything in its own way" (Swanson, 2009:212). Policy is designed by the powerful few, and implemented by the less powerful many:

> …policy decisions are inherently political insomuch as they arise from and are embedded in a politically oriented rather than purely rational, theocratic system of governance. Those decisions are also shaped by difficult-to-predict cycles of public attention and swayed by constituent pressure (Swanson, 2009:213).

Barthes (1970) made a distinction between *readerly* and *writerly* texts. A readerly text is a type of text where there is no hidden meaning and no room for interpretation. In a writerly text, the readers can intervene and add meaning to what they have read. Bowe, Ball and Gold (1992) took on Barthes' (1970) conceptualisation of texts and applied it to policy-making and policy implementation. To explore policy-making in depth, they developed the concept of a 'policy-cycle' (Bowe, Ball and Gold, 1992). In the policy process,

these authors argue, it is of utmost importance to establish what the role of the state is in policy-making. Then, the next step is to identify if there is room for other stakeholders (normally involved in the implementation process) to interpret and re-interpret the policy text. In this sense, the policy text should be a *writerly* text. Bowe, Ball and Gold (1992) argue policy generation and implementation should both be part of the same cycle and have the same actors involved. In other words, if policy is meant to impact on teachers, students and parents, then, these stakeholders should be involved in policy text formulation and exercise agency within the policy process. In relation to the Reform Act of 1988 in England, they argue "that it is not simply a matter of implementers following a fixed policy text and 'putting the Act into practice'' (Bowe, Ball and Gold, 1992:10).

In most cases, the implementers of reforms and policies have no say in the design process. However, they do need to put them into practice. Then, they become the ones accountable for the reform outcomes. Nevertheless, the actors working in the education system shape their understanding of policies and hence their professional practice and so contribute to policy enactment and policy outcomes. Therefore, policy is "struggled over, not delivered in tablets of stone, to a grateful and quiescent population" (Ozga, 2002:1). A social dimension is therefore added to the discussion. In the long run, this impacts upon the whole process of policy implementation and its effect on professionals.

Policy design and implementation are a contested terrain (Ozga, 2002). Policy implementation is also a long process that needs constant upgrading and updating. When implementing a policy, teachers and other stakeholders re-interpret the policy and adapt it to their own circumstances. Its interpretation varies because school contexts vary and the implementers of policy bring different agencies to the table.

In order to understand how schools deal with the multiple policy texts imposed from above, Ball, Maguire and Braun (2011) collected and explored the views and opinions of teachers in four schools with regard to policy implementation. These were triangulated with official policy texts, in this way linking theory to practice. Based on the findings from this qualitative study, Ball, Maguire and Braun (2011) argue that schools *enact*, rather than implement, policy. Therefore, policy implementation is not a straightforward, linear process, but a much more complex process in which the policy itself is adapted or interpreted by stakeholders (especially headteachers) during its enactment.

My study looks at Romania's case of decentralisation in education by providing examples of how decentralisation has travelled around the world. In doing so, I am interested to understand how each country has adapted it to its own context, because policy is "embedded" in the cultural and educational values of a country (Ozga and Jones, 2006). More importantly, I am looking at how headteachers are positioned and take up positions in a decentralising public education system in Romania. In doing so, I examine what is known about heads, both internationally and nationally, with special emphasis on the reculturing and restructuring of their role following the implementation of decentralisation in education through policy scholarship.

In Romania, decentralisation policy design had been largely carried out by external institutions (i.e. borrowed) and then interpreted by the Romanian Ministry of Education internally. There was very limited, if any, involvement in policy design by those who were due to implement the decentralisation reforms, such as headteachers. Notwithstanding their lack of involvement in the formal design process, their enactment of the policy still represents an interpretation of the policy. Bearing in mind, however, that the Romanian government typically provides detailed implementation guidelines, or 'methodologies', for all reforms (and, indeed, implementers are often 'paralysed' without them), this would suggest that there is less room for

interpretation of policies in Romania during implementation. Romanian policy texts are more *readerly* than *writerly*. The gap between legislation and implementation alongside headteachers' perceptions of decentralisation represent two key-dimensions in my conceptual model (see Figure 5.1 below).

In this Chapter, I added policy scholarship as an overarching methodology to the conceptual framework developed in Chapters Two, Three and Four and represented the model. From now on, this framework will be used to structure the methods and research instruments as well as to describe, understand and explain the data from the empirical study in Romania in Chapters Six and Seven. This is a conceptual framework that embodies a set of variables that can be used need to explore and explain the processes of decentralisation in education.

Figure 5.1: Conceptual Framework
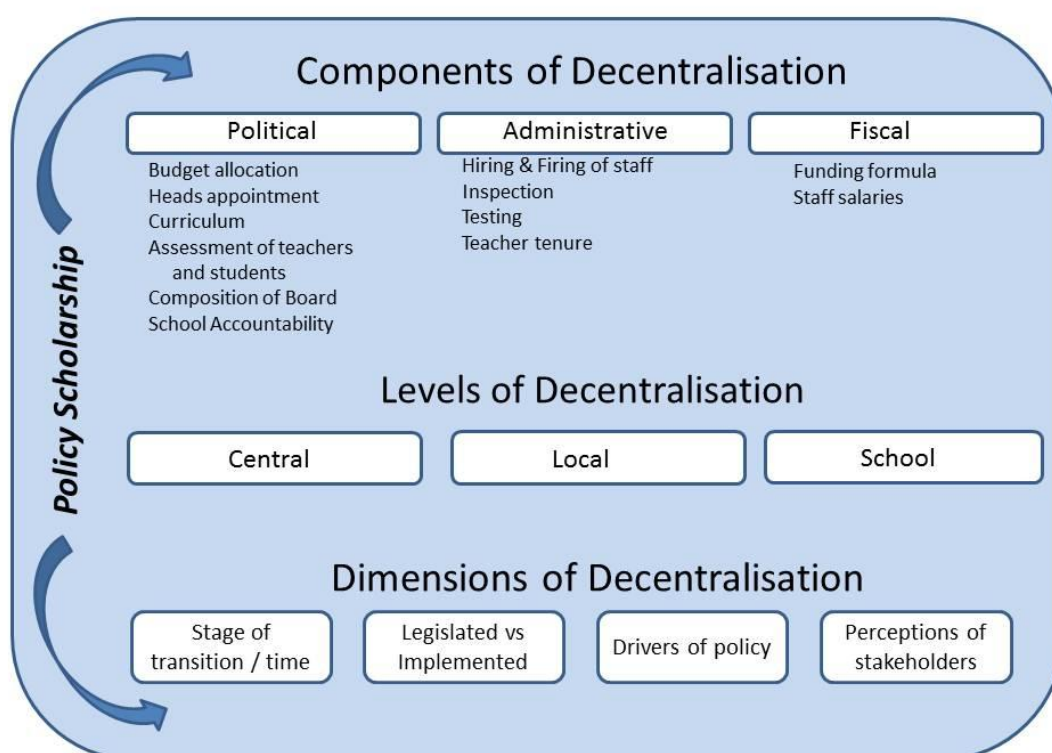
The conceptual framework evolved gradually and was permanently reshaped by the literature review, the fieldwork and findings. As described throughout the thesis, new elements were added to the framework as they were encountered. The next two chapters contribute to the framework from the empirical point of view.

In the next section I present the methods used for data collection. Interviews with twenty stakeholders in Romania and official policy documents will be triangulated to show how policy text varies from its implementation. Note that I am aware that, as a former insider, now external researcher, I bring my own personal knowledge and interpretation of the field. Throughout my research I have attempted to maintain an open and objective outlook.

5.3 Methods

Qualitative research provides a big advantage in that it is more open and "much looser than quantitative proposals" (Bogdan and Biklen, 2007:78). In addition, it allows me to develop a new conceptual framework as it is still exploratory and contributes to the body of research: "…qualitative inquiry can be designed within a conceptual framework that integrates previous work while simultaneously being open-ended" (Sykes et al., 2009:170). In relation to the conceptual framework presented above, qualitative research design means that in the first four Chapters of the thesis, I was able to explore the components, levels and dimensions of educational decentralisation in depth and, at the same time, continuously updating the model. The two methods used to address the research questions are primary documents and interviews. They will be detailed below.

5.3.1 Primary documents

Documents are an important source of information. They "can be used to bring together the past and the present, the public and the private" (McCulloch, 2004:10). Documents are rich in providing accurate information on the research setting, participants and their background and culture, policy acts and legislation: "for every qualitative study, data on the background and historical context are gathered" (Marshall, 2006:107). They are also the 'text' of the three part structure from Ball above (Ball, 1990, 2006).

In this study, I used primary documents - official national documents, education reform acts, reports released by the Ministry of Education both during and post communism. Also, I have accessed other relevant legislation such as decrees, government ordinances, reform strategy documents and similar international primary documents. These were complemented by secondary sources and "grey literature" (Hart, 2001:28). In total I used approximately two hundred documents including official policy acts and drafts and national and international reports on the education system and decentralisation in Romania (see Appendix C for a table with the most relevant Romanian documents consulted).

In general, the documents accessed for the purposes of this research were public. Therefore, accessing them was not an issue. However, some reports or policy briefs only became available to the public a few years after the completion of the respective projects' implementation. This was the case of the World Bank's reports on Romania and its projects in Romania. Some other times, although in the public domain, not all of the documents needed were available for download from the Internet. This is why, at times, I have officially asked a policy-maker or inspector to provide me with a document or report that was not available. For example, as there were no official statistics

available about the name, numbers and gender of heads and inspectors in a specific county in Romania, so I requested this from the Ministry.

One advantage of documents is that they allow researchers to collect data on a continuous basis, which means that policy can be tracked over time and mapped against stages of transition (note the *time* dimension in my conceptual framework). In addition, researchers do not need to be in a certain place at a certain time in order to collect data through documents.

Documents represent the official stance (especially policy documents, legislation, etc.). For this reason, researchers have to employ another method to triangulate the findings from documentary analysis and look at the practice - the third dimension in Ball's (1990) analysis of a policy above. Marshall (2006) draws attention to a key-aspect in the use of documents in research: "documents must be viewed with the scepticism that historians apply as they search for truth in old texts" (p.108). Note again the difference between what is legislated and what is implemented in the dimensions of decentralisation in my conceptual framework.

When studying the documents, I used the information to position a certain legislative change at a certain time and/or associate it with a reform initiative (see Chapter Three). In addition, I have quoted excerpts from certain Education Acts in order to illustrate an issue, i.e. Art. 96 of the 2011 Education Act quoted in Chapter Three shows the roles of the headteacher in a Romanian school in light of the new legislation.

The aim of researching these documents was to get an understanding of the context in which the policy of decentralisation was designed and implemented beyond the textual references: "to try to understand documents in relation to their milieu or in other words to relate the *text* to its *context…*"

(McCulloch and Richardson, 2000:6). Regardless of the importance given by the researchers to collecting data from documents, they are advised to "proceed with caution" (Marshall, 2006:107). And that is because researchers play a key role in interpreting documents. They should pay attention to the "specific factors involved in their production and context such as personal, social, political, and historical relationships" (McCulloch, 2004:4). The use of documents as a means of data collection requires researchers to be discerning, alert and reflexive. At all times, they need to take important decisions such as why and when to use the documents in question (McCulloch, 2004).

In discussing policy making, Ball (1990) draws attention to the less apparent features of education acts. He reflects that the "discontinuities, compromises, omissions and exceptions are…sometimes of prime importance" (Ball, 1990:3). It is a researcher's duty to look for what has been omitted and try and make sense why something happens and what it means for the education system and policy implementation. Policy making is "often unscientific and irrational, whatever the claims of the policy makers to the contrary" (Ball, 1990:3).

In my case, for example, I looked not only at final published legislation but also draft versions of the same to compare with the final versions. My research with policy makers (see Chapters Six and Seven) also covered the changes to policy that happened prior to an Act or regulation. It was also important to note the change in terminology used from one text, draft or Act to another. In the 1995 Education Act, for example, the role of County school Inspectorates were considered *deconcentrated* and in 2011 they were referred to as *decentralised*. I have shown in earlier Chapters that terminology can be quite confusing when attempting to understand what decentralisation comprises. Schroeder (2005) also raised this as a problem in the Romanian context.

One of the disadvantages of documents is that, although rich in detail and information, they do not provide enough data for a whole research project. They speak about the subjects and subject matters, but are very static. And a research project requires an element of dynamics and interaction. This is why, in most cases, documents are supplemented by other methods of data collection such as questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, surveys, etc. In this research project, I have conducted in-depth interviews with 20 stakeholders in Romanian education to address this shortfall.

5.3.2 Interviews

The second method employed in this research was semi-structured in-depth interviews. Researching the reformation of Romanian education after the fall of communism, I chose interviews as I wanted to look at the phenomenon of decentralisation in depth. I considered this to be the most appropriate approach, as it is exploratory, and it captures the experiences of those who are required to implement it. In addition, the interviewees are free to answer according to their own views. The most widely used research technique in social sciences and favoured by educational researchers (Coleman and Briggs, 2002), interviews are essential sources of evidence and fundamental to qualitative research.

Interviews are very dynamic and reveal a great deal of information about the interviewees. For this reason, I have the opportunity to ask for additional or supplementary information in order to understand the interviewees' response or follow up "interesting responses and investigate underlying motives" (Robson, 1993:229). This is especially true in the case of in-depth interviews as they "typically are much more like conversations than formal events with predetermined response categories" (Marshall, 2006:101).

There are different types of interviews. Wengraf (2001) makes a clear distinction between the qualitative interview and a journalist's or television talk-show interview both in terms of width and depth. As a research method, the qualitative interview offers many advantages both to researchers and the researched. It is "a flexible tool … enabling multi-sensory channels to be used; verbal, non-verbal, spoken and heard" (Cohen et al., 2007:349). Interviews are regarded as "purposeful conversations" (Robson, 1993:228).

Research interviews refer to human affairs and "should be reported and interpreted through the eyes of specific interviewees, and well-informed respondents can provide important insights into a situation" (Yin, 2003:90). The emphasis here is on the participants' views (the emic perspective) rather than on the researchers' (the etic perspective) (Marshall, 2006). Similarly, Bogdan and Biklen (2007:103) argue that interviews provide "insights of how subjects interpret some piece of the world".

In my PhD study, it is my interviewees' perception of the effects of school decentralisation on their professional roles and practice that is of interest. I interviewed twenty stakeholders in Romanian education as follows: twelve heads; four county school inspectors and four national policy-makers. The interviews were conducted in Romanian. Interview data was recorded, analysed and then translated into English for the purposes of the research. The interviews were undertaken at different points in time during the second, third and fourth year of the PhD and ranged from forty-five minutes to one hour depending on the respondent (see Appendix C for the Participant Information Sheets). Before each interview, I sent information sheets explaining the purposes of my research. At the beginning of each interview I later reiterated these and also told them that I would use quotes anonymously before asking them if they needed further clarification. Then, we proceeded to signing the Consent Forms and recording the interviews.

5.3.3 Access and Sampling

In preparation for the fieldwork, gaining access was the next issue to sort out after deciding on the methods of data collection, designing the interview schedules and selecting the group of interviewees. I first negotiated access to the Ministry of Education (macro), two County School Inspectorates (meso) and had discussions with some heads (micro) in the respective counties. I sent a letter to prospective interviewees at all the three levels of my research by e-mail, waiting for their reply for four weeks. I then went back to Romania and telephoned them in order to check on their agreement and availability and to schedule the interviews.

Ozga (2000) points out the importance given to the relationship between the researcher and the researched. My stance as researcher and co-professional was clearly outlined in all of my correspondence with the prospective respondents and then with each and every one in the group of interviewees. This was also available in the Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix C) attached to the emails sent out to potential interviewees. In that letter, I told the respondents who I was and what and where had been my last teaching position, the fact that I was doing a PhD and a brief summary of my project. At all times, I was aware that I was bringing my own knowledge of the Romanian field of education into the research and attempted to avoid the pitfalls associated with it. Being a native Romanian speaker and the prior experience of the field both as an insider (former teacher and consultant) and outsider (researcher) facilitated the research. Without it, the interpretation of the findings might have been different as some meaning might have been lost. For example, when asked about their career pathway, some interviewees meantioned a "favourable conjecture". As a Romanian, I knew that this meant that they were offered a position by their political party. Nevertheless, my own positionality could have been limiting had I, for example, probed the interviewees too much or chosen not to use the dissonant opinions. That meant that I was reflexive and reflective

upon both the data collection and the data analysis and interpretation. I constantly challenged my understanding of the data. For example, the fact that I transcribed the interviews immediately after the data collection, but I re-read them later, enabled me to distance myself from the initial assumptions about the meaning of the data.

As explained earlier, all written communication with the participants was bilingual (English and Romanian). For example, the letter of invitation and the information sheets were translated into Romanian and attached to the e-mail together with the English version (see Appendix D). The consent form was also translated in Romanian and the interviewees were asked to sign both of the forms on the day of their interview (see Appendix C for a blank copy of the consent form both in Romanian and in English).

All interview respondents were recruited in Romania. In total, there were 20 participants (both male and female) from three sub-groups in Romanian pre-university education, i.e. national policy-makers, county school inspectors, headteachers. By occupying different positions within the Romanian system of education and fulfilling various tasks, the respondents spoke at large about the challenges of decentralisation. Hence, they provided me with a picture of educational reforms and restructuring seen through various lenses. Due to the nature of my enquiry, I have used "purposeful sampling" (Patton, 1999:169). This is "a strategy in which particular settings, persons or events are selected deliberately in order to provide important information that can't be gotten as well from other choices" (Maxwell, 1996:70).

The most hard to reach subgroup was that of the policy-makers. After three unsuccessful attempts to contact and interview key policy-makers for the process of decentralisation in Romania, I used the snowball technique (Marshall, 1998) by which one member of a sample recommends others that fit the profile looked for by the researcher. One of the national-policymakers

that had already agreed to be part of the sample recommended another potential interviewee. When contacted, the latter gave me the e-mail of another policy-maker (Edward) he thought would be very relevant and interested in taking part, especially since he had played a key-role in the implementation of the Education Reform Project. This project by the Romanian Government in collaboration with the World Bank (see Chapter Three, section 3) also introduced decentralisation. Had I not used the snowball technique in this case, I would have missed out on one key-informant.

In identifying the heads in one of the counties, I also used the snowball technique. I contacted Claire, the general inspector whom I have met before in my capacity of Consultant for the Ministry of Education. She then provided me with a list of potential interviewees and their contact information. I contacted all the headteachers by phone and selected six. Then, I arranged a convenient date for the interviews. When using the snowball technique, I was alert at all times that by using the snowball technique the integrity of my data might be affected. Nevertheless, due to the specificity of the sample (i.e. twenty elite interviewees) and the criteria they needed to fulfil in order to be part of the sample (see below), this sampling technique proved fruitful. Criteria used in selecting the sample were as follows:

- Professional position or role of the participants
- County of work for Inspectors and Heads
- Experience in the field. It was very important, especially in the case of the heads. My aim was to have both newly-appointed heads in the sample, as well as very experienced headteachers (thirty years in post).
- Gender (both male and female)
- Availability and commitment to the study.

I conducted interviews with 20 respondents over an 18-month period. My focus was on interviewing four respondents at national level, four school inspectors at the regional level and 12 headteachers of urban upper-secondary schools and colleges interviewed twice at the local level. As one of the heads was not in post when I returned for the follow-up interviews, in total I conducted 31 interviews. While the interviews with the former were conducted in Bucharest due to the location of the Ministry of Education and policy-makers, the latter were sourced from two different counties in Romania of the 42 counties in total. I travelled to the schools in which the heads were working to collect the data.

In terms of gender, the sample composition was 11 male and 9 female. With regard to their professional position, they were:

- Female: 1 national policy-maker; 3 inspectors; 5 heads
- Male: 3 national policy-makers; 1 inspector; 7 heads

As this was not the object of the interviews, I have not asked questions, nor categorized on ethnicity. None of the respondents made any comments with regard to their ethnicity. This might have to do with the fact that in Romania, the majority of population is white Romanian with ethnic minorities representing less than 10% of the population. In total, I knew six of the respondents prior to interviewing them, i.e. two inspectors and three of the heads in one of the counties of research and one policy-maker. I met the policy maker in my professional capacity in the 2000s.

Four national policy makers represented the national macro level. These were: a former Minister of Education; a consultant who established the financial framework for decentralisation; a Director of one of the Agencies subordinated to the Ministry of Education and a General Director for Pre-

Higher education (see Table 5.1 below). Although there are over 300 employees in the Ministry of Education, out of which more than half are high-ranking public servants, interviewees' position and role in devising policy and educational standards, was the main reason for selecting specific participants. Please note that for the purposes of anonymity, I have altered their names in the front column.

Table 5.1: Policy-makers

Name and Interview date	Professional information
JOHN 24th May 2010	In education for 26 years *Currently:* full time Associate Senior Researcher in the Institute of Educational Sciences. PhD; in post for 12 years; *Previously:* Advisor to the Education Secretary of State for Education in the period 2005/2007; Inspector in the Ministry of Education in various departments, especially related to educational policy, financial management and decision-making, in the period 2000/2003; trainer of inspectors (1998) and World Bank Advisor for World Bank's (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development) DFID (Decentralised Finance and Management Project) in the period 1988-2002; Deputy General County School Inspector in the period 1988-2000; Subject (Physics) County School Inspector in the period 1995-1998; Physics teacher 1984-1995
EDWARD 21st May 2010	In education for 30 years *Currently:* Managing Director of one of the Ministry of Education's Agencies (founded in 2005), PhD, in post for 5 years; *Previously:* Researcher in the Institute of Educational Sciences, PhD in the period 1992-2005. In this role, he has coordinated research in curricular development, trainers' training, and educational management. In 1996, he was appointed chief of the component called "Management and finance" of the Education Reform Project (RO 3724) co-funded by World Bank (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development) and the Romanian Government coordinating the following compartments: Educational Policies, EMIS (Educational Management Information System), financial management, headteacher training, inspector training; School Head 1990-1992; History teacher in the period 1980-1990.
MARY 17th October 2011	In education for about 25 years *Currently:* General Director for pre-Higher Education in the Romanian Ministry of Education, in post for 12 years (with a 2-month break); *Previously:* Director for High School Education in the Ministry of Education for a few months in 1998; Maths teacher beforehand.
PAUL 28th January 2011	No previous experience in education Former Minister of Education, Member of the National Liberal Party *Currently:* Member of Parliament- Lower House *Previously:* Engineer

Administratively, Romania is divided into eight development regions (see Chapter Three and Map 2). Each region is further subdivided into a number of counties. In total, there are 41 counties and the capital (Bucharest) area (see Map 1 below).

I designed my study for two counties in one of the eight development regions. The reason for selecting this particular region as opposed to others was the fact that I had some professional connections, being the region in which I acted as a Consultant for two years. Furthermore, I have been a teacher for 7 years in one of the two counties. For the purposes of this thesis, I will call the two counties of research "County 1" and "County 2". The selected counties are the largest in the region both in terms of area and population. However, in spite of being in the same region, the two counties of research are quite different.

Map 1: Romania, administrative map

Source: RO.Wikipedia.org

County 1 is one of the three counties that had been selected to pilot financial decentralisation nationally as from 2005 (see Chapter Three for more details

and MERY, 2007). Specifically, around twenty schools in this county have been piloting the provisions of financial decentralisation for four academic years. Administratively, County 1 has 3 cities and 4 towns. The heads in the sample come from 1 city (which is also the capital of the county and region) and 2 towns.

In County 2's case, the decentralisation of the education system was a complete novelty and although they were aware of pilots in other counties, there had been no implementation of decentralisation before my interviews in 2010. Schools continued to follow the national regulations for both teacher and student examinations as well as receiving funds from the state budget. Administratively, County 2 has 2 cities and 9 towns. The heads in the sample come from 2 cities (one of which is also the capital of the county) and 2 towns. In Romania, the role of the County School Inspectorates is mainly that of bridging communication between the macro (the Ministry of Education) and the micro (schools).

Four county school inspectors represented the regional meso level. There are 58 inspectors in total in the two counties chosen for this research: 33 in County 1 and 25 in County 2. I chose to interview two school inspectors in both of the counties of research due to their responsibilities, i.e. management (see Table 5.2 below).

Table 5.2: Inspectors

Name, Interview date and County	Professional information
ALICE 12th May 2010 County 1	In education for 13 years *Currently:* General County School Inspector in a pilot county; in post for 8 months; but also in the period 2005-2008 *Previously:* manager at a different public institution in the county (did not mention which) for a few months in 2009; General County School Inspector for six months in the period December 2008- June 2009; MP in 2008 (and suspended from the General County School Inspector post); Economics teacher beforehand
BEATRICE	In education for 14 years

12th May 2010	*Currently:* County School Inspector responsible for Management; in post for 8 months
County 1	*Previously:* County School Inspector responsible for Institutional Image in the period 2005-2009; Expert in the County Unit of Implementation of the Project for Rural Education and teacher trainer at Teachers' Training and Development Centre in the period 2001-2005
CLAIRE	In education for 32 years
27th May 2010	*Currently:* General County School Inspector in a non-pilot county; in post for 8 months; elected Councillor in Local Council
County 2	*Previously:* a Deputy County School Inspector responsible for Management and Institutional Development for a few months in 2009 and in the period 2005-2007; deputy head in the period 2007-2009; Maths teacher beforehand
DAVID	In education for 40 years
27th May 2010	*Currently:* Deputy County School Inspector in a non-pilot county, responsible for Management and Institutional Development; in post for 8 months;
County 2	*Previously:* Deputy County School Inspector responsible for Curriculum and School Inspection in the period 2005-2007; Subject Inspector (History) in the period 2000-2002; school head for 7 months in 1994; Subject Inspector (History) and Personnel Inspector in the period 1980-1990; History teacher for the rest of his career

Whereas in County 1, there are 4 inspectors responsible for management and institutional development, in County 2 there are 2. I interviewed 2 out of the 6. In addition, I also interviewed the General Inspector in both County 1 and County 2 because at a broader level they are responsible for the entire educational architecture at county level.

Twelve headteachers of urban secondary schools from two different counties in the same region in Romania represented the micro level. At the focus of this research, headteachers represent the largest sub-group in the interviewees' group (see Tables 5.3 and 5.4 below). They were interviewed twice. While six of the heads were selected from the county that has been part of the national pilot of school decentralisation (County 1), the other six were from a county that did not take part in the pilot (County 2).

Table 5.3: Heads in County 1

Name and Interview date	Professional information
LAURA 17th May 2010 17th May 2011	In education for 11 years *Currently:* Head (697 students); in post for 8 months *Previously:* Deputy Head in the period 2007-2010 (January); teacher in the period 1989-2007
ANNA 17th May 2010 17th May 2011	In education for 9 years *Currently:* Head (701 students); in post for 11 months; *Previously:* Deputy Head in the period 2008-2009 (October); Assistant Deputy Head in the

	period 2007-2008 (April); Romanian teacher of Romanian in the period 2001-2009.
PETER 18th May 2010 12th October 2011	In education for 28 years *Currently:* Head (1950 students); in post for 6 years; *Previously:* Head in the period 1994-1995 in a different school; Subject (Physics) County School Inspector in the period 1997-2004; Physics teacher in the period 1982-1997
GEORGE 18th May 2010 20th May 2011	In education for 30 years *Currently:* Head (850 students); in post for 14 years *Previously:* Deputy Head in the period 1991/1996 in the same college as his current headship; Head of a Secondary School in the period 1984-1991; Technical Subjects teacher (technical-vocational education) in the period 1980/1996.
ADAM 19th May 2010 20th May 2011	In education for 20 years *Currently:* Head (1485 students); in post for 20 years ; *Previously:* Engineer (Transports) and Technical Subjects teacher (technical-vocational education).
DANIEL 18th May 2010 14th October 2011	In education for 14 years (May) *Currently:* Head (1000 students); in post for 4 years; *Previously:* Assistant Deputy head in the period 2004-2006; Maths teacher in the period 1996-2006.

Table 5.4: Heads in County 2

Name and Interview date	Professional information
DAN 11th May 2010 21st July 2011	In education for 27 years *Currently:* Head (1253 students); in post for 10 months; but also in the period 2003-2007 and 1997-2002. *Previously:* Physics teacher beforehand
TONY 5th May 2010 18th May 2011	In education for 15 years *Currently:* Head (1600 students); in post for 10 months; *Previously:* Deputy Head in the period 2005-2009; Maths teacher in the period 1995-2005
ROBERT 4th May 2010 only	In education for 21 years *Currently:* Head (1450 students); in post for 5 years *Previously:* Head in the period 1998-2001 in a different college; Maths teacher in the periods 2001-2005 and 1989-1998.
DIANE 3rd May 2010 23rd May 2011	In education for 20 years *Currently:* Head (2500 students); in post for 11 months; *Previously:* Deputy Head in the period 2006/2009; Assistant Deputy Head in the period 2000/2006; Physics teacher in the period 1990/2000.
LIZ 5th May 2010 10th October 2011	In education for 29 years *Currently:* Head (1300 students); in post for 4 years; *Previously:* County School Inspector in the period 2000/2006 and Expert in the implementation of various Educational Projects Economics and Marketing teacher in the period 1981/2000.
JOANNE 5th May 2010 10th October 2011	In education for 16 years *Currently:* Head (1050 students); in post for 11 months; *Previously:* Assistant Deputy Head in the period 2005/2009; Romanian teacher in the period 1994/2005.

I have interviewed twelve of the total of 60 headteachers (thirty-six from County 1 and twenty-four in County 2) in the two counties of research that fit the profile required by my research, i.e. are heads of urban, large, upper secondary schools.

5.3.4 Risk management, research integrity and ethical issues

Before going on fieldwork, researcher's risk management, ethics forms and interview schedules were approved by the University of Manchester. The only impediment I foresaw at the beginning of my study was the fact that maybe some of the respondents would not remain in post until the end of my fieldwork, especially because they can be appointed on political grounds and that because, in spite of implementing decentralisation and militating for a depoliticised system of education, Romanian Education is still highly politicized. By the same token, they can be removed from post if there is a change in government and the political party that used to support them is stepping down (see Chapters Three, Seven and Nine). That risk was more likely with regard to headteachers because they were to be interviewed twice. However, this research is about the role and work of the headteacher as distinct from the biography of the role incumbent, and this minimises the risk. When I re-visited the heads in the sample for the follow-up interviews, I found all but two heads in post. The first one (Robert, head in County 2) had completed his four-year headship by the time of the follow-up interview. On the occasion of the first interview, he advised me that he would not be able to be interviewed at a later stage. I chose not to replace this head with the new head of school as their opinion had been collected and the study is not a fully longitudinal one as not all interviewees were reinterviewed. The point was to see how the same headteachers respond to new roles following the decentralisation of education from Stage I to Stage II of data collection. One other head (Laura, from County 1) has become a deputy in the same school

she served as a head in the time span between the two interviews and the follow up still took place. By interviewing headteachers at two points in time, this study exhibits a longitudinal feature.

Lincoln (1995) notes researchers should demonstrate concern for human dignity and respect of participants first and foremost: "Research serves the purpose of the community in which it was carried out rather than simply serving the community of knowledge producers and policymakers" (Lincoln, 1995:280). Marshall (1990) advanced the idea that participants in the research should benefit in some way from the research. As a researcher, I have disseminated the research findings in an appropriate and agreed manner and have respected the guidelines provided by BERA (2011). The participants to my study will also be provided with a short report synthesising the findings of the research.

The University of Manchester's Ethics Committee on Human Beings has approved the research proposal and interview schedules in November 2009 (see Appendix C). The ethic of respect and responsibilities associated with this has informed the entire research process. All participants in the study are elite professionals. They are stakeholders in the field of education in Romania, i.e. former ministers of education, directors and researchers in the line ministry, inspectors and heads and so public figures. Consequently, the main ethical issue was related to their identities. I have addressed this explicitly both in the introductory email sent to subjects, and the information sheet. In addition, before the face-to face interviews began, I reassured them that their personal details would be hidden in order to protect their identity. Therefore, their opinions have been presented under the use of a pseudonym.

All the interviewees were supplied with an information sheet and a consent form (see Appendix C) to be signed off at the beginning of the interview. In

line with the Ethics Committee's requirements, headteachers signed two consent forms corresponding to the two interviews. Furthermore, I have been using ongoing oral consent checking during the interviewing process. These provided participants with an opportunity to decline or avoid answering certain questions or discussing particular topics if they so wished.

The interviewees agreed to me recording the interviews. The recordings and transcriptions accompany the thesis. The respondents had access to the interview transcripts before I used and analysed the data. Also, I informed all participants of their right to withdraw from the research process for any or no reason and at any time. None of the interviewees withdrew their statements though. In addition, none of the headteachers and inspectors in the sample has added anything since to the interview transcript. Two of the national policymakers wrote back, clarifying two or three minor aspects such as the name of an institution for which the interviewee used an abbreviation in the original interview. The second one (Edward) wanted to make sure that the entire transcript would not be used for quotes in the thesis. All names of cities, towns, counties and persons mentioned throughout the interviews have also been changed for anonymity purposes.

The data was stored in a locked drawer in my home and was accessed by me only. The data is kept for no longer than one year after confirmation of the PhD degree result and then it is deleted from the USB and the hard copy will be shredded. I have obtained permission to make a small amendment to the project approved by the University of Manchester's Ethics Committee on Human Beings. I initially planned to re-interview the heads in 12-14 months after the first interviews. As some of the heads were not able to be interviewed in the time stated due to participation to CPD, I was granted a change in dates regarding the part of the second stage of data collection.

5.4 Data collection

This study is an examination of the effects of the policy of decentralisation on one professional group - headteachers. With this aim, stakeholders located at three different levels in the Romanian system of education: *micro* (headteachers), *meso* (inspectors) and *macro* (policy makers) were interviewed. In addition, legislation in education and key-policy acts have been reviewed and analysed.

Interviewing of elites

The group of interviewees consisted of twenty national policy makers, county school inspectors and headteachers. Thus, they are all powerful and influential people in the field of education in Romania (a former minister, two directors in the ministry and one consultant, former advisor to the Secretary of State for Education, etc), it is of utmost importance to acknowledge some of the issues arising when interviewing elites. One of the risks researchers face with this kind of interviewees is that respondents say 'the right thing' or what they think the interviewer wants to hear. The risk here is exacerbated by the elite role of interviewees in that they represent the government/various institutions and organisations and want to provide the interviewer with the 'official' point of view.

Marshall (2006) notes the easiness with which elites converse. Ostrander (1993) shares a similar point of view and believes elites are used to being in a position of power in which other people are looking up to them, asking for questions and looking for solutions to their problems: "elites are used to being in charge, and they are used to having the others defer to them" (Ostrander, 1993:19). Elites' advice is often unquestioned and then unconditionally followed:

> Well practiced at meeting the public and being in control, an elite person may turn the interview around, thereby taking charge of it. Elites often respond well to inquiries about broad areas of content and to open-ended questions that allow them the freedom to use their knowledge and imagination (Marshall, 2006:106).

In my study, some of the heads were keen to please me and give the 'right' answer (or official answer) to my questions, in spite of my saying that there was no right or wrong answer and that I merely wanted their views. This was especially the case in the first interviews. By the second interview, and after they had seen the transcripts of the first interview, they understood that it was their evidence, views and insights that counted. The fact that it would be used anonymously was extremely important and so, heads conversed in an open and engaged manner.

Similarly, when I interviewed the four national policy-makers, I noticed that some of them wanted to provide me with the official point of view rather than a personal opinion. In my pilot study, for example, I asked Mary what was decentralisation and, she replied that it was what the legislation said it was and started quoting/reading out from the Education Act draft. I found that surprising, not least because I had previously stated that I was looking for personal points of view. On another note, John was very pragmatic and openly criticised the Romanian Government's lack of certainty with regard to what kind of decentralisation they wanted and how much of the power was to be delegated downwards. However, I am not sure John would have had the same openness had I interviewed him years earlier when he himself was the advisor to the Secretary of State for pre-university education and consultant for the World Bank.

In that sense, upon reflection, the socio-political and historical context in which the interviews took place proved to make the difference. After forty years of totalitarianism in which the only opinion that mattered was that of the

Romanian Communist Party, my interviewees are part of an ongoing cultural learning process. This is the cultural transition that Birzea (1994) appreciated would take twenty-five years to be accomplished. I believe the duration of transition to a democracy in which people are free to express both personal and professional opinions could potentially take much longer than that. This is especially the case of people currently in their 60s and 70s, who have lived most of their lives in totalitarian Romania.

In Stage I of data collection, I undertook nineteen in-depth interviews (lasting up to 60 minutes each) in the second year of my PhD. There were 3 interviews with policy makers, 4 with school inspectors and 12 with headteachers. The heads in the group were in large urban schools upper-secondary schools where the number of students varies between 700-2500.

As headteachers were at the core of my research, I considered it was necessary to interview them twice (Stage II) before proceeding to analyse the data. Therefore, Stage II consisted of re-visiting the heads in the period May-October 2011, i.e. within a 12-17 month interval since the initial interviews. I interviewed 7 heads in the third year of my PhD and 4 in the fourth year, respectively. The 12th head in the sample could not be interviewed for the second time as his headship finished before I reached Stage II of the fieldwork.

Also, due to the new legislation enacted in 2011, one of the national policy-makers, who was interviewed in the pilot (2009) and was supposed to be interviewed in Stage I of the main study, could only be interviewed in Stage II (October 2011). She wanted to be interviewed only after the enactment of the new Act (2011). As the plan was to interview all respondents in Stage I, and only re-interview the heads in Stage II, approval was sought for and

granted by the Ethics Committee from the University of Manchester to interview this respondent in Stage II (see Appendix C).

Interview schedules

I designed my interview schedule so as to address the research questions, to provide an accurate picture of the phenomenon under discussion and to avoid "lack of consistency" (Robson, 1993: 229). The schedule followed three lines of inquiry:

- past - historical context under communism
- present - early and contemporary post-communism and
- reflections on the future in the light of the new legislation

Each line has been thoroughly probed during the interview (see the interview schedules in full Appendix C). I asked all the main questions in the schedule and, depending on the dynamics of the interview, I used the probes more or less or in a different order than listed.

I consider earlier life is part of the current and future person, and so I started the interview by asking the respondents to present and describe themselves. An additional reason was that I wanted them to feel comfortable. If they talked about themselves and shared important things about their life and career, the aim would be clearly achieved. Life and professional identity are interdependent. I wanted to find out how the respondents came to be who they are today. Most of my respondents were married with children. I wanted to find out how much time they dedicated to their job and family. There were some exceptions to this pattern. For example, both of the female inspectors interviewed in County 1, both in their 30s, were unmarried and had no children. I also wanted to know how the interviewees perceived their

professional role in light of the new legislation and explored issues of leading professional versus chief executive identities (see Chapter Four).

For the heads in the group, I also wanted to know when and why they decided to become heads; if this was a planned move or rather a matter of circumstances. I was also interested in how their spouses/partners and children and extended families reacted to their taking up headship, a challenging and time-consuming job. My interviewees talked about the challenges of headship nowadays and during communism. Some of them were even able to make direct personal comparisons as they had been headteachers or inspectors during communist times. The interviewees commented on the roles and responsibilities of school heads and the uncertainties related to the implementation of decentralisation in Romanian education.

Before ending the interview, I asked my interviewees to give a final thought or two and most of them did. Their thoughts have been collected. It has been interesting to notice that some interviewees took this as an opportunity to share with me other thoughts that sprung to their minds during the interview. Others realised that they forgot to mention something when asked a certain question. A few have thought out loudly about their hopes and dreams for their future in headship or in education. Having had a background in the same field (see Oakley, 1981; Finch, 1984), I was able to establish a rapid rapport with the interviewees and the overall atmosphere was one of trust and openness.

5.5 Data analysis and interpretation

Qualitative data analysis and interpretation is time consuming and involves the researcher being alert, focused and involved at all times: "All qualitative

data analysis is idiosyncratic" (Ely *et al.,* 1991:143). In this sense, there is not a fixed recipe, and the researcher chooses the approach that best fits the research questions, chosen methodology and data. Therefore, analysis is subjective and it refers to the ways in which I, as researcher, am making sense of my data.

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) draw attention to the distinction to be made between data analysis and data interpretation. And while the former is "searching and arranging interview transcripts, field notes, and other materials" (p.196), the latter means "developing ideas about your findings, relating them to the literature" (p.196). Below, Merriam and colleagues (2002:14) state "data analysis is *simultaneous* (original emphasis) with data collection…To wait until all data are collected is to lose the opportunity to gather more reliable and valid data…With that caveat in mind, data analysis is essentially an inductive strategy".

In the next sub-sections, I will briefly refer to the analysis and interpretation processes undergone in order to unpack the PhD data collected. The interviewer co-authors the story; who am I and how I position myself in the research has a great impact on the story, because I enter the field with prior knowledge and this knowledge can improve or inhibit the interpretation of data. My experience of the Romanian education system allows me to quickly understand and interpret the interviewees' opinions. At the same time, I was most careful not to impose my opinions. I use first person when writing up the findings because this is my PhD study, and so I play a very active-creative role (Foster and Parker, 1995) in the research as well as taking responsibility for the research.

Transcribing and translating interview data

The interviewees' thoughts and statements are not only collected during interviews, but also co-authored by the interviewer/researcher who gives meaning to the data according to his/her own interpretation (Kvale, 1996). There have been a number of issues identified with transcribing and translating interviews (Esposito, 2001, Rossman and Rallis, 2003, Tilley, 2003, Temple and Young, 2004). These have not been acknowledged by researchers until recently:

> Especially in the use of interviews, transcribing and translating text have become increasingly salient issues in the discourse on qualitative research. Neither is a *merely technical task;* both entail judgment and interpretation. Only recently has the methodological literature offered discussions about the issues in transposing the spoken word (from a tape-recording) into a text (a transcription), or in transposing the spoken word in one language (from a tape-recording) into another language (a translation) and then into a text (a transcription) (Marshall, 2006:110).

I both recorded the interviews and took notes while interviewing. In preparation for data analysis and interpretation, I collated my notes in separate files and folders. For instance, one folder was called micro (heads), another one meso (inspectors) and the third one macro (policy makers). In the micro group, there were two sub-folders corresponding to the two stages of data collection and two counties of research and included both the audio files of the interviews and later on, the transcripts. In an article on translating, Temple and Young (2004) address three primary issues:

(a) Whether to identify the translation act in the research report;

(b) Whether it matters if the researcher is also the translator;

(c) Whether to involve the translator in analysis.

In response to the above, I transcribed the interviews myself and translated relevant quotes into English. This proved helpful as an incipient form of

analysis occurred while transcribing (Rossman and Rallis, 2003) and translating. Wengraf (2001:7) argues that when data have been translated and/or transcribed, they are not raw data any more, but "processed data". Brott (2002:161) stresses the importance of typing an interview transcription yourself, but agrees this is very time-consuming and it might detract the researcher - transcriber from his/her focus as a researcher. Moreover, it requires a great deal of attention and good language knowledge:

> We do not speak in paragraphs, nor do we signal punctuation as we speak. The judgments involved in placing something as simple as a period or a semicolon are complex and shape the meaning of the written word and, hence, of the interview itself (Marshall, 2006:110).

Esposito (2001) noted that translation is "the transfer of meaning from a source language . . . to a target language" and sees the translator as "an interpreter who . . . processes the vocabulary and grammatical structure of the words while considering the individual situation and the overall cultural context" (p. 570). Hence, if the interview data then needs to be translated from one language into another there are much more complex issues arising than with transcribing because they involve more issues of connotation and meaning (Marshall, 2006). Rossman has worked extensively with students whose first language, second or third language is not English. It is of paramount ethical importance to inform the reader that translation has occurred at some stage in the research process (Rossman and Rallis, 2003). Rossman and Rallis (2003:260) identify three other issues associated to transcribing and translating:

1. If you have translated from one language to another, which language constitutes the direct quotes?
2. Can you use translated words as a direct quote?
3. How do you signal that a translation is accurate and captures the subtle meanings of the original language?

In my case, transcribing and translating interviews became additional forms of analysis that preceded the documentary analysis and thematic analysis per se. In terms of the technique I used in transcribing interviews, I paused and re-listened to the recordings as many times as necessary. Once the transcript of an interview was completed, I listened to the whole interview once more to check for any inadequacies or misunderstandings. I then sent the transcript to the interviewee to be checked for accuracy and to see if the respondent wanted to add or clarify anything to it.

Analysis is a continuous process in qualitative interviewing. As a Romanian native with degrees in both Romanian and English languages and literatures, I am fluent in both of the languages Romanian and so rendering the meaning from one language to another did not constitute a problem. I have translated the interviewees' quotes into English after carefully analysing them in the original language, i.e. Romanian. In her study in Italy and Portugal, for example, Barzano (2007) notes that the word 'accountability' has no direct translation in these other languages. The nearest term is 'responsibility', which has a different connotation in English. The same is also true in Romanian. Overall, I tried to render in English the exact meaning of that word in Romanian. If that was not possible, I put a note under the respective quote explaining the differences in meaning and interpretation.

Thematic analysis

The interview data analysed resulted from the interviews described above and will be presented in Chapters Six and Seven using Thematic Analysis. The conceptual framework was also useful during the analysis phase as it enabled me to cross check my themes against the components, levels and dimensions of the model. Moreover, when I designed the interview schedules I already had in mind that the communist past might impact on the interviewees' current professional responsibilities and opinions. For this reason the interview schedule included questions relating to the past,

present and future. In this sense, the time (and later stage of transition) dimensions of my model were already under consideration. Finally, the data obtained contributed new dimensions to the model itself – that of the perceptions of headteachers of decentralisation and the difference between what was legislated versus what was happening in practice.

Thematic analysis is an approach used for identifying, analysing and reporting themes (patterns) within the data (Braun and Clarke, 2006:79). It is "a poorly demarcated, rarely acknowledged, yet widely used qualitative analytic method…" (Braun and Clarke, 2006:77). Thematic analysis has caused some debate because there is no fixed 'recipe' to use with this approach. For Boyantzis, thematic analysis is "not another qualitative method" (1998:4), but a "process" that can be used with most of the qualitative methods. It is a "translator of those speaking the language of qualitative analysis and those speaking the language of quantitative analysis" (Boyantzis, 1998: vii).

One of the advantages of thematic analysis is it "can be useful for producing qualitative analyses suited to informing policy development" (Braun and Clarke, 2006:96). This is why I considered this the most suitable approach for my data because I aim to learn how policy development has affected practice. The majority of research studies in education are interpretive, "…that is, the goal of the research is to understand the phenomenon and the meaning it has for participants" (Merriam et *al.,* 2002:327). I have used what Braun and Clarke (2006) call an "inductive approach" which means that the themes identified are strongly linked to the data themselves (Patton, 1990). To illustrate the findings, I will use direct quotes from interviews in the next two chapters.

In doing thematic analysis, Boyantzis (1998) calls for caution in distinguishing between "the unit of analysis": "the entity to which the

interpretation of the study will focus" and "the unit of coding", "the most basic segment or element, of the raw data or information that can be assessed in a meaningful way regarding the phenomenon" (xi). Data analysis and interpretation using thematic analysis involves three stages (Boyantzis, 1998:29):

- Stage I, "deciding on sampling and design issues"

- Stage II, "developing themes and a code". There are three different ways of developing a thematic code:

1. *"theory driven"*

2. *"prior data or prior research driven"*

3. *"inductive or data driven" ("constructed inductively from the raw information"- p.30)*

- Stage III, "validating and using a code"

In relation to Boyantzis' recommendations, sampling and design issues for my research were covered in section 5.3.3. I developed the interview schedules (see Appendix C) based on the data obtained in the pilot study and the respondents' feedback with regard to the questions asked. In terms of coding of themes, the analysis and interpretation were done using a bottom-up approach. I started to search for themes and patterns and group the quotes together in data encoding that "requires an explicit 'code'... A theme is a pattern found in the information that at minimum describes and organizes possible observations or at the maximum interprets aspects of the phenomenon" (Boyantzis, 1998: vi).

A good thematic code "captures the qualitative richness of the phenomenon" (Boyantzis, 1998:31) and has 5 elements:

1. *a label*

2. *a definition of what the theme concerns*

3. *a description of how to know when the theme occurs*

4. *a description of any qualifications or exclusions to the identification of the theme*

5.   Examples, both positive and negative, to eliminate possible confusion when looking at the theme.

I have tried to be in compliance with these guidelines when I coded the data. At first, I developed themes by reading all interview transcripts, selecting anything between a word and a paragraph and attaching a word on the right hand side that showed what was it about. That constituted the initial code. Whenever I identified the same issues, I used the same codes. I ended up with a rather long list of codes but also noticed that some of them overlapped. So the next stage was to cluster together the ones that were similar. At another stage, I selected the potential quotes for each coded area from all the transcripts.

While Boyantzis (1998, pp. 12-16) considers "projection", "sampling" and "mood and style" as the three major obstacles to an effective thematic analysis, Braun and Clarke (2006, pp. 94-95) elaborate on the "potential pitfalls" to be avoided:

1.   A failure to actually *analyse* (emphasis in original) the data at all

2.   Using the data collection questions…as the 'themes' that are reported

3.   A weak or unconvincing analysis

4.   A mismatch between the data and the analytic claims that are made about it

5.   A mismatch between theory and analytic claims, or between the research questions and the *form* (emphasis in original) of thematic analysis used.

An example of how I avoided one of these pitfalls is that the themes were generated from the data, not from the interview questions. Arriving at the current structure of my findings (see Chapters Six and Seven) was a long

process and I had to change the structure several times in the process. For example, one of the ideas was to have two different chapters: one for stage I of data collection - when I interviewed national policy-makers, county school inspectors and heads, and one for stage two – in which I re-interviewed the heads. In thinking about this option, I understood that it might have attempted to represent a longitudinal study, which is not the case. Furthermore, as I analysed the data from the second set of interviews, I noticed that most of the themes overlapped with those that I had already coded for stage I. And so, this initial structure idea was not a viable option.

Another thought I had was to have three chapters of findings: two for data on heads (one for heads' roles in times of centralisation and one since decentralisation) and one for national policy-makers and county school inspectors. I have tried this option and realised that this structure still did not showcase the Romanian example as I would have wanted. Added to that, I wanted to emphasise the role of heads after the decentralisation of Romanian education while drawing on communist times and early post-communist transition to decentralisation.

Finally, I arrived at the conclusion that I would have two chapters on findings that mirror the five themes presented in Chapter Four on international heads and add a theme specific to the Romanian context, i.e. politicisation. I trust this third and final choice is the right one.

5.6 Validity and Reliability

Validity is an important key to effective research (Cohen et al., 2007:133). Taking into account that the proposed research is qualitative and that the subjectivity of the respondents, their attitudes, thoughts and feelings, together with the researcher's may represent sources of bias, Gronlund

(1981) argues in favour of validity being seen as a matter of degree rather than an absolute state. Maxwell (1992:285) states that validity in qualitative research refers to "authenticity" and is synonymous with "understanding". One of the five kinds of validity Maxwell (1996) proposes is "interpretive validity". This is *"the ability of the research to catch the meaning, interpretations, terms, intentions"* (Cohen *et al.*, 2007: 135). Construct validity is a "quality control feature…a mechanism aimed at ensuring that researchers are actually researching what they think- and what they report- they are researching" (Evans, 2002:57). Strauss and Corbin (1990) explain the need to talk the same language:

> Usually, when anyone sees words, he or she will assign meanings to them, derived from common usage or experience. We often believe that because we would act and feel in a particular manner, that this, of course, is what the respondent means by these words. That belief is not necessarily accurate. Take a word- any word- and ask people what it means to them. (p. 81)

Maxwell (1992:284): "Validity is not an inherent property of a particular method, but pertains to the data, accounts or conclusions reached by using that method in a particular context for a particular purpose". Four main validity criteria are "necessary to all qualitative research" (Whittemore et al., 2001:529):

- credibility
- authenticity (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, Janesick, 1994 and Thorne, 1997)
- criticality
- and integrity (Maxwell, 1990, Smith, 1990)

I consider I fulfilled all these criteria when talking to the twenty key-informants in the Romanian system of education. Due to their senior professional position and the fact they have been doing that job for a number of years, the interviewees have high credibility and integrity. Their stories and perceptions of decentralisation are authentic especially as I conducted member checking to validate the data I had obtained.

I looked at the findings critically and weighed the information received during interviews against the socio-political context. As education is politicised, so are all these key-positions in the system. While some of the respondents have changed the political party several times in order to survive being dismissed from the post, others have done so from political convictions. Nevertheless, one way or another, they have all been connected with at least one political party throughout their career. Whether they were members of that party, or only initially supported by that party when applying for a position as head, inspector, national inspector, this is another facet of the discussion.

The term 'reliability' has been largely associated with a positivist approach to research, i.e. quantitative research designs. In quantitative research, reliability is essentially synonymous with "dependability, consistency and replicability over time, over instruments and over groups of respondents. It is concerned with precision and accuracy" (Cohen et al., 2007). While the meaning of 'reliability' is clear in quantitative research, the suitability of the term is contested in qualitative research (Winter, 2000, Golafshani, 2003). In qualitative research, 'reliability' refers to the stability of findings (Altheide and Johnson, 1984).

For Bogdan and Biklen (2007), reliability in qualitative research is a balanced act between what actually happens in the research context (accuracy) and what it is that researchers record (coverage). In relation to reliability, one of the issues associated with qualitative interviews is "the lack of standardization [that] inevitably raises concerns about reliability" (Robson, 1993:229). I addressed these issues by recording interviews and being consistent in my judgement (Boyantzis, 1998) both during the interviewing process and after. By also using an interview-schedule, the structure allowed for a level of consistency.

As opposed to quantitative research that aims to generalise findings, the aim of qualitative research is not to lead to generalisations, but to record multiple

interpretations of events (Brock-Utne, 1996, Cohen et al., 2007). This is precisely why I designed an exploratory qualitative study that looks in-depth at a smaller sample, with the aim of gaining illuminating insights. In my research, I provided a localised account of a contemporary phenomenon in education and its effects on professionals to which professionals in other countries can relate. Methodologically, Bassey (1981, 1983) argues that 'studies of singularities', i.e. research focussing on single events, could be much more relatable to others than a study that can be easily replicated. In other words, the *relatability* of a study is more useful than the generalisability.

The conceptual framework itself allows for detailed analysis and comparisons of the components of decentralisation, if applied in tabulated form. For example, it is possible to compare the percentage of the curriculum, which is determined at school, local and national level by country. In this sense, qualitative research applied to the decentralisation of one component of education (curriculum) can be used to show comparability and relatability between contexts.

Triangulation was used to "check on data" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985:315). The use of triangulation helps in overcoming "method boundedness" (Cohen et al., 2007:142). Interview data is also triangulated through comparative analysis, a "mode of methodological enhancement" (Evans, 2002:93). I validated and triangulated my data interpretation by member checking. In addition, the use of qualitative interviews and documents also ensures some triangulation (Robson, 1993).

5.7 Summary

In this chapter, I provided detailed information on the research design and methods used in this study. In addition, I presented the various stages in the fieldwork, from securing access to collecting and interpreting data. Throughout the chapter, while drawing on specific literature, I explained how

and why I approached and tackled the methodology issues. The conceptual framework was expanded to incorporate policy scholarship and I also discussed how it contributed to research analysis.

In the next two chapters I will be presenting accounts of the twenty key Romanian stakeholders interviewed with regards to the implementation of decentralisation in education. In analysing the data from the Romanian study, I will use the conceptual framework first introduced in Chapter Two and then developed further in Chapters Three and Four and presented in this Chapter.

In Chapters Six and Seven I will look at interview data with national policy makers, county school inspectors and heads. Six themes resulted from the analysis as follows: new professional roles; juggling multiple responsibilities and accountability systems; professional identity; budget; market forces and competition; politicisation. Whilst the first three themes are discussed in Chapter Six, the last three are presented in Chapter Seven. Of note, the last theme (i.e. politicisation) is specific to the Romanian context only.

CHAPTER SIX

PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEMS OF ROMANIAN HEADTEACHERS

6.1 Introduction

Educational decentralisation in Romania is taking place in a post communist state context, and so far I have shown that in the transition from communism to a more democratic society, the Romanian Government adopted neo-liberal policies.

In particular, decentralisation in education is being implemented through financial delegation from the national to the local authorities and then transferred to schools. In the process, the composition of the school board changed so as to reflect the new empowerment of local authorities and parents in the educational act. For the headteacher, the changes introduced in decentralisation led to the adoption of new roles and accountability systems. It is expected that all these will have an impact on their professional identity.

By looking at how the components, levels and dimensions of decentralisation work in practice in Romania (I explored them from the legislative point of view in Chapter Three) and their effects on headteachers' role, I am addressing the third research question: *What are the implications of decentralisation for headteachers in Romania?*

In this chapter I begin presenting and analysing the findings from my empirical study in Romania thematically, where I present the voices of those

who are actively experiencing this process. I am looking at what decentralisation means for headteachers' roles in Romania. In doing so, I am presenting their professional background and career pathways, their new responsibilities and accountability as well the relationship between professional and personal commitment (i.e. work and family life). The majority of the data is from headteachers but I will also include county school inspectors and national policy makers. Where the views of the latter differ from those of heads, I have highlighted this in the text. In this chapter as well as in the next one, I will solely focus on interview data. I used documents in Chapter Three where I presented the Romanian case of educational decentralisation based on legislation. In Chapters Six and Seven my emphasis is on what is implemented. Whilst mainly contributing to the *implications for stakeholders* dimension in the model, by adding the Romanian stakeholders' opinions to those of their international counterparts (presented in Chapter Four), Chapters Three, Six and Seven add to the *legislated versus implemented* dimension of decentralisation in the conceptual framework. The themes presented in this chapter are:

- New professional responsibilities (6.2)

- Juggling multiple activities and accountability systems (6.3)

- Professional identity (6.4)

Two final sections in this Chapter summarize these findings (6.5) and their contribution to the conceptual framework (6.6). I am setting the scene for Chapter Seven in which I detail headteachers' experiences of budgets, markets and competition against an overarching theme of politicisation. Finally in Chapter Seven, I conclude the contribution of both Chapters Six and Seven to the Conceptual Framework.

6.2 New professional responsibilities

In Chapters One (section 1.2) and Three (sections 3.6 and 3.8) I presented the responsibilities of Romanian headteachers as stated in the official legislation over the last two decades. I also discussed some important differences between head roles in communist versus post-communist times. In short, after the fall of communism, a shift of responsibility from the national to the local levels was attempted. I will now explore the interview data relating to these topics. There are four subsections here: the chief executive role, composition of school boards, hiring and firing staff and the appointment of heads.

The head as Chief Executive

In Chapters Two and Three I stated that in totalitarian states including Romania, the Communist Party imposed national legislation and directives from top to bottom. The findings of this study confirm this. Under communism (see Chapter Three, section 3.2), Romanian headteachers, though called 'Directors' were in fact school administrators. Everything from staff selection to finances and curriculum used to be centralised and school 'Directors' did not have much decision-making power. They were accountable to the school inspectors who, in turn, were accountable to the Ministry of Education:

> Financial management was fulfilled by the County School Inspectorate through the so-called centres for budgetary execution. This was a centralised financial system in charge of several schools. (Edward, Policy-maker)

Depending on their age, the respondents in the study experienced communism either as inspectors (David), heads (George, Adam), teachers (Diane, Claire, John, Edward, Mary, Joanne, Liz, Dan, Peter, Robert), or as students (Tony, Anna, Laura, Alice, Daniel, Paul). Heads expressed their opinions of this centralised system with clear hierarchies:

> In communist times, schools were run by the Party. If a head was a Communist Party member, the Party would support his

school more. As a result, that school would have a better material base for example. (Daniel, Head)

In those times, the relationship between School Directors and Inspectors was rather tense. There was a pure subordination of the Directors, with no room for collaboration. Many things have changed for the better since. (Peter, Head)

In the past, the head had to be correct, impartial, honest and a Party member. Those that weren't Party members, were persuaded to join the Party in the first 2-3 years after appointment. For instance, I was not a member of the Communist Party when I first took on headship. (George, Head)

In the 1990s, the strongly centralised character of education began to change when a transfer of responsibility from the Ministry of Education to County School Inspectorates was initiated: "Post-1989, a certain deconcentration of decision-making was transferred from the Ministry to Inspectorates and to a lesser extent from Inspectorates to schools" (Edward). Like their international counterparts who had started the process ten years earlier (see Chapter Four), there was the beginning of a change in headteacher roles in Romania.

In the early 1990s, immediately after the fall of communism Romanian heads were still *administrators* of national policies and legislation. In 1995, a new Education Act was adopted in which, heads (now to be called Managers) were about to start playing a more managerial role for the first time. At the time, this change was largely in name only with no real additional responsibilities in terms of finances or hiring staff.

Not until the mid 2000's did headteachers begin the move from being administrators or instructional leaders to assuming a more executive role: "We're now moving from administration to management and finally to

leadership" (Edward, Policy-maker); "Heads are the managers of the school. They are in charge of administering and managing budgets" (Laura, Head). This is similar to the role of *chief executive* (Hughes, 1972). An emphasis was now placed on the managerial side of their role:

> I think that the head now needs to be…a Manager, not a Director; s/he has to know how to plan her/his activities; to have business knowledge, to think about efficiency, (…) work within the allocated budget so as to ensure all the resources that their teacher colleagues need. (Tony, Head)

However, the lack of clarity in legislation made it difficult for heads to understand how to become managers or what roles they should personally assume. They felt initially as if they had simply more work to do and wanted legislation to specify in more detail what they could or should delegate to their deputies, for example: "It is pretty challenging, you know. There is an immense amount of work that cannot be done by one person only" (Robert).

One cultural overhang from communist days is that heads in Romania are used to being directed in some detail as to what they should be doing. So when the legislation set out the principles but not the methodologies of decentralisation (initially) most were unable to implement what was directed. Peculiar maybe to the Romanian case, heads were expecting detailed methodologies as to what roles they should or should not delegate to their own staff, for example.

In the absence of these full methodologies (and in order to cope with the workload) heads began to delegate instructional matters to their deputy heads: "My deputies understand the school's priorities and give me a good hand on the Administrative Board" (Robert, Head). Nevertheless, heads also stepped in if their attention was needed in an instructional issue or if the deputies were not around and vice versa: "Anything can be achieved through team-work" (Robert). This is especially the case in large schools (such as the

ones in which the heads interviewed work) where classes start at 7.30 or 8.00 a.m. and run for 12 hours, with half of the students studying in the morning, and the other half starting in the afternoon until the evening. Even though they work extremely long hours (see section 6.3), Romanian heads cannot be in the premises for 12 hours a day every day. There was no choice but to delegate responsibility to their deputies with such a long school day: "I'd need half a day to enumerate head's responsibilities...there are all sorts of statistics required by all sorts of institutions, bodies or simply by School Inspectorates" (Adam, Head).

Moreover, heads' new responsibilities (see Table 6.1 below) meant that they needed to spend time outside the school developing relationships with local authorities (see next section for more details):

> Every day as manager I have to allocate a certain time and importance both to the instructional process and to the managerial side of the job (…).There are many things that need to be sorted out at the beginning of each academic year. These include: staffing, funding, budgets, revenues, etc that we need to present to the Town Hall, inspections from Health Authorities and the Fire Department, etc. (Liz, Head)

> There is not a day that passes at school without an inspection, a commission coming in to check I don't know what, etc. (Diane, Head)

> In a decentralised system, the change for heads will be truly dramatic. They will be responsible for school management much more than before. This includes budgetary projections and executions, human resources management. They will also have to find time for instructional leadership that becomes increasingly important. (Edward, Policy-maker)

On average, heads allocate about four-five hours per day for managerial-administrative issues. They are still involved in instructional matters, in spite of delegating most of the instructional functions to their deputies.

Table 6.1: Head Roles in the 2011 Education Act

Head roles
Art 97/Education Act 1.2011
a) The head is the legal representative of the school. S/he is responsible for the executive leadership of the school
b) The head is the school's credit coordinator
c) Together with the Board, the head is publicly accountable for the school's performance
d) The head designs the regulation for school's organising and functioning that s/he then sends to the Board for approval
e) The head projects the budget, draws up the report for budgetary execution and sends it to the Board for approval
f) Is responsible for selecting, appointing, periodically evaluating and motivating staff as well as for firing staff in the school
g) Fulfils other roles established by the Board
h) Presents an annual report over the quality of education in the school. The report is presented to the Parents' Committee and is also sent to the local public administration authorities and to the County School Inspectorate.
i) Coordinates the statistical data gathering process and transmits it to the County School Inspectorate for the national system of indicators in education.

By the time of my second interviews (after the enactment of the 2011 Act), roles in a school were now clearly specified for both heads and their deputies. Legislation prescribed what had effectively been happening on the ground: while the head now fulfils a managerial role (Bursar, Financial/Business Manager, *Chief Executive*) and develops external relations such as with the local authorities, the deputy now deals with educational issues (Leading Professional). To achieve this delegation, heads needed to ensure effective teamwork: "First and foremost, I am a team-player and I believe that a good team can adopt strategies that can then open many doors" (Laura, Head):

> Nowadays, it is essential for heads to know how to work with people. Nobody can tell me that a head is great based solely on his skills and qualities. They can be very bright and able, no doubt, but they definitely can't do everything on their own. If his team doesn't support and respect him, he'll fail! (Tony, Head)

The fact that heads are experienced teachers themselves makes it easier to understand their colleagues. They are still aware, however, that delegation

does not mean abdication of responsibility: "The delegation of tasks to the deputy does not mean that the head is not held accountable for those issues anymore" (Adam, Head).

> You know, the consequences for making mistakes are quite costly. If we are audited…the head is clearly made responsible for discrepancies! This is why heads need to be really careful in everything they do and are better off checking everything three times. I mean it just doesn't work being a laissez-faire head. (Anna, Head)

A real Chief Executive role can only became reality when full control of finances is passed to the school and, in Romania, this only happened in 2010/11 (see Chapter Seven, section 2).

What is the composition and role of School Boards in staff (and head) selection and why?

Despite the frequent changes of government over the past decade, whilst the process of decentralisation has often faltered, the principle of decentralisation has not been rejected by any government. Decentralisation was meant to be a partnership in which the schools, families and local communities play equal roles in students' education. When I first interviewed the heads in 2010, the 2011 Education Act was under public debate. At the time, the School Board's membership consisted of two thirds teachers plus one parent representative and one representative of the local authority (see Chapter Three, section 9). When the 2011 Act was finally published the new composition was quite different: 1/3 heads and teachers, 1/3 parents and 1/3 local authority representatives:

> I don't have a problem with the principle of the new Board, *i.e. including more parents and representatives of the local community on the Board. This is one thing that all former ministers from the past seven years have agreed upon.* My problem though is that in the new Board, there are 7, 9 or 13

members [depending on school size]. In each of these variations, teachers are in the minority. I cannot agree with taking the decision-making from the school and giving it to the local community and parents. In these circumstances, the Government should not ask heads and teachers to be more accountable than before [if they are not able to take decisions]. (Paul, Policy-maker)

Many of the headteachers, inspectors and policy-makers interviewed however, were not so keen on this component of decentralisation, or at least, were not in favour of the balance of power under the new Board composition, i.e. being accountable to local authorities (see section 6.4 below for more detail).

Although the discourse of decentralisation is that it will increase schools' autonomy and heads' powers, heads often find themselves more disempowered than ever. This is especially the case in Romania, for a number of reasons explored in detail below: firstly, local authorities and the mayor (who comprise one third of the Board) are highly politicized (see Chapter Seven, section 4); secondly, there is a culture of nepotism and favour in Romania, which is probably stronger than in some West European countries; thirdly, heads need to apply for funding to the local authorities for the maintenance and buildings costs in their budget; fourthly, the amount allocated for these is to some extent negotiable (this is a different budget to per capita funding – see Chapter Seven, section 2); fifthly, local authorities now play an important role not only in school governance but also in the appointment of staff and the heads themselves:

> There is a need to set up better criteria when it comes to the selection and appointment of heads if we want to achieve better outcomes in education. If we carry on basing appointments on nepotism and/or politicisation, all we will manage to achieve is poor school outcomes. At the same time, the really valuable people that could have a great input and involvement in a school, will give up hope and never apply for headship. (George, Head)

As such, many heads feel disempowered and the adoption of this article on School Board composition is synonymous with decision-making powers moving outside of the school. Moreover, they believe that by losing a teaching majority on the Board may lead to an even bigger politicisation of the education system (see Chapter Seven, section 4).

Whilst legislation on decentralisation is intended to increase the autonomy of schools, this is not necessarily what is being achieved. There has been a transfer of power from national to local level, but at the local level itself, there are new battle lines: "In decentralisation, the School Board will have more power than heads" (Tony, Head).

In Romania as in other countries (see the vignettes in Chapter Two and the role and composition of boards internationally in Chapter Four) the role of the school board increased post-decentralisation (Maclure, 1989) and heads also became accountable to the new board (Hess, 1990, Gewirtz, 2002, Whitty, 2002). However, the role of local authorities on the school board was not accompanied by concomitant roles of financial provision and heads' appointment. Neither is political party membership a prerequisite (or highly influential factor) in heads appointment.

Another discrepancy between what is legislated and what is implemented (legislated versus implemented dimension of the model) is noted when it comes to teachers' selection. Although according to the 2011 Act, this is clearly the head's job (See paragraph f) in Table 2 above), in reality, when I re-interviewed the heads in 2011, they were still not selecting their teachers despite the legislation (Art 9 f) from Act 1/2011). The reason is that they were waiting for the secondary legislation to the Act, which would detail the hiring criteria, the membership of the selection committee, etc. In the meantime, teachers were still selected nationally by County School Inspectorates, following national guidelines:

> The biggest issue is that there is no autonomy of heads regarding staff selection. They are asking for great results. At the same time, they impose the human resources you're working with and heads don't have the slightest say in it. For instance, in my school I used to have a teacher suffering from acute schizophrenia. (Adam, Head)

The fact that there is a difference between legislation and implementation with regards to hiring staff is of real concern for headteachers. Heads are accountable for the quality of instruction in their schools. In order to provide quality education, they want to select the best and most suitable teachers for the post. While the central government through County School Inspectorates is still responsible for the hiring of teachers, heads feel they cannot be accountable. With accountability there should also come the responsibility to make the decisions to which they can be made accountable:

> …there is no room for manoeuvre. Consequently, I cannot take a decision for my school and say "Look, I take full responsibility for this. I want the best for this school and this is what I'm going to do". There is nothing we can do about it at the moment and this is what bothers me the most. I need to be allowed to work with the right people. (George, Head)

Whilst the new powers to hire and fire staff represent a decentralisation of powers to school level, it is to the level of the School Board and not to the level of headteachers. This means that local authorities and parents will take a more active role in hiring/firing decisions:

> A few years ago, conflicts started to appear between schools and the Town Hall. I don't know what triggered these conflicts and why. My guess is the current Mayor wants to impose people in top positions in schools. Despite the fact these people are not the best in what they're doing, they are *his* [emphasis in original] people. (Anna, Head)

This can still create problems for heads, particularly given the politicisation of local authorities and their influence on the Board (also see next section).

The Appointment of Heads

As shown in Chapter Three, heads used to be appointed by the County School Inspectorates according to national guidelines, examinations and Inspectorate interviews. The 2011 Act stated that they would, in future, be appointed by the School Boards although the secondary legislation, consisting of methodologies and guidelines for implementation, was not enacted until the end of that same year and the beginning of the year after (2012). "In the [2011] Act, it is stipulated that the Board is selecting the head and so on and so forth, but the exact requirements fail to be specified" (Dan). Note that this need for detailed specification of methodologies slows down the implementation of legislation.

Even when the selection process is detailed, heads and school boards are still looking to the Ministry for guidance. Even when things are prescribed, they are still not prescriptive enough. Moreover, the timing of the various methodologies and supporting guidance papers does not help either. On too many occasions, there is a chicken and egg situation: legislation specifies something that has a prerequisite which is not yet in place. Similar to the per capita funding issue, whereby the educational legislation preceded the necessary financial legislation, the appointment of heads methodology was also flawed: "It is said that the candidate for headship has to be a member of the Body of Experts in Educational Management. Problem is this body hasn't been founded yet" (Dan).

During my second round of interviews, and indeed at the time of writing, the methodologies were still being elaborated. Consequently, in practice, heads are still hired by County School Inspectorates instead of the School Boards. Regardless of when this Article is fully implemented, there is no doubt that this component of decentralisation will increase the powers of local authorities (as opposed to Inspectorates). However, how this will translate into school autonomy and or the powers of headteachers is less certain.

As the local authorities sit on school boards, administer most funds and are essential to heads' and teachers' appointments, this may well mean that decentralisation is not achieved in the sense that it has been in other countries. It is more likely to take the form of localism, similar to the case in Italy (Barzano, 2007, Grimaldi and Serprieri, 2010) and Chicago (Hess, 1990), rather than full decentralisation at the school level like in Victoria (Abu-Duhou, 1999) and New Zealand (Whitty, 2002).

6.3 Juggling multiple activities and accountability systems

As shown in the previous section, in the past (communism and early post-communism), the head's main role was that of an enactor of national legislation. Post decentralisation, Romanian heads have experienced important role changes. Nowadays, the variety and multitude of daily tasks in a head's diary is extraordinary. They switch from one thing to another with rapidity, whether they are in school, or outside it:

> The sort of things I have to deal with every day is amazing, whether it is about repairing a water pipe that broke, or something completely different, which you have never thought of before becoming a head. Sometimes, I get home and I feel like my brain is not working any more. (Diane, Head)

Common activities *within* school are: planning budgets with the school's chief accountant, working on the institutional development plan, meeting with parents and students, sitting on the board for the monthly meeting, meeting with teachers on the Teachers' Board, organising paperwork for inspections, teaching for up to four hours per week and many others.

Outside the school, heads' activities normally include a monthly meeting with other heads organised by the County School Inspectorate, visiting the mayor

at the Town Hall with regards to maintenance funds, liaising with the County School Inspectorate for inspection, staffing issues, CPD, and participating in national or international projects.

Each of these activities has a corresponding interface with other stakeholders in the administration of education. Heads are thus accountable to multiple stakeholders: to the Local Authorities with regard to finances and school board administration; to County School Inspectorates with regard to instructional matters and a small portion of finances (for student awards); to students and parents as consumers of education; and to teaching and non-teaching staff as employees. I will elaborate on these below.

6.3.1 Local authorities

Since the introduction of decentralisation in education, Romanian heads are subordinated to the mayors and local councillors from a financial point of view. Schools' maintenance costs and buildings are covered by local budgets raised through local taxes as of 2005. In 2010, per capita funding was introduced and also administered to schools by these local authorities. Per capita funding is designed to cover teacher salary costs only. Nowadays there are only 30% of funds allocated from the state budget through the ministry and the County School Inspectorate (see Chapter Three, Section 3.8).

In this context, it is interesting to note how headteachers perceive their change in accountability. Heads now see local authorities as a body to which they are (to some extent) subordinated, although they generally phrase this relationship as 'collaboration':

> It's not necessarily that they [the Town Hall] have ultimate authority, but there are new bonds being created. We need the local authorities' support concerning financial matters because it

is their budget that supports schools, isn't it? There are certain things that are dependent upon the local community. (Laura, Head)

…when I say local community I also include the Town Hall because this is the institution that manages the funds for schools. That being said, I've never seen this as subordination, but more like collaboration because I am only subordinate to the Mayor from a financial management point of view. (Diane, Head)

For some heads, this new relationship with the local authorities has proven beneficial:

We are accountable to the Town Hall. This is a relationship we're continuously nurturing and the mayors are always ready to come to our activities. They've always been there for us, both the current mayor and the former one. (Joanne, Head)

Decentralisation is a good thing because if we need something as a school it's much easier to go to the Town Hall and ask for it instead of going to the Ministry (Daniel, Head).

Most of the heads have an excellent relationship with local authorities and are being supported in their endeavours by the Mayor. Dan is happy with the outcomes of decentralisation and the fact that local authorities have a bigger say, because in his case, the Mayor has always been supportive. Adam also talks about the relationships he developed with the Mayor and local authorities. He recalls how he managed to get more funds for maintenance and material investments for 2010 due to his negotiating skills:

Initially, I was given a budget of only 2 million RON* for this year. Because this was far from enough to cover our needs, I had to go and see the Mayor. In the end, 3 million RON for maintenance and running costs were allocated to our school. (Adam, Head)

*Note: 5 RON= £1 or €1.20; (3 million RON = £600,000)

> Unfortunately, some of the heads believe that they neither need the Mayor, nor the local councillors as long as they're heads. They couldn't be more wrong! I think that without the Mayor and local authorities, one can neither be a good head, nor have a good professional activity as a head. (Peter, Head)

Although they agree with a more prominent role played by local authorities, not all headteachers are in favour of subordination to the same:

> It is not bad that the Local Council makes decisions. On the contrary! The only thing is that they need to do this according to the school's needs and these needs are best known by the head and School Board. (Adam, Head)

> This idea of subordination to the local authorities is quite daunting in my opinion; (…) I find it perfectly normal for a head to be checked and audited by someone else, but that person should not be from the local community, but from the County School Inspectorate. It is a completely different thing to be subordinated to an institution such as the Town Hall that does not know exactly what it is that I am doing in my school. (Anna, Head)

Some heads fear that local authorities might interfere too much in school matters, other than finances. The local government's lack of expertise in education and its strong politicised character are other reasons for heads' reluctance towards local authorities' involvement in schools' governance (see 7.4 for more on politicisation). In time, it is possible for some of the heads' opinions to change. Some of the heads have already adapted to the new circumstances and understood a good relationship with the local authorities is essential to obtain more funding and other general support from now on (see Adam, Dan, Peter, etc). Ultimately, where the money is and who makes the appointments is what determines primacy of accountability.

6.3.2 County School Inspectorates

Decentralisation and financial delegation have also impacted on the relationship between schools and County School Inspectorates in Romania. During communism, there used to be direct subordination between heads and the Inspectorates. Since County School Inspectorates lost most of their fund managing function this has now changed (see section 3.8 in Chapter Three for more information on school inspectors):

> As far as I can remember, I think that there used to be a clear definition of reporting structures. Before 1989, resources for schools were coming via the Ministry of Education through the School Inspectorate and that was the hierarchy. (Laura, Head)

Accountability, however, comes in different forms – financial, instructional, personnel and administrative. From an instructional point of view, heads accountability has not changed. For educational matters all of the heads interviewed say that they are still subordinated to County School Inspectorates first and foremost as the local offices of the Ministry of Education:

> We are in a relation of subordination to the School Inspectorate for instructional issues and school curriculum. Each and everybody has their own role in the new maze and I think that collaboration between all these bodies is welcome. What would happen otherwise? Acting solely, being accountable to no one and having no one's support would mean everyone does whatever they please and that would mean a disaster - true chaos! (Laura, Head)

> Also, we're subordinated to the School Inspectorate as we run all the national examinations under their patronage. (Diane, Head)

Despite the financial relationship with local authorities, many heads still believe that their *first* line of accountability is to the County School

Inspectorates. And County School Inspectors themselves think that decentralisation will not alter their role greatly:

> Our role will not change too much. The only difference will be that we won't be responsible for organising the national examinations for teachers. We will probably still countersign heads' appointments. It is even easier in the deputies' case because heads can sign the appointment order for deputies on their own. (Claire, Inspector)

Heads believe that the Inspectorates are best able to judge their performance and regulate school activities:

> Currently, heads are accountable to the County School Inspectorate (…) Secondly heads are accountable to the School Board. If something goes wrong and if the School Board doesn't penalise them, then the County School Inspectorate will do something about it. (Peter, Head)

While there is no direct relationship between school heads and the Ministry of Education, heads receive central directives through County School Inspectorates. County School Inspectorates are the link between the macro and micro levels of the education system. They fulfil the inspection role, and offer guidance for instructional and managerial matters:

> County School Inspectorates will only keep the inspection role. They won't have any decision-making powers with regards to heads' appointment because this is now the Mayor's job. (Paul, Policy-maker)

> School Inspectorates will keep the school inspection role because this is part of what we currently do too. We'll still inspect teachers, for example, as we assess their practice for upgrades; the institutional inspection will be part of our responsibilities in the future too. (Beatrice, Inspector)

Between the two sets of interviews, new legislation was enacted, which, in principle, would also give school boards responsibility for recruiting teachers (until this time the remit of the County School Inspectorates). The reality,

however, as mentioned in 7.2 above is that the methodology for doing so was still not in place at the time of my second set of interviews and so there was no difference in this aspect of their role. Accountability for recruitment at the time of the second phase of interviews still vests with the County School Inspectorates. Heads are looking forward to having a say in this area. During follow-up interviews, they reinforced the idea that schools should be allowed to recruit their teachers in order to increase the quality of education.

6.3.3 Students, parents and staff

In addition to their accountability to local authorities and the County School Inspectorates, Romanian heads do also now feel accountable to students and their parents:

> First and foremost, I am accountable to students and parents, because we are all working for them. Teachers and heads are working for the local community. (Diane, Head)

> We are also accountable to parents and, I believe, to all the actors in education because it is our responsibility to do this for the proper functioning of the school. (Laura, Head)

> To be honest, the thing that matters to me the most is being accountable to students. (Tony, Head)

This suggests that accountability to students is a moral duty that does not necessarily require formal regulation. Romanian heads also see themselves morally responsible for the well-being of their staff. This is to head teachers' advantage as they seem to be aware of and accountable for everything that happens in their school. At the same time it is daunting because, at times, heads are afraid of taking the wrong decision or feeling that they need to do everything:

> When you are in a leadership position, you realise that other people are dependent upon you. Often you have little time for your own problems. I need to be able to pick up the phone at 10 p.m. if a colleague calls me (…) or see a parent at 7 a.m. I need to be able to juggle all these. (Anna, Head)

Heads see their schools as their big extended family. As with any other family, everybody's concerns and well-being need to be taken into account: "I like to do justice to my hard-working fellow teachers" (Tony, Head).

> I think there should be a something like a written contract between the Head and the School Board and Teachers' Board. The head should resign if s/he does not reach the targets in a certain amount of time (Peter, Head).

I was expecting that, by the time of the follow-up interviews with heads, the new school board would be completely functional, and so, that I would be able to report on heads' experience in this new context. It was not always possible, however, to collect heads' views with regards to the functioning of the school board in its new composition because of the bureaucracy involved in appointing members. Peter, one of the last heads re-interviewed (October 2011) says, for example, that they are still waiting for the Local Council's nominations on the Board. As far as the schools are concerned, they had already decided which teachers and which parents would sit on the Board:

> Accountability is now increasing. We need to report on everything we're doing. The Local Council will now have 3 representatives in our Board, plus the representative of the Mayor. (Dan, Head)

Overall, heads appreciate the rapidity with which school problems are attended to now post-decentralisation. Dan, Tony and Joanne consider the involvement of local community and parents in education have benefitted their schools.

Some of these issues concerning accountability to multiple stakeholders have also been observed elsewhere (Ribbins and Marland, 1994). Whitty

and colleagues (1998) report heads in their study also see their job as one of personal responsibility towards pupils, parents and teachers, and so does Barzano (2007) when presenting data on Italian heads.

6.4 Professional identity

When teachers become heads there is a major leap to be made in terms of their role and identity. With the new roles that they are assuming (e.g. financial manager, entrepreneur etc) this process becomes yet more difficult. Add to this the fact that they are nowadays responsible for extremely large organisations (average number of students ca. 1,500), the transition is daunting. There are a number of issues in this transition:

- Lack of a headteacher 'profession'
- Temporary nature of headship
- Teacher versus headteacher identity
- Relationship with colleagues and isolation
- Family support and conflict
- Career pathways
- Workload and stress
- The role of politics in appointments (elaborated more in Chapter Seven, section 4)

I grouped these eight issues into four subsections that I present next: dual identity of heads, family commitments, career pathways and workload/stress.

6.4.1 Dual Professional Identity: teacher and head teacher/manager

Historically, the profession of headteacher was not officially 'regulated' in Romania. There was no separate qualification, entrance examination process, or pay scale. It has simply been a new stage in the career path of a teacher. However, it is usually also a *temporary* stage in their career as headteachers often return to being teachers after only a few years in post. Teachers that are appointed as headteachers are generally in post for around four years. Sometimes they are teachers then heads then teachers then heads again. See later below for some sample career pathways. Note that appointments have always been made politically, i.e. if the ruling party changes, a new head can be appointed from the respective party (see also 7.4). This is quite different from the experience of international heads elaborated in Chapter Four.

This is why, when probed with regard to their professional identity, interviewees tended to have a dual identity – that of teacher and headteacher, not least because of the temporary nature of the appointment: "I am a teacher and if I won't be a head anymore, I'm going back to teaching" (Diane, Head).

> Headship is a fleeting stage in one's career. In the future, if you can comply with the eligibility criteria, you could carry on being a head. If not, you go back to teaching. After all, this is what you were trained to do. (Daniel, Head)

In Chapter Four, I discussed the relationship between headteachers and their colleagues in various international contexts (Power and Whitty, 1997, Blackmore, 1999). In Romania it is no different in that headteachers are also keen to manage the managerial/collegial relationship with other teachers. The reluctance of Romanian heads to act as managers for fear that they might offend their colleagues is in line with findings in the United States of America (Lortie, 2009). It is more likely in Romania that headteachers tend

towards an open, supportive management style than in other countries because of the temporary nature of their headship. They need to bear in mind that their relationship will not always be one of subordination in the future:

> I see all teachers as colleagues. I will never forget I will go back to teaching and so I'll never forget the ephemeral character of this position. One day one can be here and back to teaching the next day. In fact, teaching is more important to me (…) I try not to forget that I'm one of them. Sometimes I point things out and make comments and they found this distressing (Diane, Head).

In the international literature, there was a feeling of isolation amongst many headteachers post decentralisation – both from the teaching staff and other headteachers (Weindling and Earley, 1987, Lortie, 2009). In Romania, this is less the case, possibly because the process of decentralisation has only just begun or maybe because they continue to maintain their dual identity of teacher and headteacher as shown above.

Romanian heads are confronted with another issue. They fear they might lose their identity as subject leaders if they do not teach anymore. This finding has not been encountered elsewhere in the international literature, largely because in other countries, once heads become heads, this becomes (and remains) their profession until retirement:

> In my view, the head shouldn't teach. The problem is that if I don't teach anymore, then I can lose some of my teaching skills. There has to be legislation which states clearly for how many years heads give up teaching, what happens if they do, what happens if they are not heads anymore, and so on. (Tony, Head)

> As a head, one loses contact with teaching. I have been trained to be a teacher and not a head. Incidentally, I did have the opportunity to do some teaching this year and I think this is normal because if one doesn't teach then a part of us has gone. It would useless for me to come to school if I locked myself into

this office and didn't do what I love to - and this is teaching (Anna, Head).

I can't say that since becoming a head, I gave up my profession. All these years, I kept teaching, even if not full time because of time constraints. I don't see any problem in going back to teaching one day. (Daniel, Head)

It is out of the question to teach and be a head at the same time. I wouldn't be able to cope with this. It is impossible! (Diane, Head)

At the same time, they admit there is not much time for teaching after taking on headship. This is especially the case after the implementation of decentralisation. Nowadays, Romanian headteachers still teach, only if for a few hours per week.

6.4.2 Professional and family commitments

In Romania, there was a general sense of sadness amongst all the interviewees with regard to the time spent with their families. This is in keeping with the international literature (Sachs and Blackmore, 1998). Most Romanian heads interviewed are parents and would like to spend much more time with their families and children. They fear that they are now missing important years in their children's lives as Diane emphasises:

My family has encouraged me to apply for this position. At the time, they did not realise what I was getting myself into. Nowadays, it is very true that I spend less and less time with my family. This is such a large high school with so many things to do that I spend most of my time here. (Diane, Head)

Nevertheless, with their family's support, they manage to juggle their professional and personal responsibilities:

> I consulted with my wife and we agreed that (…) our first family 'council' in communist times consisted of two members, my wife and I. At the time, both of us had been given teaching posts in the middle of nowhere (laughing). We needed to reassemble our family council 10-12 years later before I accepted the deputy headship in this school and this is when I got the all clear again. This time round, there were four members in the council, but everybody consented to it. (George, Head)

As the interviewees reveal, all of them consulted with their families before accepting the head's post: "My daughter was very young then, a toddler. I wasn't much older myself (laughing); my wife agreed with me, there were no problems" (Adam, Head).

Knowing exactly what such a position would entail, it is interesting to note that while many of the heads' parents have a background in education (some of them even as heads or inspectors) they had advised their sons/daughters not to pursue a career in headship:

> I have encountered some opposition from my parents because my father had been the head of a school in this county in for twenty, maybe even twenty-five years (…) My mother was a head for seven years of a much smaller school than this one, about 200-250 students. They advised me to be careful because this is a challenging job in a large school and it wouldn't be easy. (Robert, Head)

At the same time, there are other heads whose parents, former heads or deputy heads, have been supportive in their children's career choice: "By being appointed a head, I went one step further than my mother on the career ladder, so to speak" (Daniel, Head); "My father was a head for about twenty years. This makes my mother say that I am my father's daughter" (Joanne, Head).

Another point to make is that there is a group of spouses, who after initially supporting their spouse's choice in embarking upon headship, have become less understanding later on:

> We had daily rows about my job (…) my wife wanted to…leave. She used to be a teacher at the same school…she left education to work in a bank and live in [name of a city 39 km away] and she said: "if you're not coming with me, then…" and so I had to move over there and commute here every day (laughing) because we were always fighting. (Dan, Head)

> In time, maybe my family has started to lose patience. The ever-growing responsibility and accountability led to objections by my family regarding the amount of time I am missing from home. And, maybe, the lack of money that comes in for all of the headaches doesn't help either. (George, Head)

Without their families' support, headteachers contend they would have not been able to perform well as heads: "I was very fortunate to have an extremely supportive family that understands that I sometimes need to spend 14 hours a day at work" (Anna, Head). They admit having sacrificed some of their personal life for the school: "There were times when my family didn't see me around too much. I've done my best but…there were sacrifices I needed to make". (Dan, Head)

6.4.3 Career pathways

The Romanian stakeholders interviewed in this project followed different pathways to becoming heads/inspectors/national policy-makers. None of them says that they consciously wanted to be a head and planned a career in that sense:

> I neither wanted to be an inspector, nor a head. In fact, I have never planned to apply for a position in leadership. That being said, I felt honoured when the Chief County School Inspector appreciated my career and trusted I would make a good

inspector and head. Once accepting the inspector position and then headship, I understood it suited me. (Peter, Head)

Similar findings in terms of not planning for this career change were identified in my earlier study on women in headship in Romania (Popescu, 2008). The richness of the heads' stories, their background (education and family) and most importantly, their career in headship is quite extraordinary. Most of the heads interviewed advanced the career ladder after previously being deputies (Laura, Tony, George, Diane) or assistant deputy heads (Anna, Joanne, Daniel):

> So far, the most difficult thing in my career was to become a deputy head. The road to deputy headship was long and winding, especially because there was someone else competing against me for the same position. In the end, I surpassed all obstacles and got the job. Then, when taking up headship, the situation was easier due to the experience of three years as a deputy. (Laura, Head)

Diane admits she could not have done the job had she not been a deputy head beforehand. Being a deputy first ensured a smooth transition to headship. Otherwise, she concedes it would have been too much to deal with all of a sudden.

Adam's career is different in that he was appointed a head directly: "I entered education in May 1990 and was appointed head in July 1990" (Adam). Liz also followed a different career pattern. She was first inspector, and then head. This is somewhat unusual, because, it is normally vice versa, i.e. heads apply for a position as inspectors. And so, in her case, having had a different expertise in the field and having seen many other schools as an Inspector enabled her to know better what she wanted for her school.

Similarly, Peter's case is also a variation on the traditional teacher to head, head to inspector theme. Peter was appointed head in 1994, but resigned a year later following disagreements between him and the then General County School Inspector. Then, in 1997, he was appointed Subject Inspector (Physics) after his students achieved great results in national competitions. After six years in the Inspectorate, he then took on headship in the school he is in at the moment.

The constant to and fro in posts is largely down to the political influences in senior appointments in education. Even more than in the heads' case, the career of inspectors and policy-makers is influenced politically. The four inspectors interviewed also had different career trajectories.

Alice, for instance, became a General County School Inspector directly from teaching and at a rather young age (early 30s). It is worth mentioning that Alice's father used to hold the General County School Inspectorate chair before Alice did. David, on the other hand, used to be a teacher, turned inspector in communism in the period 1980-1990. After the fall of communism, he went back to teaching History and become a head four years later. Because he did not like headship, David resigned and went back to teaching yet again. In 2000, David went back to the Inspectorate as a Subject Inspector (History) and in 2005 he was appointed Deputy General County School Inspector until 2007. In 2007, David went back to teaching, only to come back in 2009 as Deputy General County School Inspector for Management and Institutional Development.

Claire, initially teaching Mathematics for almost two decades, entered politics in 2005 and immediately became Deputy General County School Inspector. In 2007, due to changes in the political landscape, Claire became a deputy head. In 2009, when new changes occurred on the Romanian political scene, Claire went back to the Inspectorate and occupied the same Deputy General

County School Inspector position for a few months and then became General County School Inspector.

Beatrice was a teacher for five years, participated then in the World Bank's Rural Education Project (WB, 2003) then became an Inspector Spokesperson for the County School Inspectorate and Inspector for Management.

The four policy-makers interviewed were John, Edward, Mary and Paul. John progressed gradually in his career. He was first a teacher, then a deputy-head, Subject County School Inspector (Physics), Deputy General County School Inspector, Advisor for the Minister of Education, World Bank Consultant and so on.

Edward started his career in education by teaching Philosophy. He then went on to become a head, researcher in one of the Ministry of Education's agencies, where he was appointed coordinator of the World Bank-Ministry of Education decentralisation programme. In 2005, when a new Agency of the Ministry of Education was set up, the then Minister asked Edward if he would like to be Director.

Mary, Maths teacher initially, became the Director of one of the most important Directors in the Romanian Ministry of Education. She joined the Ministry as Director for High School Education and later became General Director for pre-Higher Education. During this time she had a two month break when the political environment changed. This break in being a Director in the Ministry of Education was extremely short, when compared to breaks of, sometimes, years in heads and inspectors' cases. Despite the fact that the political party supporting Mary was not in power throughout the past 15 years, she was asked to resume her duties in the Ministry. Some officials are

able to withstand the turbulence of political party changes and retain their posts.

Paul is a former Minister of Education. Prior to being appointed Minister, he was working in engineering. Although his stay at the Ministry of Education was short-lived, Paul capitalised on his time there and then became a Member of Parliament.

All of these examples show the variety of experiences of stakeholders in top positions in Romania. They also reveal that heads, inspectors and policy-makers alike were often resilient. They have found ways to resist the outcomes of political games, i.e., if their party did not win the elections or if their party left the coalition in power. In most cases, temporarily, they went back to teaching/deputy headship (heads) or headship/deputy headship (inspectors) and returned to their previous level when their party was back in power.

Some of the interviewees found other coping strategies to resist the fluid political situation in Romania, especially those that had managed to remain in post for over 10 years (a rarity). They either successfully managed to remain party neutral. Or, maybe surprisingly for Western readers, moved from one political party to another, depending of which party won the elections. By looking at the career patterns of all twenty stakeholders interviewed and, more importantly, at the timeline of the fluctuations in their careers (mostly associated with elections or other political events - such as the breaking up of a coalition), it is easier to understand the relationship between politics and education.

6.4.4 Workload and Stress

Juggling the multiple roles discussed above has meant that Romanian heads' workload has increased and so too the levels of stress. Similar experiences were noted by heads in westernised contexts (Hughes, Ribbins and Thomas, 1985, Evetts, 1994, Sachs and Blackmore, 2007). All Romanian heads interviewed work very long hours during the week. In spite of generally enjoying their work, there is a general dissatisfaction among the interviewees over the amount of paperwork they now need to do as managers:

> Had I known what headship was all about; I wouldn't start all over again. I wouldn't do this again because of the bureaucratic element it entails that bothers me immensely but needs to be done. (Anna, Head)

This is in line with the experience of the international heads (Ribbins et al, 1998, Bottery, 2007b). The emphasis on paperwork makes the Romanian heads conclude there is far less time for very important sections of their job (instructional issues, human resources, communication, etc). They rhetorically question the necessity of so much paperwork. Anna and Dan question whether the amount of paperwork reflects the quality of education in a school: "My family started losing their patience because I spent a lot of time at school which is not reflected in the fairly little financial rewards I take home as head" (George, Head). There are also heads that think it will make them lose their motivation, doubled by the poor financial remuneration.

6.5 Summary and contribution to the understanding of decentralisation

This chapter began to examine the effect of decentralisation as experienced by headteachers in Romania. The latest reforms in Romanian education had a major impact on heads. Three key themes emerged: new professional

responsibilities; juggling multiple activities and accountability systems; and professional identity.

These themes identified in the findings from the Romanian study were also themes in the international literature explored in Chapter Four. Similar expressions of stress, isolation and loss of time with family, for example, were noted. There appear, however, to be a number of distinctive features of the Romanian context when contrasted with other countries. These may be a result of the very different macro-cultural factors, which impact on the policy of decentralisation in Romania. If, for instance, in England the idea of a strong and independent head has a far reaching tradition (Grace, 1995) and has been continuously reinforced over a long period, in Romania, the situation is different.

In many areas the legislation is either unclear or the process has not been fully completed (e.g. new role of school boards and appointment of heads and staff). This is due to issues at the macro level but also to the cultural background in Romania: the need for prescription in how exactly to perform their new roles compares to the relative comfort that international heads face with the new autonomy.

In Romania, although the head is acknowledged as the number one in schools, his powers were often limited to running the school according to national guidelines implemented by the County School Inspectorates and thus had, in the past, limited autonomy. This seems to be changing slowly in decentralisation, with heads distancing themselves from the leading professional role (now the responsibility of the deputies) and playing a more executive role. As part of this new role, they manage finances for the first time, and will be responsible (with the Board) for the hiring and firing of teachers. In addition, Romanian heads are tasked with building community relationships, liaising with local funding bodies and inspectorates, motivating

and empowering their staff whilst paying attention to the needs of the newly-created educational market which consists of students and parents.

Overall, Romanian heads are conscious of different layers of accountability and subordination in the decentralised context although the situation is far from clear. This is an important step, as pre-decentralisation, heads used to be subordinated to the County School Inspectorates only. School Inspectorates used to deal with finances, human resources, instructional and administrative issues as well as fulfilling an inspection role. Currently, the only layer of accountability towards County School Inspectorates is in terms of the instructional/educational, administrative and inspection role (plus a minor funding role). This is still something that both inspectors and heads are getting used to.

Nowadays, the *real* first line of accountability is to local authorities. Firstly, when it comes to finances, heads are now accountable to the Mayor and local authorities and receive approximately 70% (see Chapter Three) of their funding from these authorities. Whilst a large part of this funding is prescribed according to a per capita formula, there is still a large portion which is 'discretionary' (for buildings and maintenance etc.) and needs to be negotiated. This reinforces the power of the local authorities.

Secondly, post-decentralisation, local authorities have started to play an increasingly important role in both the headteacher and other staff selection (see Boards' composition). Whether my interviewees agree with this or not, this is a reality. Some of my respondents understand sooner than others and have developed stronger relationships with the mayor. In time, this subordination to local authorities will increase.

Generally, there is a positive attitude towards decentralisation among the headteachers interviewed, albeit with some reservations and fears for the future. Positives included: job satisfaction, greater self-control, making decisions, managing finances. Most of the interviewees hope decentralisation will be beneficial for education.

All Romanian headteachers interviewed noted a re-professionalization from teachers to heads/managers and from implementing strongly centralised policies to having increased autonomy in some areas (such as finances). However, there is a dual professional identity in Romania whereby heads still see themselves as teachers *and* as headteachers, not least because of the instability in post.

6.6. Contribution to the Conceptual Framework

By beginning to examine the findings from the empirical study in Romania, this chapter is contributing to the conceptual framework in several ways. The three themes presented in this chapter contribute data on the level of decision making and the perception dimension of three components of the conceptual framework:

- *The Composition of the Board* (section 6.2);
- *School accountability* section (6.3);
- *Heads' appointment* section (6.4).

The findings presented in the chapter particularly contribute and enrich the *perceptions of stakeholders* dimension in the model that was previously based on international headteachers' experiences of decentralisation only. By illustrating the challenges faced by Romanian headteachers in adapting

to a new legislative and financial system and exploring the discrepancies between policy text (legislation) and policy enactment (implementation), the findings above also contribute to the *legislated versus implemented* dimension of the model. All these happen in the context of a transition from a centralised to a decentralised system of education. In this sense, the findings explored in the three themes above also contribute to the *stage of transition/time* dimension of decentralisation.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE EFFECTS OF DECENTRALISED BUDGETS, MARKETS AND COMPETITION AND POLITICISATION ON HEADTEACHERS IN ROMANIA

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter I continue examining the findings of the empirical study in Romania. I am looking at what decentralisation means for national policy makers, inspectors and heads in Romania, in what ways they engage with policy and how and why it may be affecting their work. In other words, I am mainly seeking to find an answer to the third of my research questions: *What are the implications of decentralisation for headteachers in Romania?*

This chapter presents the Romanian findings in line with the last two themes from Chapter Four and adds one new theme specific to the Romanian context. The resulting themes are:

- Budgets (7.2)

- Market forces and competition (7.3)

- Politicisation (7.4)

After summarizing the findings (7.5) I shall be presenting their contribution to the conceptual framework (7.6).

7.2 Budgets

The most novel aspect of decentralisation for heads in Romania is associated with financial delegation. Firstly, there is the transfer of responsibility with regard to funds for education to City/Town Councils (see Chapter Three for more information). This is in clear contrast with pre-decentralisation when County School Inspectorates were in charge of financial management: "Funds used to be transferred to the school through the so–called centres for budgetary execution" (Edward).

Secondly, and this is very relevant for headteachers' work, there is a financial delegation at school level: "It's about our use of public money and the responsibility that comes with it" (Diane). Romanian interviewees say that by having to manage budgets, they are given more freedom to take the initiative and learn to prioritize and set themselves short-term goals. This is also reflected in the international literature (Daun, 2007).

For Romanian headteachers, the transition from pre-decentralisation to decentralisation and delegation of finances has meant that heads have taken on financial manager responsibilities. In contrast with some other countries such as England, where some schools hired financial managers to work alongside the head, in Romania, heads took on the additional role of financial managers. They are helped of course, by the school's chief accountant. In the past, the chief accountant's main responsibility was to ensure that the staff's salaries are calculated correctly based on national pay scales. Also, the accountant was the one collecting the salaries for all the staff in their school. Nowadays, the chief accountant has also taken on many more responsibilities. They help the head with planning the budgets, calculating the funds available, designating funds for certain areas, etc. Together with the heads, chief accountants are accountable for school budgets.

For heads, financial management has been particularly challenging. As mentioned in the previous section, heads are former teachers and did not have any training in managing budgets prior to being appointed:

> It is a somewhat ungracious mission for a school head. We have been trained to be subject leaders: Romanian, Maths, Religion, Music and so on. We have not been trained in the mercantile or economic spirit - but we need to develop it. Now, the head also needs to develop financial skills. (Anna, Head)

Now, as financial managers of their schools, Romanian heads are receiving appropriate support. They are attending courses on financial management and learning how to manage large budgets:

> In decentralisation, heads will be confronted with another challenge: to become entrepreneurs. As has always been the case, heads are teachers. Therefore, former teachers cannot be entrepreneurial heads without appropriate training; another challenge for the heads. In my view, it is mandatory for prospective heads to be trained in educational and financial management. (Paul, Policy-maker)

In Romania, one of the most important provisions of financial delegation was the allocation and distribution of funds. There are three elements to be taken into account here: the funding formula, funding for buildings and maintenance and the real allocation of funds.

a)   First, the funding formula.

In Romania, in January 2010, funding based on historical costs was replaced by per-capita funding based on a standard cost per pupil. This type of funding was to be used by schools as the basis for budgeting for teacher salaries: "More students means more money and money is needed to pay staff wages" (Anna, Head).

Whilst all interviewees agreed with the per capita funding principle, opinions varied on how this might affect their own cases. Robert is worried that the money received for the number of students will not be enough to cover his costs for teachers' salaries:

> In my opinion, per capita funding is the most difficult part of decentralisation. At the moment, the Town Hall is providing us with this money, but in our opinion the money allocated for wages only seems to be enough for 10 months. (Robert, Head)

Other heads were optimistic that their financial situation would improve:

> With its 1200 students, there is no doubt that our school will be a successful case of per capita funding. It's both the economist and the head in me talking now. I think that besides covering our costs with teachers' salaries, we will still be able to have a good pot of money to spend in the school, invest in the material base or in students with outstanding results. This does not mean that we shouldn't carry on focusing on attracting extra-budgetary funds such as donations, contributions and sponsorships. (Liz, Head)

Some schools do better than others – there are clearly winners and losers under the new formula as was the case in the international literature (Evetts, 1994, Gewirtz et al., 1995). During the first interview, Tony was confident that once per capita funding was implemented, it would mean that any excess funds would stay within schools, to spend on improvements. Similarly, Dan was optimistic about the new funding formula. The money that came in via per capita funding would enable Dan's school to pay for teachers' salaries and would also generate an extra 6 million RON (in excess of £120,000) Together with his board, Dan had decided to use half of this amount to pay five of his colleagues for having won teaching awards. In addition, Dan is confident that they would have sufficient funds to pay the "13th salary" (a holiday bonus) to all staff.

Diane says that they are lucky because their school is very large (2500 students). When they made a simulation of the funds they should receive according to per capita funding, they calculated that they would have an extra 10 billion RON (£2m). She notes that, in order to survive in the new decentralised system, schools need to learn how to save money. With that in mind, Diane agrees with the amalgamation of schools if there are schools with many teachers and few students. Unfortunately, the postponement of the implementation of per capita funding (because of the financial crisis) meant that many of these ambitions and hopes were not realised. In general, Romanian heads are more positive towards the per capita funding system than many of their international counterparts (Thomas, 1996, Ribbins et al, 1998).

b) ***Secondly, the funds for buildings, maintenance, other overheads and cost of materials come directly from the local authorities' budgets.***

Although all heads welcome the move from historical funding to per capita funding, a number of them pointed to possible inequities arising from the lack of a similar formula for running costs. A good example is that of technical-vocational high schools and colleges. These establishments need more funds to equip the labs, perform maintenance operations and pay for the staff who teach practical skills in smaller class sizes, etc:

> Funding represents another serious, very serious issue. We have been told "this is your pot, do your best with what you've got". But as long as this pot is not filled according to my school's needs, I will never be able to manage it properly (George, Head).

Other heads were worried that money would not be enough, even in a large school. Such an example is provided by Adam:

> No, it's definitely not enough. It's never enough, but I know where to direct the funds this year in order to develop in a certain direction in the future. (Adam, Head)

The costs for running a technical-vocational school are higher than those for running a traditional school:

> To give you a couple of examples, just think about how much electricity consumption there is when turning on a lathe. And we don't only turn one on, but dozens each day. We also have production lines for pastry and bread, etc. I'm going to be honest with you now and say that in the current circumstances, we can't afford to use them all the time. In a non-vocational high school, the biggest electricity consumption is from computers. If I turn the bread line on for a day, it consumes as much as all the computers will in a non vocational school for a month. (Tony, Head)

And because all the heads interviewed lead large urban schools, the maintenance and utilities' cost are very high: "It is going to be very difficult for a school as large as ours to support the maintenance costs and utilities bills. So this will be quite a problem" (Robert, Head). This is the case of all schools, regardless of their specialism. The lack of a clear formula meant to cover running costs for schools is noted as a problem by all heads:

> I'm still unclear about how we're going to get maintenance funds from the Local Council. There is no rule yet and the legislation is ambiguous. Is there going to be a fixed amount per school? Or, perhaps, per student? I, for one, would be happy to get a certain amount of money per student. I would then be able to plan the finances much better. (Tony, Head)

A similar point of view is shared by Adam, who says full school autonomy would allow heads and schools to plan resources more efficiently:

> …this means managing finances based on priorities. For instance, my immediate priority now is to develop an Electronics Lab. Therefore, I would channel the money into equipping this in order to develop my school. Whereas, if the money is not allocated to individual schools, but there is a fixed amount for all

schools at Local Council level, maybe the Local Council has a different priority in mind for a different school or group of schools and so my lab would not be completed. (Adam, Head)

One head believes that the reason why there is no standard cost per student for maintenance too is that there is not enough money available:

From the local authority I have 2.5 to 3 million RON for goods and services this academic year. If we were to do the Maths, and the standard cost per student were implemented for maintenance and running costs too, then I would receive an extra 10 million RON. (Adam, Head)

There is a line of argument that some aspects of the decentralisation process will, indeed, reduce the level of politicisation:

It should not be possible to give more money to a school because the mayor is friends with that school head or members of the same political party. In this sense financial formulas are not only more objective, but also more predictable. (Mary, Policy-maker)

For example, Mary above believes that the per capita funding system will, in the long run, lead to less nepotism and, eventually, education will be de-politicised. Whilst it is true that per capita funding is transparent and the money received by schools is based on the number of students, the funds for maintenance and repairs do not. This is the area where nepotism functions most according to the heads interviewed (also see section 7.4 below).

d)   Thirdly, the real distribution of funds to schools.

Whilst the standard cost per student formula could still be improved, interviewees in Romania seemed to be more upset by the real distribution rather than the theoretical allocation of funds. They state that, despite being awarded the funds in theory, they cannot use them because they do not

actually receive all of the money. Or, if they do receive the amounts predicted, this does not happen until very late at times:

> It's pointless to be allocated our theoretical pot if, in practice, each term* we are told by the General Directorate of Public Finances at the [Local] Council that "we don't have enough money to pay you your share, and this is all that you're going to get". And we've got to a point in which in the last term of the year we end up with a lot of money when in fact we really needed it in the third term. Teachers' contracts state that the money for the summer holidays is to be given at the beginning of those holidays. That means that at the end of June-beginning of July, we should be paid for the next three months. But as they did not approve the allocations, they only sent June's figure and then sent the remainder in the fourth term. What was I supposed to understand from this? That I would pay the staff's summer holidays in the fourth term [in December]? (Anna, Head)

*Note: in Romania, there are four terms in the financial year as follows: January-March; April-June; July-September; October-December.

At times, when a surplus was generated in a school's accounts, it was redistributed to other schools (through applying paragraph 6 of Article 4 from Government's Ordinance 1395/28th December 2010):

> I wouldn't call it real per capita funding, because the money left over from my per capita funding has been reallocated and redistributed to schools that had less funds than they needed to pay their teachers' salaries. We were unable to give our own teachers who had performed well or who had additional responsibilities any financial incentives at all. (Tony, Head)

The reallocated money was often given to the smaller schools which did not have many students enrolled so as to attract enough funds to cover their teachers' salaries:

> If you ask me, there is no balance here. The wrong people are penalised. It doesn't mean that those who have more students don't do their job properly, does it? On the contrary! These are the schools that need to get more money because it's due to

their quality that they get more students and not the other way round. Why don't students go to the first types of schools? What I'm saying here is that local authorities should do something drastic about those schools instead of helping them financially. (Diane, Head)

This also leads to the dissatisfaction of some heads, who consider futile their efforts to attract more students with the aim of then getting an extra pot of money to use for investments or other things in their schools. In their opinion, this is in stark contradiction with what the Government says it discourages through decentralisation, i.e. the lack of quality and efficiency through competition and market mechanisms.

The general positive outlook on decentralisation and per capita funding is clearly marred by a number of issues that arise when funds are distributed. It is not real financial delegation when funds that are allocated to a school can then be redistributed to other schools. The heads interviewed believe this is a perpetuation of a situation that should eventually stop. They agree small schools should be given a hand, provided that it is for a limited amount of time only.

In addition, my interviews took place before and during the economic crisis. As a result of the crisis, teacher salaries in Romania were cut nationally by up to 40%. This meant that although the per capita formula continues, the amount allocated per student was drastically reduced: "Oh well, nothing really changed (…) In fact, the salaries have been frozen according to the framework approved by the Government. And so no other funds were available" (Tony, Head). The combined effects of an evolving system, only partial delegation of finances, annual (and not long term) distribution principles and the economic crisis have made it difficult for heads to balance budgets and plan finances.

This finding has not been encountered elsewhere internationally, i.e. the body of literature presented in Chapter Four. The international literature reviewed indicates that once a funding formula was adopted in a country/state, it became reality.

7.3   Market forces and competition

As Chief Executives operating in a system where funds are allocated according to student numbers, Romanian heads have needed to think of schools as real businesses. This translates into a number of new roles and activities. This section has a number of subsections: competition for students, competition and revenue generation, relationships with other heads, amalgamation.

Competition for students

Firstly, schools need to compete for students and as such heads need to promote their business to attract students and parents:

> The implementation of per capita funding means that we will need to acquire the ability to plan for the future and ensure the financial support for the organisation. In this way, and at least this is how I'm seeing things, I will have to develop a vision for how to improve my school's image in order to attract students. (Anna, Head)

This finding is similar to that of Clarke and Newman (1997) who say that in post-1988 England, heads embarked upon activities to set up "visions, missions and business plans" (p.60). To attract more and better students and teachers, heads need to market their schools. Daniel's school is in the top 5 in the city in terms of number of students – of sixty schools in total:

"Competition for students is a real challenge. All heads want to form as many new classes as possible. A school's reputation is really important here" (Daniel). Moreover, heads say competition is beneficial to education:

> It is natural to have competition between institutions and organisations in any field of life. This is beneficial to education because it leads to an increase in the quality of delivery in school. (Peter, Head)

Daniel believes that heads, teachers, and students alike should all play their part in promoting their school, from talking to their neighbours and friends, to organising open days. Another head in the same city, George, was even more creative:

> Until this year, we had plenty of students coming over and so did not used to promote ourselves. We've recently started attending the High School Fair in our county (where we exhibit our offer to prospective students). One or two years ago, we also came up with a *sandwich-board student* advertising our school. This year we came up with two new ideas. First, we transmitted our Student Fair offer online. Secondly, we had a student, carrying a board on his front and one on his back reading 'I chose [name of the high school]' and with a cut-out of the face for prospective students to take photos. We will post the photos on our school radio's website. I have to say, this year went pretty well. The disappointment hit when we went to rural schools to promote ourselves and were told: 'Our students are going to a different high school and so it's pointless for you to be here.' (George, Head)

As entrepreneurs, heads also need to find new niches to compete with other schools in the market:

> There is no doubt that competition between schools will increase. This is why we will have to come up with many more offers for as many qualifications as possible. Another idea is to focus on Adult Education; or, to find opportunities to train teachers in a certain area. We need to reinvent ourselves if we want to stay competitive! The head has to feel the market! (Adam, Head)

Competition for *numbers* of students is a new phenomenon in Romania. In the past, schools always used to compete for the quality of students in that students would express a preference for a particular school but would be allocated on merit, i.e. examination results. In this sense, the best schools generally received the best intake.

In the newly decentralised system, schools are still interested in the quality of students and the preference/allocation method has not changed. However, they are now also able to take on more students (and thus receive more income from the state). This also means that sometimes heads need to make concessions when it comes to accepting new students:

> Nowadays, there is such a fierce competition for students between schools that a head has to think strategically. We cannot afford to reject too many new students. Whether we like it or not, this is part of the managerial role of the head. (Tony, Head)

In the past, the number of students they could accept was either fixed or prescribed by the County School Inspectorates. This allocation role of the County School Inspectorates, however, is changing. Schools promoting themselves will be able to compete for students in an open market:

> The School Inspectorate knows how many schools of a certain type are in the town and knows their maximum capacity. In deciding upon the number of students per school, the County School Inspectorate takes into account staff numbers in every school. If for example, in the future, one of the other technical-vocational colleges in town took on 7 new classes, maybe there would only be students for 2 new classes in my school rather than 5. (Adam, Head)

> Currently, schools do not provide for as many students as they could or would because the number of students is approved by the County School Inspectorate. In the future, there will be a serious competition for good schools that will afford to be aggresive in their marketing. (Paul, Policymaker)

The findings are predicting an increase in competition between schools in the future. The fact that the County School Inspectorate will no longer decide the number of students a school can accept will open the way for more entrepreneurial heads to market their schools better so as to attract more students. If there is demand from students, then schools will be able to form more classes.

Competition and revenue generation

Interviewees unanimously agreed that decentralisation creates the need for marketing and financial skills too. As a result of competition, schools also began to raise and generate funds on their own initiative. In some cases, together with their staff (Adam, Dan, George, Joanne) heads successfully applied for external funding (EU) in order to offer better schooling opportunities for their students. Others benefitted from EU projects implemented by universities: "Over the weekend, we've let some of our spaces to universities. We used this money to celebrate our School's Day with students, parents, teachers, local authorities and inspectors" (Diane, Head).

Other schools were able to generate their own income from other sources in order to either pay staff more or improve schools themselves. Dan's school for example, was a technical college which generated revenue through driving tuition. Tony generated revenues by selling grapes and wheat grown on their premises. In Romania, another common form of revenue generation is through parent contributions:

> This year, with parents' contribution, we changed the windows
> in some of the classrooms, bought and installed a new bolier in
> one of the buildings, and some other things. (Diane, Head)

This shows heads adopted a more proactive role in school and found new avenues of bringing more funds into their schools.

Relationships with other heads

All twelve heads interviewed have a good relationship with other heads, both in the locality and outside it, despite the competition between heads and their schools. They say that, whenever, they meet, the atmosphere is collegial. Many of the heads, especially the ones that are in headship for a long time, have other heads in their group of friends. It is lonely at the top and heads have always needed these headteacher-to-headteacher relationships.

They say that they call each other without hesitation when, for example, they need to consult over a matter of legislation or to discuss issues specific to managing schools in the new decentralised system: "There's always been competition between schools. And although I am sure this will increase in the future, it won't get to the stage of hitting below the belt" (Peter).

Heads also need to collaborate with other schools. One example is when heads bid for projects with European funding in which they get points for partnerships with schools in other counties/regions. Dan remembers that he recently missed out on funding for such a project precisely because such a written partnership was absent from the file.

Furthermore, some heads believe there should be a formal heads' association that could forge better communication between schools:

> When we get to full decentralisation, there has to be a Consultative Council or a Council of Heads in place. In this way, heads will be able to consult with other heads, exchange ideas and collaborate. (Peter, Head)

There are signs, however, that relationships between heads could deteriorate in the future given the competitive marketplace, although this is not yet common. For example, Adam and George used to be good friends and collaborate closely. When, one year later, they started competing for students coming from the same school, this changed. Similarly, Dan explains:

> There have been other heads complaining about me enrolling some of the students coming from their schools. But this is the students' right. They can go to study wherever they want to. If they come to my school, I can't tell them they can't be our students, just because other heads would get upset. (Dan, Head)

These experiences can be seen as a trend towards the natural effects of competition – relationships between competing bodies take on a new form.

Amalgamation

In this new market environment in education, those schools that have the size and ability to compete will survive. Those that do not are left to close or are amalgamated into other schools in Romania. A decrease in student numbers during the same period nationally has meant that competition is fierce and only the largest or strongest remain open. Very small schools were deemed ineffective because they either had small numbers of students enrolled, or too many staff. Consequently, they became satellites of larger schools located in the vicinity. Edward draws attention to some not very optimistic numbers:

> Currently, only 25% of schools will develop further due to existing good working relationships with the local community. These schools are looking forward to getting more autonomy so as to flourish. Another 25% of schools will die slowly, but surely because they neither have appropriate relationships with the local community, nor do they have a performing management. The other 50% will survive the market, only just! Therefore, I

> believe it is essential to design appropriate policies meant to implement decentralisation! (Edward, Policy-maker)

County School Inspectorates traditionally would determine whether a school needed to be closed or amalgamated. The responsibility for this, however, is being transferred to the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education as part of the decentralisation process. The new per capita funding system highlights much quicker whether a school is viable or not.

This reorganisation of the education system actually began in 1995 but mostly accelerated in the last couple of years. Many schools in rural areas that had a handful of students were either closed down and the students transported to schools in the next village, or kept open for another year or two until the students moved to secondary school or the teacher retired. As a result, there was a reduction of over 72% of the total number of schools nationally (Eurydice, 2009, MoE, 2012). The results of this change were most noticeable in rural Romania (see also Chapter Three).

Most of the heads in my sample had been allocated smaller schools for amalgamation. Peter is the head of a large school (2100 students and over 100 staff) providing education for students aged 6-18. In Peter's case, amalgamation translated into learning how to deal with pre-primary schooling (children aged 3-6) after his school was allocated a kindergarten following school clustering: "We've adapted and learnt. At the end of the day, we now have a feeding school for our own primary school" (Peter, Head).

Similarly, one primary and one pre-primary school came under the umbrella of Adam's school. Anna's case is an example of how amalgamation worked in practice in her community and its implications for her work. Two kindergartens and one primary school became subsumed into Anna's school

in the last year. Consequently, there are now 1100 students and 80 teachers, 6 auxiliary staff and 11 non-teaching staff, for whom she is accountable. After the amalgamation, Anna remained head and the former head of the primary school became her deputy.

In urban Romania, especially in large cities, the results of amalgamation were also felt, but to a lesser extent. For example, there would now be three schools in a neighbourhood, as opposed to six or seven previously. In County 1 of the study, the amalgamation process which arose from market forces began in 2006 and was completed by 2011. In County 2, this was an entirely new challenge that began in 2010 and was completed in 2011. One example in County 2 is that *all* 6 schools in the locality came under Dan's school umbrella. For Dan and his two deputies this translated into new responsibilities, increased accountability and long hours at school. In most cases, when amalgamation occurs, students are all migrated to the same facility although it can happen that smaller satellites are kept open under the leadership of the main school.

Internationally, there have also been several cases of school closures and amalgamations following decentralisation. For example, it is increasingly common in England for a head to serve as Chief Executive of a federation of 2 or more schools. In Italy, this has also happened (Barzano, 2007, Grimaldi and Serpieri, 2010). Note that, whilst there are private schools in Romania (7% of total) there is no indication yet that decentralisation will lead to an increase in privatisation of schools. This might change in the future. In some countries where decentralisation has been implemented, two decades later there was a mix of public and private schools, such as Academies and Free Schools in England (see Gunter et al., 2011).

7.4 Politicisation

All of the themes in this Chapter to date have reflected the same themes identified and discussed in Chapter Four, when discussing international research contexts. The following subsection, however, is something new as it is peculiar to the Romanian situation. The role of politics in the education system in Romania is significant and has a profound impact on many of the topics in this thesis. Politicisation comprises *external influences, centrist culture overhang, political influence on appointments (past, now and future), volatility and job security*. External influences and the centrist cultural background in Romania were covered in Chapter Three. Here I shall focus on what the politicisation means for headteachers' roles and appointments.

It is still the case now that every change of minister at the national level leads to a change of inspectors at the regional level and a change of heads at the local/school level. This still represents centralisation in that the national government dictates changes downwards, especially on the appointment of heads (see below). In this respect, nothing has changed from communist times, other than the various political parties in power nationally and/or locally. If in communism, there used to be a single party, i.e. the Romanian Communist Party, nowadays, there are over 200 political parties.

Post-decentralisation, the change was a shift in power from the national level (Government, Ministry of Education) to the local forms of government (Town Hall and Town Councils) as opposed to County School Inspectorates. For heads, this introduced even more confusion than before. As I illustrated in Chapter Six, section 3, when I discussed heads' different accountability systems, heads subordinate themselves both to the Mayor and to the Chief County School Inspector.

There have been five changes in elected government in Romania in the last ten years. Many of these governments have been coalitions, which have also led to changes of minister from one party to another even during a particular coalition's administration. For example, there were four changes of government in 2012. During the same ten year period, there have been fourteen ministers of education. Some of these have been in post for anything between a few days and 18-24 months.

When ministers change in Romania, it is quite common for the subsequent levels of Directors, inspectors and heads to change too. For most of the past twenty years since communism, inspectors have been political appointments made by the ministry and in turn heads too were appointed by the inspectors and thus politically made. Changes in national government would lead to changes in ministers, directors, inspectors and heads. In the newly decentralised Romanian system, however, the local authorities are gaining more power from the central bodies (e.g. financial administration, participation on school boards and in the appointment of headteachers). As a consequence, it is becoming more important for headteachers to belong to the correct colour of party at the local level. Note that decentralisation has not changed the level of politicisation it has simply moved its focus. This is nicely summarized by Paul, a former minister: "The 2011 Education Act *decentralises politicisation* (my emphasis). In other words, this is a top-down politicisation of education dictated by political parties" (Paul, Policy-maker).

These fluctuations both pre- and during decentralisation have impacted upon the professional activity of virtually all of the twenty stakeholders interviewed in this study. One policymaker recollects the changes in government in the late 1990s:

> The new regime appointed heads and inspectors on political grounds. As far as I can remember, at that time, there was a somewhat Right-oriented regime because the Democratic Convention (CDR) came into power, Emil Constantinescu was

the elected president and they brought their own people in (John, Policymaker).

However, it was not long before there were new changes and fluctuations on the political scene and, as the same interviewee recalls, there were major changes at the level of County School Inspectorates yet again:

> Immediately afterwards, a new return towards the Left occurred when the Social Democrat Party (PSD) came into power and made massive changes at the level of the Inspectorate. Basically, half or even three quarters of the inspectors were fired. Especially General Inspectors that were perceived as very close to the party in power (John, Policy maker)

Every change of government and or minister represents the beginning of a change process downwards; their subordinate secretaries of state, general directors in the ministry and general county school inspectors at the middle tier are replaced:

> This is the same nowadays. They are basically appointed politically ...the General Inspectors were told to "make their team", in other words, bring in those people recommended by their Party and the ones that suited their interests. (John, Policy-maker)

> There are at least ten counties, and you can check this, where the General Inspectors were not changed when I was the Minister of Education. That means that they can not change them now, because they might as well be from their own political party. What they can do though, is to change these General Inspectors' heads, and appoint heads that are obedient to the new Government. (Paul, Policy-maker)

In opposition at the time of the interview, Paul talked about these political appointments. He says that, when he was a Minister of Education, some very capable General County School Inspectors were not changed, although the situation was different when there was a new change of government.

The fact that national policy-makers admit the role that politics plays in education confirms the findings from the interviews with the heads. Although the four policy-makers interviewed seem to strongly disagree with political appointments does not mean that they did not also do the same thing when in power. Paul above is proud that ten General County School Inspectors were not changed when he was a Minister of Education. While this might be true, it also means that over thirty General Inspectors were indeed changed.

My interviewees accept these practices with some resignation because they know the rules of the game. In the game, some of them lose; some of them win, or get a better position (for example, Beatrice's case in County 1 who became a Management Inspector). Some others know that if their political party does not win the elections, the newly-appointed Minister and General Directors in the Ministry will ask them to resign and so, knowing that their time will come again and so, they wait quietly in the wings until they can take their seats again. John calls this "a process of social learning and accommodation to new political rites".

When interviewed, many of the respondents did not say why they had a break in headship or as inspectors. Claire talks openly about her recent experience though: "I left from the position of Deputy General Inspector in 2007 because I was not wearing the appropriate party colour and so I went back to my school..." (Claire, Inspector). She carries on talking about the frustration she felt when her application for the deputy position was processed by the new team of inspectors. She explains that at the time, she did not apply for a position in headship being aware they will never grant it to her. However, less than one year later, she is Chief Inspector again, this time, General Chief Inspector.

This politicisation results in headteachers' instability in post. Some of the heads are replaced with new heads that are members of the political party in

power at a certain moment in time: "The outcome was an ever-increasing fluidity of headteachers' careers. In most cases, this translated into *delegated heads**" (John, Policy-maker).

*Note: heads appointed temporarily by the General County School Inspector without going through open competition.

These temporary heads are appointed until a new head selection process is organised (though this changes little in most cases), or until a new General County School Inspector and Minister are appointed. In reality, due to the fluid political situation in Romania, few heads stay in post for the full 4 years of appointment. This is unlike the situation in other countries. For example, in England, the average time of heads in post is ten years (Howson, 2005).

John also acknowledges the high level of involvement of politics in education. He explains that:

> People did not apply for a position in headship if they didn't have the support of a political party or another or one important person or another. It might have been the Mayor or the General County School Inspector, or both. The resilient ones would succeed. (John, Policy-maker)

Dan is one such example. He was a head in three different periods. The time of his taking on a headship coincides with new changes in government. This indicates that his party came back to power. When their party wins the elections or joins the coalition in power, they know they are back in the game of getting a position as Heads, Inspectors, and so on. "I was appointed head due to a favourable conjecture" (Daniel, Head). Whenever the interviewees mention 'favourable conjecture' it is implicit that, in fact, they refer to being proposed a position by their political party.

New School Boards

As mentioned above, the 'decentralisation of politicisation' is causing changes at local level. One such example is the new membership of school boards. In Chapter Three (see Table 3.8), I discussed the composition of the School Board and particularly that teachers do not represent the majority on the Board anymore. In practice, this might mean that the level of politicisation in education will increase even more. There are, for example, three local authority members plus a mayor's representative on school boards (see also Chapter Six, Section 3).

The new composition of school boards has two possible consequences for headteachers roles:

a)   Heads appointments are made on (local) political grounds

The new composition of the board provides the perfect opportunity for heads' appointment and/or dismissal to be made on political grounds:

> Heads will have to be subordinated to the Mayor and obedient. Instead of collaborating with the Mayor and having a relationship based on professionalism, the relationship will be one of subordination. (Paul, Policy-maker)

County School Inspectorates used to select and appoint heads before mayors were invited to countersign heads' appointment documents in 2010. This caused concern among heads, inspectors and policy-makers that feared an excessive political involvement of the local authorities (previously, they feared excessive political influence from national authorities!). Indeed, mayors took this as an opportunity to exert influence over schools and heads. For example, due to the tensions between Laura and the Mayor in her town, she had to resign from headship:

> It wasn't about me wanting to remain a head or not. The decision I took was influenced by the local authorities…I'd like to believe that this doesn't happen everywhere. I believe the biggest influence of the kind is felt in schools from small communities. In these schools, the Mayor thinks things should be done his way, even if this contradicts the school's opinion. (Laura, Head)

Laura went back to being a deputy head where she is in charge of instructional matters, rather than the managerial-administrative. In these circumstances, she does not liaise with local authorities on a regular basis any more. Laura's case is an example of how politicisation works at the level of a small town.

b)   Headteachers may actually have less power or autonomy than before

The new tri-partite (school-parents-local community) composition of the Board and the fact that heads are not allowed to chair the Board, instead of empowering heads towards greater school autonomy, can leave heads with much less influence than before. As a consequence, it may happen that not only the appointment of heads, but also of teachers themselves is politically influenced.

Paul, a former Minister of Education, also predicts this. He believes that the challenges heads face, are far from over, especially since heads might be coerced into hiring different teachers that the ones they would normally do. This comes at a difficult time for heads whose roles have increased to include entrepreneurship and budgeting to compete in an open marketplace for students:

> Heads will be key from now on. They will experience pressures from the Mayor or other political appointees with regard to whom to hire in their schools. This is the biggest challenge

heads will have to face. This will happen especially in large, urban, renowned schools. Heads will be struggling to hire the best teachers professionally instead of the ones *recommended* (original emphasis) politically. (Paul, Policy-maker)

As a former head, Laura agrees that the Mayor's involvement can be daunting to a head's role. However, in her opinion, there will be an even stronger politicisation in a small community where everybody knows everyone:

> For me, the involvement of local authorities in the decision-making process in schools means negotiation, and not imposed authority. In terms of hiring teachers, competence and professionalism are on the top of my list. Decentralisation will have devastating effects in education as long as favouritism is chosen over competency. (Laura, Head)

Before the 2011 Education Act the head was Chair of the school board. This is not the case anymore, when any of the other members of the Board will assume this role. All heads interviewed do not agree with this change, as they believe schools and teachers know the school's needs best and some decisions will take longer with the new Board composition.

The level of politicisation is clear throughout the education system. Because of the volatility of the system, the lack of momentum for implementing change at the school level is lost:

> It is very difficult to achieve something as a head if there is no continuity on the job. If a new head is appointed in our school and doesn't like any of my work for these four years that I've been a head here, then these four years are lost for good. (Robert, Head)

The short length of time in office means that heads do not have enough time to learn the job (managing budgets, selecting staff, devising long-term marketing strategies, and finding new entrepreneurial avenues, recruiting

more students etc), let alone implement decentralisation. This means their strategic and managerial plans are very likely to be short-term too.

7.5 Summary and contribution to the understanding of decentralisation

This chapter resumed an examination of the findings of the Romanian study. The latest reforms in Romanian education had a major impact on heads' professional performance and roles. Three key themes were covered: budgets; markets and competition; politicisation.

Managing budgets, recruiting, retaining, hiring, firing and paying staff, for example, have been the most challenging tasks for Romanian heads in the last few years. In many ways, this is very similar to what heads have been experiencing in other parts of the world when faced with managing budgets under SBM/LMS (Ribbins, 1991, Sue Beeson with Peter Ribbins, 1998, Gewirtz et al., 1995). Romanian heads are eager to reap the rewards of delegated budgets and the new responsibilities that result. They hope this would increase school autonomy in the long run. This also supports the experience of LMS/SBM in England and Wales, New Zealand, Victoria and United States (Abu-Duhou, 1999:102; also see Caldwell and Spinks, 1992, Caldwell and Hill, 1999).

In Romania's case, the market economy has only been operating for two decades. Whilst decentralisation of education has been discussed for nearly fifteen years, its implementation only began less than five years ago. In this former totalitarian regime, for example, the cultural background for headteachers has historically been one of absolute subservience. Heads were traditionally obedient to the one political party (and needed to be members) and they took direction from the state in all areas through the

regional hierarchies. The change is, therefore, both new and radical for headteachers in Romania. The shift from a highly centralised, communist education system to a hybrid system with elements of both centralisation and decentralisation with local financial responsibility is a huge leap in a very short space of time. Not surprisingly, the process of decentralisation in education has taken far longer in Romania than in other countries. Moreover, some of the old 'habits' of the communist regime such as nepotism, and loyalty to a political party still persist.

Competition between schools is a new element in Romanian education. The competition for students has led to many schools being closed and or amalgamated into other schools. Only the strongest are able to survive. The 'winner' schools and heads were more efficient, have become more entrepreneurial or found ways to operate in new niches (such as adult education). For example, in order to use resources efficiently and cater for large numbers of (700-2500 students), many Romanian schools have double school days: half in the morning, half in the afternoon to evening. Large student numbers and double school days are peculiar to this country. Another uniqueness of the Romanian case is that of innovative methods of revenue generation to boost budgets. Activities can range from selling driving tuition to selling grapes and wheat from their own land, or to letting school rooms for functions during weekends. Parent contribution is another common way of gathering funds in Romania.

Politicisation of education in Romania is perhaps, the most unique aspect of headteachers' environments. In particular, the instability caused by frequent changes in government, which is then followed by political appointments at all levels of the system, including in headship is unique to the Romanian context.

Whilst the nature and players in politicisation are changing (there is a shift from allegiance to national parties and County School Inspectorates towards local parties and local authorities) it still pervades the system. In the new composition of the School Board, for example, three local councillors and one representative of the Mayor will have a say in appointing headteachers. Note above that the term served by a headteacher in Romania is still very short and decentralisation does not look as if it will change this situation. My interviewees were generally aware of the situation, not particularly enamoured with the level of politicisation but effectively resigned to the fact that it exists (as it always has done). Most of them just choose to play the game.

7.6 Contribution to the Conceptual Framework

The findings in both Chapters Six and Seven are indicative of the challenges experienced by Romanian headteachers. In these chapters, I contributed to the conceptual framework firstly by showing how the various *components* of decentralisation are implemented in practice at the school/local level (see Fig 1.) and explored the *dimension* of the *perceptions* of Romanian *stakeholders* in the process**.**

Decentralisation is a term used to describe a multitude of functions or powers which are or can be transferred from central to local authorities and/or to schools. In Chapter Three, I examined the legislation in Romania which has specified the new roles and functions of the various actors in the education system. In these last two Chapters I have contrasted the legislation with the reality on the ground and, additionally, made comparisons with other international contexts from Chapters Two and Four. This is the dimension of decentralisation that I have referred to in the model as *legislated versus implemented.*

Figure 7.1 – Conceptual Framework
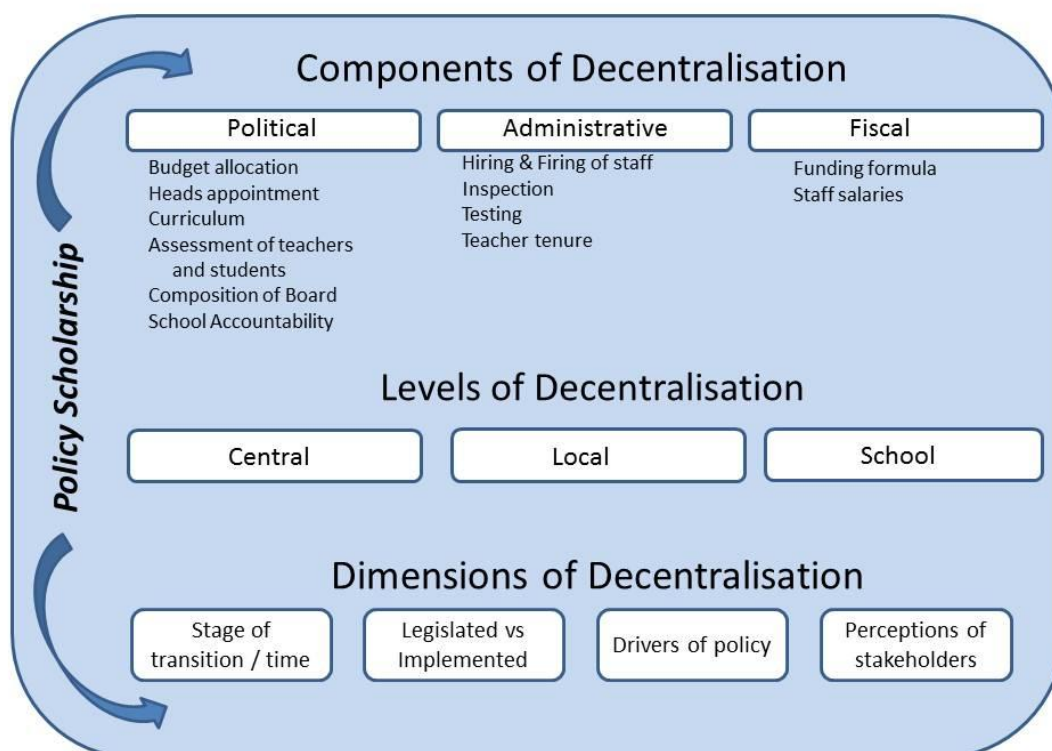
Finally, the discussion in this chapter has demonstrated that this transfer of decision making for each component of decentralisation is still ongoing and thus in a state of flux. This relates to the dimension of decentralisation referred to as *transition of time*.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

8.1 Introduction

In this chapter I am presenting the steps I have taken to build a new conceptual framework which was then used to present the Romanian case of educational decentralisation. In section 8.2, I present the conceptual framework itself and how it was developed. I then summarise the components, levels and dimensions that form the framework. In section 8.3, I explain how it can be transferable to other countries undergoing decentralisation in education. Finally, in section 8.4 I summarise the chapter.

8.2 The development of the conceptual framework

I needed a model to conceptualise and explain the findings from the Romanian empirical study. When devising my conceptual framework, various other existing theoretical models of decentralisation and examples from practice (see Chapter Two), the Romanian context of decentralisation based on legislation (see Chapter Three) and the experiences of headteachers in other countries (see Chapter Four) informed my thinking. This created a platform for the analysis of findings from the empirical study in Romania (see Chapters Six and Seven). The contribution of each chapter to the development of the conceptual framework is detailed next.

To answer my first key research question: "What is decentralisation?" (and later, the same question as applied to Romania), I needed to identify the components of decentralisation to understand exactly *what* is being

decentralised, *to whom/at what level* and *to what extent/degree.* I looked at specific countries that had implemented decentralisation in education (see vignettes in Chapter Two) and showed why each of these illustrative examples is important in exploring the Romanian case. When data for other countries was presented I was able to tabulate the components of decentralisation and to what level/to what degree they had been decentralised.

Taking on Cheema and Rondinelli's (2007) areas of decentralisation (political, administrative and fiscal areas of decentralisation), I grouped budget allocation, composition of the board, heads' appointment, curriculum, assessment, and school accountability under *political*; school boards, hiring and firing of staff, inspection, testing and school amalgamation under *administrative* and finally, funding formula and staff salaries under *fiscal*. Knowing what components are or can be centralised/decentralised and to what level has allowed me to accurately define and depict the process of decentralisation in Romania.

When presenting my research methodology, however, it was clear that the whole model sits within the specific methodology of policy scholarship and, thus, this too was added to the framework. In Chapters Six and Seven I applied my conceptual framework to the research findings to illuminate the Romanian case of educational decentralisation. This final model embodies a set of variables that need consideration when researching decentralisation in education in any education system (see section 8.3. below).

Figure 8.1 Conceptual Framework of Decentralisation in Education
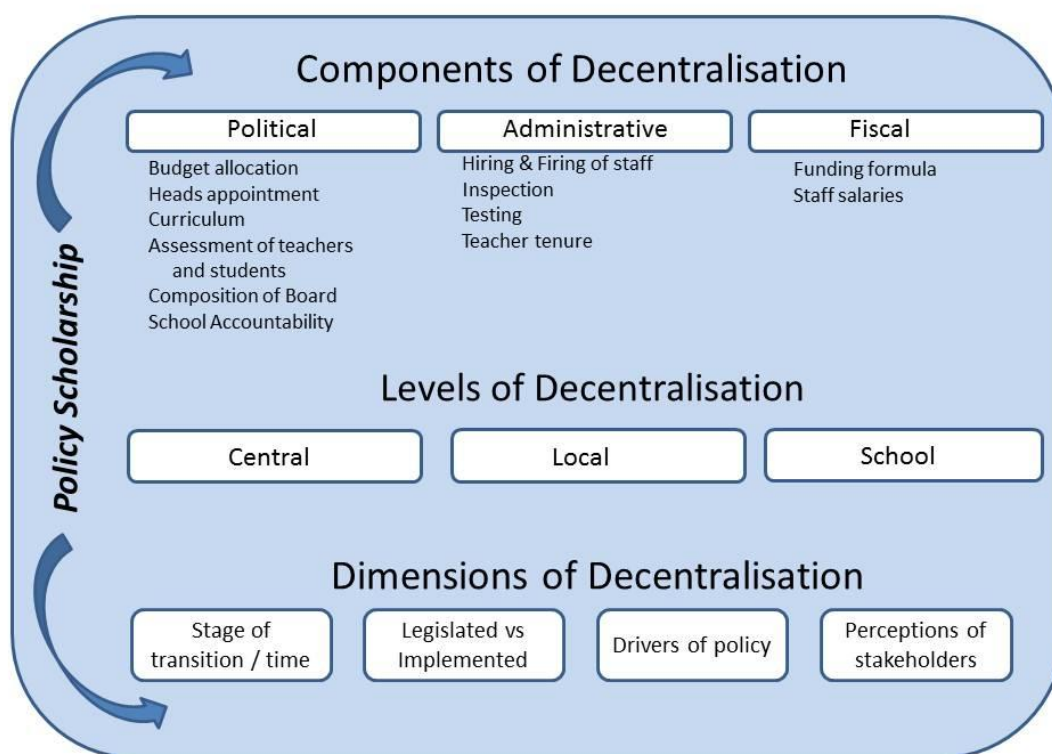
I shall summarize my findings on levels and components of decentralisation in Romania shortly but, beforehand, I will elaborate on the four dimensions of decentralisation as featured in Figure 8.1 below:

- **Stage of transition /time**

Time plays a central role in public policy development and implementation alongside other factors. Previously, Pollitt and Bouckaert (2009), Pollitt (2008) and Newman (2001) examined the relationship between 'continuity and change' in public policy and management through the lens of time. I showed in Chapter Three (3.3.1) that according to Birzea (1994), post-communist countries experience three different types of transition simultaneously: political, economic and cultural. The post-communist Romanian reform of education through decentralisation is still ongoing and there is no doubt that cultural change takes much longer than political and

economic change. Moreover, in Romania, the time that elapses between legislation and implementation is long (see below). As such there is an important dimension of time to the decentralisation process in Romania (and the reasons for this delay) that needed to be explored.

- **Legislated versus Implemented**

There is a gap between policy design and policy implementation (Newman, 2001) in Romania. In other words, what is *intended* to be decentralised according to legislation (see Chapter Three) is different than what really does become *implemented* (see Chapters Six and Seven). For example, the hiring and firing of staff by the school and the hiring of the head by the board are not a reality yet in Romania, even though they were both legislated in the Education Act of 2011. In Romania, the gap is more apparent than in many other countries.

- **Drivers of policy**

In Chapter Three I showed that the *reasons* behind the implementation of educational decentralisation in Romania (RQ2) were slightly different to those encountered in other countries (Chapter Two). In most countries the drivers are economic, based on the introduction of markets into public services. In Romania, the situation is different, not least because it has very little history of market economics. The decentralisation of the education system was introduced on the background of transition from communism to post-communism, under the guidance of *external* institutions, such as the European Union and World Bank, rather than initiated from within the existing national political or educational system (see Chapter Three). This also had a bearing on the relative success or failure (in implementation

terms) of decentralisation in this country. In this context, the transition from a centralised to a decentralised education system needs to be explained in the wider context of post communist market reform.

- **Perceptions of decentralisation by stakeholders**

In my model, the *perceptions of stakeholders* are explored by focussing on how headteachers experience the process of decentralisation internationally in Chapter Four and in Romania in Chapters Six and Seven. The dimension *perceptions of stakeholders* applied to this unique context (Romania) is new to the body of international literature.

I shall now present each of the components and levels of decentralisation for Romania in terms of what happens in practice (see Table 8.1 below).

Table 8.1 – Components, levels and dimensions of decentralisation in Romania

Components	School level	Local authorities	Centralised nationally
Budget allocation	School managed but with some prescription as to uses.	70% of all funding managed by local authorities.	30% of all funding managed nationally. Pay scales and the per capita funding formula are also determined nationally.
Staff salaries	Managed by schools using per capita funding budget.	Per capita funding budget reallocated to schools	National pay scales need to be followed for staff. Limits the discretion that school boards will have.
Funding formula	Per capita formula exists, though mainly for staff salaries only.	Per capita formula budgets are allocated to local authorities for onward allocation to schools.	Established nationally based on school and local government data and then allocated to local authorities to then be allocated to schools.
Composition of the school board	1/3 of board comprises teachers and headteacher. 1/3 of board is parents	1/3 of board comprises local authority representatives plus the mayor from having just one representative in the past. Emerging legislation reducing the number yet again.	
Appointment of heads	Due to be appointed by the school board.	Local authority represents 1/3 of the board. Therefore, much influence here, especially when combined with their budget allocation role above.	National guidelines for how appointments should be made (process, job requirements etc.)

School accountability	To multiple stakeholders including staff, parents, students.	To local authorities for funding (and as board members).	To County School Inspectorates for all instructional matters.
Hiring/Firing of staff	Due to be school managed.	Local authorities sit on school boards.	Still the remit of County School Inspectorates. National Employment Law and regulations, national pay grades and national tenure rules.
Teacher tenure	Tenure impacts on school boards ability to hire and fire staff.		New tenure arrangements, not yet decided.
Curriculum	20%	20%	60%
Inspection of schools			National inspection system, run at local level by School Inspectorates and ARACIP.
Assessment of teachers and students	Students' assessment organised in schools. Teachers assessed by Heads.		National exams followed by all schools and administered by County School Inspectorates.

I can summarize, therefore, that in Romania, 70% of state funding for education has been decentralised from the national level to the local authorities' level, which, then in turn provide the funds to schools. 30% remains in the hands of the national or central authorities to administer. The 70% of funds are provided in two categories: buildings and maintenance and per capita funding for staff salaries. Schools do not currently have *full* responsibility for these funds in terms of how these funds are managed, e.g. per capita funding can only be spent on staff salaries (and not merged with funds for buildings and maintenance, for example).

Funding for staff salaries is a formula based on per capita funding or numbers of students with certain adjustments made for the location of a school, for example. Funding for buildings and maintenance is not formula driven but is determined instead by the local authority. This will to some extent be based on historical costs but also on the basis of applications from schools, their merit and relationships between local authorities and schools. Note that local authorities comprise one third of school board members. There have been a number of issues with the implementation of this component of decentralisation policy, including: the timing of financial legislation to accompany educational decentralisation, the economic crisis, the formula implementation has not been followed or excesses in one school

have been redistributed to other schools. Moreover, local authority politicisation has impacted on real school autonomy, bearing in mind the board composition and funding allocation for buildings and maintenance.

8.2.1 How the model relates to the research questions and the thesis

In Chapter One, I posed three key research questions:

RQ1: What is decentralisation in the context of state restructuring and the provision of public education in Romania?

RQ2: Why and how is decentralisation taking place in public education in Romania?

RQ3: What are the implications of decentralisation for headteachers in Romania?

In order to address these questions, I explored the international literature relating to decentralisation and state restructuring and decentralisation internationally (Chapter Two). This literature review generated two subsets of questions that I had to ask in order to understand the Romanian case of decentralisation according to the legislation in Chapter Three. These strategic (legislation-related) and technical (implementation) questions were best answered by establishing a conceptual framework. Thus, the relationship between the *components, levels* and *dimensions* of the model and the three main research questions is as follows:

The components of decentralisation and the level at which these are decentralised will vary by country and over time, thus the *'what is decentralisation'* (RQ1) is a difficult question to answer without explaining what these **components** are and to what **levels** they are centralised/decentralised.

By exploring the **dimensions** of decentralisation (drivers of policy; stage of transition/time; legislated versus implemented; perceived by stakeholders), I answer '*how and why decentralisation is happening in Romania* (RQ2) and '*what are the implications of decentralisation for headteachers in Romania*' (RQ3).

The model's *components* of decentralisation are covered in Chapter Three in terms of what has been legislated to be decentralised and to what *level* of the system in Romania. In Chapters Six and Seven I looked at the same components through the *perspective* of heads and other stakeholders and the *realities of implementation*. In Chapter Three I looked at *when* it took place and the *drivers behind the policy* (external influences, etc) whilst in Chapters Six and Seven I looked at the 'how' it has happened in practice. As such, all of the dimensions of decentralisation have been covered. In the next sub-section I am providing a summary of findings as they emerged from my analysis.

8.2.2 Summary of findings

I organised and analysed the findings from the empirical study into two chapters (Chapters Six and Seven). In doing so, I also triangulated the findings from the study with official documents, policy acts, reports, etc. Six key themes resulted, as follows: the definition of new headteacher roles; juggling multiple accountability systems; professional identity; budgets; markets and competition; politicisation. I shall now provide a summary of the findings theme by theme.

Theme 1: New professional responsibilities

Romanian heads have changed their professional roles as a result of decentralisation. Previously, headteachers were instructional leaders or leading professionals with some administrative responsibilities. Nowadays, they play an executive role (in line with the 2011 Education Act), similar to that of Chief Executives (Hughes, 1972) and look after financial and managerial matters. The role of Leading Professional (Hughes, 1972) is now the responsibility of deputy heads. This is in line with the experience of international heads post-decentralisation (Abu-Duhou, 1989, Brown, 1990, Grace, 1995, Gewirtz et al, 1995, Gunter and Rayner, 2007, Whitty, 2002, Lortie, 2009) although there has been no equivalent of the recruitment of Business Managers as has been the case in some schools in England (Woods et al, 2010).

One key difference to the definition of the role in Romania is that headteachers are never far removed from the role of leading professional because of their instability in post. I have shown that with political changes either locally or nationally in Romania, it was (and still is) possible for headteachers to lose their positions each time the administration changes. In contrast to Lortie's (2009) two stage career path to headship, where there is an assumption that heads are first teachers and then later heads, in Romania the situation is more fluid. Headteachers often return to being teachers after a short period of time in post, then get reappointed to headship a few years later and so forth. It is important for Romanian heads not to lose their role identity as leading professionals as they will, more often than not, return to being teachers again during their career.

The school board is now comprised of 1/3 teachers, 1/3 parents and 1/3 representatives of the local authority. Amongst other responsibilities, the school board hires and fires teachers and headteachers (from the legislation point of view, though not yet in practice), and also some flexibility with regard to remuneration of the same within fairly strict national guidelines. Note that Romanian heads are paid much less than their international counterparts – the average salary for a head in Romania is £700 per month.

Theme 2: Juggling multiple activities and accountability systems

Romanian heads' day to day routines involve complex activities both within and outside the school. Outside the school, Romanian heads are officially representing their schools in relationships with third parties, whether these are local authorities, County School Inspectorates, parents, other schools and headteachers. Within the schools, Romanian headteachers sit on the school board, assign roles to their deputies and middle managers, coordinate the managerial/administrative activities, including managing budgets with their chief accountants.

As far as accountability and subordination are concerned, after decentralisation, Romanian headteachers are subjected to complex multi-layering. Accountability to parents, who now represent a third of members on the board, is a new element in the accountability framework. Parents and students are now consumers of education but in contrast to other countries such as England, they only have a limited choice of school as they are allocated to schools according to exam results first and then to their preferences second.

Accountability is also acknowledged towards staff and students. All the Romanian interviewees agree that, first and foremost, they are accountable

to students as they are at the centre of the instructional act. Italian heads noted similar findings (Barzano, 2007).

Accountability to local authorities is also something new for headteachers post decentralisation in Romania. Before the decentralisation of the education system, heads used to be subordinated only to the Ministry of Education through its County School Inspectorates. County School Inspectorates fulfilled multiple functions: instructional/educational oversight, human resources, financial and inspection roles. Post decentralisation, while retaining the inspection role and control over instructional-legislative issues, County School Inspectorates lost the majority of their funding responsibilities. In this sense, County School Inspectorates' role has decreased considerably in favour of local authorities.

Local authorities are now playing *the* most pivotal role in education (that used to be the case with County School Inspectorates). Firstly, local authorities own and administer funds for the school buildings and, most importantly, provide funding to schools for teaching salaries. There are two ways in which finances flow from the local authorities to schools: funding for teacher salaries and for maintenance/repairs which represent approximately 67% of all funding (33% still administered nationally). Of the 67%, whilst they are both administered by local authorities, the source of funding for teacher salaries comes from the state budget (via local authorities) and is based on a national formula per student, and the source of funds for utilities, maintenance and buildings is from local budgets/taxation. There is no formula on which the latter are allocated and so, the amounts received by each school are very much dependent on the relationship between the headteacher and the Mayor. This means that local authorities have more power than might seem at first glance. While for most of the Romanian heads interviewed this situation was to their advantage, in some cases the opposite was noted.

Secondly, local authorities as of the 2011 Education Act now represent one third of the total number of members on the school board, whose functions include, importantly, the appointment of both headteachers and other staff (although, in practice, this is not yet in place).

Internationally, heads also noted an increase in responsibilities and accountability to multiple stakeholders, primarily to parents, students and staff. Interestingly, local authorities' participation in education has decreased in most international contexts examined. In some countries such as England, the role of local authorities was seriously *reduced* post-decentralisation, whilst in other countries, such as New Zealand, the local authorities' education offices disappeared completely. This is in stark contrast to the Romanian case of decentralisation. If ten years ago, local authorities in Romania administered up to a third of funds with limited participation in school matters, nowadays they administer two thirds of funds and contribute a third of the board's composition.

My interviewees' opinions on the new accountability dynamics varied, in part, because the process is still ongoing. Many interviewees believe their primary line of accountability is to students, others add to this, parents and the County School Inspectorates. Subordination to local authorities is only recognised by a few. Despite their financial and board powers, many headteachers have not yet acknowledged the extent of local authorities' power and, irrespective of this, most interviewees disagree with local authorities' participation (often termed 'interference') in school matters. It will take some time until all headteachers get used to the new reality. Those who do understand the new accountability dynamics have already developed stronger relationships with the Mayor.

Theme 3: Professional identity

The Romanian headteachers interviewed followed various career pathways to headship. All of them are qualified teachers; they acknowledge the differences between the jobs of teachers versus heads and admit to liking the head's role. As the political situation in Romania is very fluid and the role of heads is politically influenced, their time in post can be of short duration. The interviewees thus have a dual professional identity: headteacher and teacher. This is different to the experience in other countries (see also Politicisation theme below).

During decentralisation, Romanian headteachers have learnt how to juggle with multiple roles at work and their workload has increased as a result. As teacher training days and student competitions are organised during the weekends, most of the heads go to work during the weekend as well. Once or twice a month Romanian heads also meet with the other heads in the county at the County School Inspectorate. This means that, on average, heads spend approximately 60 hours per week at work.

The ever-increasing time spent at school and the stress associated with the job has impacted upon Romanian headteachers' personal and family life. Romanian heads now have even less time to dedicate to their families. This is similar to the experience of heads elsewhere (Evetts, 1990, Schmuck and Schubert, 1995, Sachs and Blackmore, 2007).

Due to the increased managerial tasks they face, heads have become distanced from their teaching colleagues. This is similar again to the experience of heads in other countries (Evetts, 1994, Fullan, 2001, Lortie,

2009). In some cases, the complexities of headship and time spent away from home means that they feel isolated from their families and also from other heads and teachers. For the time being, this is not as prominent in Romania as in some other countries, perhaps because the process of decentralisation is more recent and also because of the temporary nature of the position.

Generally, there is a positive attitude towards decentralisation, in particular the delegation of finances, among the Romanian headteachers interviewed. Most of the interviewees hope decentralisation will be beneficial for education in general and their managerial practice in particular. On the one hand, there are heads that believe it will impact positively on their practice and will make them raise their game and gain greater self-control and autonomy. On the other hand, heads are experiencing greater fear of instability with regard to headship because of the politicisation of education. The fragility of headship impacts upon headteachers' personal and professional lives. While school boards now select their own teachers, the Ministry of Education through County School Inspectorates still appoints headteachers and the impact of decentralisation on tenure is still unknown.

In spite of generally enjoying their role, there is a general dissatisfaction among the Romanian heads over the amount of paperwork and bureaucracy they now need to do as managers. This is also in line with the experience of the international heads (Hughes, Ribbins and Thomas, 1985). The emphasis on paperwork makes them conclude there is far less time for what they consider very important parts of their job (instructional issues, human resources, communication, etc). They rhetorically question the necessity of so much paperwork and conclude this can make them lose their motivation. In other countries, heads also had different attitudes to decentralisation. While in general agreeing with the principles of decentralisation and hoping for an increase in autonomy, heads in England, for example, argue against

the new managerialisation and bureaucratisation of education (Clarke and Newman, 1997, Gunter and Rayner, 2007).

Theme 4: Budgets

In Romania, heads have taken on the role of financial manager. In this endeavour, they are helped by the chief accountant in their schools. Coming from a purely instructional background and with no prior experience in managing budgets, Romanian heads found handling large budgets challenging. Consequently, the Romanian government has put in place appropriate training in financial management. The fact that training came after the implementation of financial delegation in Romania, meant that heads learnt by experience as well as by training.

International heads have also found it difficult dealing with budgets when they first started implementing decentralisation for the same reasons (Ribbins, 1991, Sue Beeson with Peter Ribbins, 1998, Gewirtz et al., 1995). The fact that only in some schools in England separate School Business Managers were hired (Woods et al., 2010), meant that in most schools, the head took on the chief executive role, leaving the deputies in charge of instruction (leading professional).

Heads are also responsible for identifying and recruiting better staff whilst keeping within the budget allocated. Romanian heads are expecting that the decentralisation of budgets and decision-making to school level will lead to greater school autonomy in this regard. Again, this is in line with the experiences of their counterparts in England and Wales, United States, Victoria (Australia) and New Zealand (Abu-Duhou, 1999:102; also see Caldwell and Spinks, 1992, Caldwell and Hill, 1999). Romanian heads found the allocation and distribution of funds to be less flexible than they previously

hoped. Reasons for this include the financial crisis, prescription of funds within a budget category, local authority 'interference' and transfer of funds between schools.

Theme 5: Markets and competition

Competition between schools for students is new to Romanian education. After quasi-markets and per capita funding was introduced, many schools were deemed ineffective. Consequently, they were either amalgamated into larger schools, or closed. A massive 72% of all schools have closed or been amalgamated in the last 5 years!

In the educational quasi-market, schools have started operating their schools as businesses. In terms of their educational offer or brand, many have sought out new niches in the market that would ensure their success in the future. Some of these include delivering CPD courses for teachers, adult education or setting up as a new specialised technical college to reflect the local industry.

Also a result of competition, heads have looked for new avenues to generate revenues for their schools. Producing and selling products (examples included growing and selling grapes or wheat, driving tuition and function room hire) have allowed some schools to spend more on staff or material improvements. Typically, parents have always contributed to school funds in Romania through donations. This, however, is now less the case than before decentralisation.

Like Romanian heads but two decades earlier, heads in England, USA, New Zealand, Victoria (Australia) have faced up to market forces by increasing

the quality of educational provision and choice in order to attract more and better students (Gewirtz et al., 1995).

Romanian heads acknowledged the importance of good relationships with other heads. They are asking for advice from one another and collaborate well, both formally (for partnerships) and informally (many of the heads interviewed are friends with other heads in the county/country) with very few exceptions. This finding contrasts to the international literature according to which, headteachers feel that, through competition, the educational market sets them against other headteachers (Sachs and Blackmore, 1998).

With regard to parents and local communities' participation in education, there is an element that adds to the distinctiveness of the Romanian case of decentralisation. Whilst in liberal democracies, parents have always been encouraged to participate in education (even before decentralisation) the situation could not be more different in Romania. In communist Romania, parents and local authorities could not participate directly as power was concentrated at the top of hierarchy (see Chapter Three). Under decentralisation, it is now legislated that parents and local authorities play a prominent role in education. The School Board now consists of one third teachers (including the Head), one third parents and one third representatives of the local authorities. So this is an important step forward.

Another distinctive element in Romanian decentralisation is the exercise of parental choice as mentioned briefly earlier. As students are admitted to schools based on their results in national examinations, Romanian parents actually have a very limited role in choosing between schools. Students and parents can express school preferences but examination results define the allocation of schools within their preferences.

Parental choice can also lead to inequality especially in rural Romania where there are not as many schools as in urban areas and the distances are greater. When parents from rural areas decide to send their children to complete high school (post-16 when education is not compulsory any more), mostly due to financial reasons, they tend to enrol them to the closest school, which might not be the best for their children. Therefore, the educational market can work against these students.

Theme 6: Politicisation

In spite of the similarities in decentralisation policy between states and countries across the globe, due to the socio-political and cultural backgrounds of implementation, the heads' experiences of decentralisation are significantly different. In Romania, a key reason for this is the level of politicisation of the education system.

There are many facets to politicisation in Romania. Firstly, there are the external influences such as the EU and World Bank which are acting as the drivers for decentralisation policy (and possibly, as a consequence, this leads to less 'buy in' than if the policy were home grown). One example of this is the creation of eight development 'regions' in the country in line with EU expectations, which exist largely in name only but have no administrative or legislative function.

Secondly, there is a rapidly changing internal political system (followed by new political appointments at macro, meso and micro levels). As a result, the implementation of policy and programmes is seriously affected by the multiple fluctuations at state level as key-actors (policy-makers, ministers, state secretaries, national and regional inspectors, headteachers) also

change. Note that there have been five changes of government in the past 10 years with further four changes in the coalition in power.

Thirdly, there is an expectation that headteachers should be members of a political party and if your party is in power then your role is generally secure. This does, however, lead to serious insecurity amongst headteachers and, consequently, school governance can also suffer.

Fourthly, though it has always been the case for education to be politicised in Romania, it seems that post decentralisation, this will be no different. In short, in spite of the necessary legislative steps being taken towards a decentralisation of education that follows western models, the situation could not be more different when it comes to implementation. Old practices of nepotism and political favouritism still prevail and the interference of politics in education in particular represents the largest barrier to the success of the implementation of decentralisation. This high level of politicisation of the education system is unique to the Romanian case of decentralisation in education.

Fifthly, the nature of politicisation is currently changing. Decentralisation has led to an increase in local politicisation of education as opposed to national influence in the past, mainly because of the increased role of local authorities. In the next sub-section I explore the relationship between politicisation and the conceptual framework.

8.2.3 The Contribution of Politicisation to the Conceptual Framework

Earlier in the thesis I suggested that the decentralisation developing in Romanian public education is a hybrid between neo-liberalism and

communist legacy, thus taking the shape of *politicised decentralisation*. It is neo-liberal, in that it introduces some of the market principles in education (competition for students, local/school budgeting, and, to some extent, parental choice). It bears a communist legacy in that it has also inherited practices of nepotism and politicisation of the system.

I also showed that the Romanian state is shifting governance arrangements from hierarchies to markets. The decentralisation of Romanian education involves the transfer of some powers regarding education to local authorities' and school level, and the participation of various kinds of stakeholders in the educational process (i.e. local community, parents, etc). Therefore, these are features of a more democratic state (Giddens, 1989). This is an encouraging development considering Romania's past of a totalitarian state. However, the omnipresent politicisation of education (volatility of governments and minister-to-headteacher appointments made on political grounds are just one example, see Chapter Seven) affects professionals' roles at all three levels in the hierarchy (i.e. macro - national level, meso – regional/local level and micro – school level).

The theme of politicisation of education in Romania runs throughout my research. It has consequences not only to which components are decentralised (and to what level of the system) but also to why decentralisation is happening (*drivers of policy* dimension), why progress has been slow (*time* dimension), or at times unsuccessful (*legislated versus implemented* dimension) and also helps to explain the experiences of headteachers and other stakeholders in the process (*perception* dimension).

8.3 The transferability of the model

A number of western style democracies (e.g. England, USA, Australia, Canada, Italy, etc) began the process of educational decentralisation from the 1980s and 1990s. Another wave of the introduction of decentralisation in education is now either recently implemented or emergent in former communist countries (Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, etc), countries in the Balkans (for example, Cyprus) and developing countries elsewhere (Uganda, United Arab Emirates).

Developed after reviewing international literature and research (in Chapters Two and Four) and tailored to present the Romanian case of the decentralisation of public education (in Chapters Three, Six and Seven), my conceptual framework can be used by other countries implementing decentralisation in education. Under the umbrella of policy scholarship (Ball, 1990, Grace, 1995) and with thorough consideration of the components, dimensions and levels of decentralisation in education, my model can provide an answer to both the strategic and the tactical questions of decentralisation.

By defining which components are/can be decentralised, to what extent, and to what levels of the system, an agreement on a definition of educational decentralisation can be reached. Moreover, by using this model it will be possible to compare and contrast the levels of decentralisation of different countries internationally. With the insight that comparative research can bring, the model is, therefore, useful even for countries with an existing decentralised system. They may be better able to decide, for example, whether and how they might decentralise yet further certain components of their policy.

In addition, following Gordon and Pierce's (1993) argument that other international examples have to be used to mirror their own national case, the Romanian example of decentralisation provides stakeholders in other countries with a richer understanding of their own context, regardless of whether they had decentralised their education systems already or not. The Romanian case of decentralisation and its effects on headteachers represents a contribution to knowledge by providing the readers with details about a new context.

8.4 Summary

This Chapter presented my conceptual framework, from its origins through to its contribution to the field. I have shown how the components, levels and dimensions model enabled me to analyse my research findings in Romania. It is useful for practitioners and academics alike to describe, compare and contrast decentralisation policies in other countries. In the next and final Chapter, I shall present the conclusions of and reflections on my research.

CHAPTER NINE

CONCLUSION

9.1 Introduction

In this last Chapter I am focusing on the conclusions of the research, the contribution to knowledge and further research agenda. In the second section of this concluding chapter, I explore the relationship between the findings and the research questions. In the third section, I consider the implications of my study for policy, practice and practitioners and the contribution to knowledge. Finally, in section 9.4 I reflect on the thesis and try and tease out what other projects could explore further the decentralisation of public education in Romania.

9.2 The relationship between findings and the key research questions

This research has revolved around three key-research questions. After summarizing the findings and their relationship to the conceptual framework in Chapter Eight above, I am now in the position to address the research questions posed at the beginning of the thesis.

RQ1: What is decentralisation in the context of state restructuring and the provision of public education in Romania?

Internationally, decentralisation is a transfer of power from the national government to lower forms of government, and public or private institutions.

Why this has happened (or is happening is covered in RQ2). Here I shall focus on what decentralisation comprises.

There are many models or frameworks, which attempt to define decentralisation. For my thesis I was particularly interested in what decentralisation is in the context of the provision of state education. As I discussed in Chapter Eight, Conceptual Framework, many of these models were not particularly useful for defining what decentralisation is, especially when applied to the education system in Romania.

In order to define what decentralisation is here, there was a need to identify first the *components* of decentralisation (budget allocation, heads appointment, curriculum, assessment of teachers and students, composition of school board, school accountability, hiring and firing of staff, inspection, testing, teacher tenure, funding formula, staff salaries) and then the *levels* (national, local, schools) to which they are (or may be) decentralised. I then looked at the *dimensions* of decentralisation in education (drivers for the policy; the stages of transition over time; the differences between what decentralisation is as it is legislated versus what gets implemented, and finally; its effect on professionals in the education system. I considered all these elements were vital in developing a new conceptual framework which helps to illustrate the peculiarities of decentralisation in Romania. This model was informed both by reviewing existing literature and by my empirical study.

In the thesis, I present the Romanian case of educational decentralisation and the effects on headteachers as a snapshot in time (2010-2012). Against the background of a totalitarian regime in which all public administration was state-controlled and excessively centralised for over four decades, the Romanian government only recently adopted the policy of educational decentralisation.

In Romania (as indeed in other countries), there is no clear-cut distinction between a centralised or decentralised system. Much of the answer to this question comes down to a definition of which components are decentralised to which levels. Moreover, what decentralisation is, needs to be considered in the context of the structure of the state and its governance.

It is important, firstly, to point out that in Romania, whilst 8 administrative regions were set up post communism (in line with EU guidance), these regions do not operate like the federal regions of Germany (Bavaria, Schleswig Holstein etc.) or Spain (Catalonia or the Basque Country etc.), or the national governments within the UK (Northern Ireland and Scotland etc.), for example. There are no regional elections, regional taxes or even regional government authorities as such – regions exist largely in name only. There are, however, local authorities (similar to UK county councils), which are the beneficiaries of this new policy of decentralisation.

Governance in Romania is shifting from a hierarchical state model to what I call *'politicised decentralisation'* in all areas, not just in education. In this form of decentralisation, some responsibility (especially financial) is being transferred from national level to local authorities and, in education, further, to the level of schools. Yet, at the same time, it is still largely a centralised system.

Of all the components of decentralisation, the source and allocation of funds is, perhaps, the most important in terms of what it means for school autonomy, decision-making and empowerment. In Romania, for example, taxes are mostly still collected nationally, allocated downwards to local authorities which are then authorised by the national entities for their disposal. In turn, they are reallocating these funds to schools, which have

some authority for how they are spent. In this sense, decentralisation is a form of empowerment of local government and schools within a centralised system. Local authorities do, in addition, have some powers of local taxation, for which they have more flexibility in determining how this revenue is spent.

When defining the components of decentralisation and to what levels the responsibility is transferred, it is also important to note whether there are any conditions attached. For example, it is possible to say that the allocation of funds has been transferred to local level (i.e. decentralised), but if there is a detailed prescription for how these funds are to be spent (e.g. this budget is for staff salaries only and staff can only be paid according to national guidelines) then the empowerment itself is limited. This is the case to some extent in Romania. Decentralisation has involved real transfer of power (and decision-making) locally and to schools but there have also been some simple transfers of administrative authority for funds already pre-determined.

Note that in Romania there are national as well as local (but not regional) elections. It is commonplace for local and national governments to be of different parties (as is also the case in the UK). Mayors are the locally elected representative in local government and the prefect is the representative appointed centrally to sit in local government. What *is* different in Romania is the level of politicisation of the education (and other public services) at both national and local levels. Decentralisation *has* led to real empowerment at local and school level. This empowerment, however, comes with a few conditions for the actors involved, not least, membership (preferably) of the respective national or local party in power. A recurrent theme in the thesis is the overly politicised character of education that affects the 'what is decentralisation' in terms of its implementation and enactment. Over two decades after the fall of communism, the three types of transition identified by Birzea (1994) as *political, economic* and *cultural* are still ongoing. The delays in reform implementation make Fartusnic and Birzea

(2009) conclude Romania is now going through a *second transition* encompassing all three types.

Finally, when considering what decentralisation comprises, I have considered the dimension of time or transition in the process. This is especially important in Romania as decentralisation is still ongoing. It started back in 1998, gained momentum from 2005 onwards but is still a moving object. At the time of writing, for example, even the most recent legislation (the 2011 Education Act) is undergoing major changes (Government Ordinance 92/2012), which is affecting the answer to all three research questions of this study (RQ1 'what is decentralisation'; RQ2 'how' it is being implemented and RQ3 'what' are the effects on headteachers below).

RQ2: Why and how is decentralisation taking place in Romania?

The issue of why a state decides to transfer power downwards through decentralisation has been the subject of long debates. Several authors have argued that the reason the state is shifting responsibilities to regional or local level is to bring decision making closer to the point of consumption of services. There is some debate as to whether this is the main reason or not and also whether it is happening intentionally. It may be instead, for example, that central government is losing control or does not want to be responsible for (local) public services any more (Pierre and Peters, 2000, Hindmoor and Bell, 2009, Newman, 2001, Newman and Clarke, 2009). Similarly, whether decentralisation is achieving its aims is contentious. There is a link between why decentralisation is happening and whether it should be happening at all (the advantages and disadvantages of a decentralised system).

There are a number of competing and complex themes associated here, such as the value of local autonomy, empowerment of those delivering local

services, empowerment of the local public administration, parents and students as 'consumers' of education, the efficiency of a decentralised system, whether a decentralised system improves education (i.e., student performance), decentralisation's effect on equality of opportunity and so forth. My thesis, however, is not concerned with the pros and cons of decentralisation but more with why and how it is happening in Romania (and RQ3, what its effect is on headteachers).

In Romania, the decentralisation of education is part of a wider programme aimed at the restructuring of the state and public administration after the fall of communism (in December 1989), through the transition to a more democratic society and in preparation for European Union accession (which happened in 2007).

The financial contribution of international donors (such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development) to Romanian education began in the 1990s and was completed in late 2000s. Through the loans taken from these international bodies, the Romanian Government committed itself to a certain set of reforms and policies. Similar reforms were expected of Romania by the EU as a precondition for accession. The policy of decentralisation adopted by the Romanian government thus finds its origins in western models and is, effectively, *externally imposed*. After borrowing the decentralisation policy from western democracies, the process was then implemented in a former totalitarian country. The 'why' decentralisation is happening in Romania is actually quite simple (external influences), the 'how' it is being implemented, however, is more complex.

There are multiple elements to 'how' decentralisation of education is happening in Romania. It is worth summarizing initially what the legislation

has intended to achieve through decentralisation before looking at the practical issues that have beset its implementation.

Firstly, there is a shift of finances from the national government through the Ministry of Education to local authorities and on to schools, partly based on a per capita formula established nationally and partly based on a needs basis, allocated by the local authorities. Secondly, by encouraging schools to generate revenues, compete for students, and provide parents with some choice regarding schooling, a quasi-market has been created in education. Thirdly, the Romanian educational decentralisation involves the increased powers of school boards and a change to their role and composition. Appointment of both headteachers and staff are now to be determined by the board. Finally, the school curriculum has been partially decentralised as mentioned earlier: 60% national; 20% local; 20%school.

It is interesting to note that while *'decentralising'* some components of education (such as budgets), the national government retains authority in the most important areas, such as legislation and policy-making (all Education Acts are national, for example) in Romania. Despite some decentralisation of the curriculum (20% is decided by local authorities and 20% by schools), most of the curriculum (60%), inspection, testing and assessment are also centralised at the national level. In that sense, Romania resembles other countries undergoing decentralisation (e.g. England, New Zealand, state of Victoria in Australia).

What is distinctive about Romania is that the emergent hybrid in which decentralisation and centralisation co-exist represents a shift in decision making from national to local level, though only little from national or local level to schools. Even when decentralisation does occur at the school level, schools do not have much real power either because there is limited flexibility in delegated budgets or simply because the school boards, which

are responsible for heads' and staff appointments are still 1/3rd comprised of local authority members. Remember that these members are part of the same entity, which determines the maintenance part of the school budget on a 'needs basis'. Add to this the politicisation of the system and importance of belonging to the right party and I arrive at a conclusion: decentralisation to school level is not quite happening as the legislation might suggest. As one of my interviewees, a former minister of education, expressed it, "the 2011 Education Act decentralised politicisation (…) this is a top-down politicisation of education dictated by political parties" Paul).

Whilst the policy of decentralisation was adopted following external pressures and external models (coming from Anglophone countries), it is important to recognize that the national context within which decentralisation is happening is key to understanding the difference between what is legislated and what actually happens in practice:

> While policy texts look rational and coherent, it seems that decentralized systems are *locally** based and hence neoliberal ideas and solutions need to be critically examined [before adopting unquestioningly for other countries]" (Gunter, 2011:214).

*my emphasis

Romania's political and cultural legacies have a significant influence on the outcomes and policy borrowing is not without its complications (Newman, 2001).

RQ3: What are the implications of decentralisation for headteachers in Romania?

My field research summarized in 8.2.2 presents six themes that address this research question: new professional responsibilities (executive versus administrative roles, the school board composition and role including heads' appointments and remuneration), juggling multiple activities and accountability systems, professional identity, budgets, market forces and competition and politicisation. A very brief summary of the key points rehearsed here are:

- Heads are adopting the Chief Executive role and are in charge of budgets;

- The school board is now one third teachers (including the head), one third parents and one third representatives of the local authority. Whilst schools now have more financial powers, the inclusion of local authorities on the school board politicises key decisions at school level. As teachers and the head now represent a minority on the board (and the head is no longer the Chair), this does also mean that some heads believe they have less power than before. Some also disagree with this level of outside 'interference' in education;

- Appointments of heads and staff are to be performed by the School Board (2011 Education Act), although this has not yet happened in practice;

- Heads face multiple new roles and accountabilities both within and outside of the school. The key ones include the local authorities and parents with a decreased role of County School Inspectorates. There is probably a lack of awareness of the new level of accountability represented by the local authorities;

- Romanian heads still see themselves both as teachers and headteachers, not least because of their instability in post. They feel that the workload and bureaucracy is increasing and consequently spend less time with their families. Relationships with other heads are not yet as competitive as in other countries;

- The budget or financial manager role is, perhaps, the most important change to Romanian heads' roles and largely welcomed by heads interviewed. They have found it most challenging, because of the lack of training (and the cultural background of administrative role within a communist, hierarchical state). They do, however, relish some of the funding choices it enables them to make. Due to the financial crisis, however, financial delegation came to a halt in 2011. In spite of an agreed standard cost per student for the year 2011 (Government Decision 1395/2010), in practice schools did not receive the necessary funds because they were not available any more. Or, if they were, any excess was transferred to other schools that could not afford to pay teachers' salaries (for example, due to a small number of students);

- The introduction of decentralisation in Romanian education also meant the creation of a quasi-market. Many schools were closed or amalgamated, and those heads who survived began to operate their schools as businesses, competing for students and finding new avenues for generating revenues;

- Politicisation was a key theme in the findings. This is covered in a little more detail below, especially as it is a key feature of the Romanian context;

Politicisation and headteachers

In communist Romania, it was common practice for headteachers to be members of the Romanian Communist Party. With the emergence of more parties on the political scene after the fall of communism, heads can now choose to be members of a political party or not and if so, to which political party. In theory this is a normal democratic development and should work well. In practice, Romanian headteachers have to choose carefully their political allegiances as choosing the wrong (or no) party can cost them their headship. Even before decentralisation, it would be typical for Ministers, Directors, County School Inspectors and also headteachers to be changed out when a new national government is appointed. This is not the case in other countries.

Even when aligned to the party in power locally and/or nationally, there is no guarantee that headteachers would complete their headship. Unfortunately, for schools, the impact is real as headteachers are often replaced with each of these changes. The fluidity of the political situation means that heads are also changing frequently despite being appointed for four years. While most European heads are in post for eight years (with Heads in England and Wales in post for ten years on average, according to Howson, 2005), only the most resilient heads in Romania stay in post for such a long time period.

Indeed, as my respondents showed, some heads manage to stay in post for as much as twenty or thirty years. However, these represent the exception rather than the rule. Other heads do not manage to keep their post for more than one year. Another group consists of heads that juggle political parties and opportunities and are at their second or third headship, with several breaks in between. All this comes at a cost. Being forced to step out midway through their headship causes serious problems to Romanian heads. These range from emotional problems, to material and employment ones. In the long term, this affects their rather fragile identity as heads. It also helps to

explain why so many of them see themselves as both teachers and headteachers since they often alternate to and fro between the two roles in the course of their career.

In effect, the instability of the political system in Romania has implications for the other two levels in the Romanian education system:

1. At *macro* level, the multiple changes in government mean the momentum for devising, adopting and implementing decentralisation is lost. A policy needs time to be implemented. Normally, a government should be in power for at least four years until new elections. Four years is not enough for policy implementation, but it is a good start for the implementation process. If the members of the cabinet change very often, sometimes even a few times per year (there have been 3 different cabinets in 2012 only and 7 ministers of education in the past 5 years (see Chapter Seven) the chances of success of any policy are seriously reduced. So, by the time new people are appointed, get used to their new responsibilities, are brought up to date with the policy of decentralisation, precious implementation time is lost. Soon thereafter there might be a new change of government or minister and the process starts all over again.

2. At *meso* level, county school inspectors are the ones creating the link between the macro and micro levels. Changes at the top also mean changes for county school inspectors. In consequence, the messages (legislation, directives, etc) sent from the top downwards lack consistency and coherence.

9.3 Contribution to knowledge

First and foremost, by looking at the experiences of decentralisation of Romanian heads I make a contribution both to *Romanian literature, practice and research.* The findings of my empirical study have implications for education in Romania at several levels:

- *Macro*: it can inform policy makers and academics who are currently involved in designing and developing the decentralisation policy. This is particularly useful in a country where the roles and responsibilities of policy makers are in constant flux. A new Minister, for example, would benefit from this study in several ways. Firstly, it provides a comprehensive description of the existing state of decentralisation policy in Romania. Secondly, it provides a theoretical, practical and apolitical understanding of how decentralisation is progressing and how it is perceived by the various stakeholders. As such, this thesis will signpost a number of improvements that may be undertaken. It should also help to speed up the process of decentralisation.

- *Meso*: it is relevant to County School Inspectors and Local Authorities whose roles are restructuring. County School Inspectors are now more focused on guidance and control of instructional matters. This thesis will help them to reposition their roles in light of the changes. For local authorities, this thesis is of real value, not least because they have had very little input or involvement in education in the past. It will provide them with a good understanding of the education system in Romania and how they will need to adapt to their new responsibilities.

- *Micro:* it is key for headteachers as it focuses specifically on their practice. The thesis should provide information and opinions that are directly relevant to the new responsibilities and accountability systems that they are facing. The fieldwork in particular will chime with many of their own experiences and they will find that they are not alone in this new environment.

Secondly, this thesis contributes to the *international body of literature* in that I am showing how state restructuring through decentralisation is working in a post-communist country. In showing how policy implementation differs depending on the socio-economic, political and cultural context, it creates a new insight for educationalists, policy-makers, practitioners and researchers internationally, not least because the existing empirical base predominantly refers to westernised countries.

The conceptual framework based on components, levels and dimensions of decentralisation that I have developed during the course of my thesis has made an important contribution to the field. It is useful to academics and practitioners alike, not least for its ability to define what decentralisation is; by taking each of the components of decision-making and identifying at what level(s) it is (or, more importantly, could be) taking place, an understanding of decentralisation is achieved. With an agreed definition of decentralisation, policy making can be discussed in more explicit terms. Comparisons are also far easier between countries to further inform policy making.

The dimensions of the model reflect a number of factors by which the components of decentralisation can be considered. They touch on many of

the strategic and tactical issues that are involved in policy design, enactment and implementation.

9.4 Reflections

In this final section of the thesis I reflect on my research and findings. These personal thoughts are organised under the headings 'matters for policy', 'heads' responses to decentralisation', 'matters for professionalism' and 'further research agenda', and refer to the implications of these for the trajectory of decentralisation reform in Romania.

Matters for policy

Firstly, when suggesting a new policy, the international organisations should recognise that policy migration is fraught with problems. This is especially the case when the provision of funds is conditional on the adoption of one or more new policies. It is likely that the lack of acceptance of a policy could hinder its implementation. When something is imposed from 'outside' and above, it will face resistance.

Secondly, governments, especially in the former CEECs, should think very carefully before borrowing a policy, which may work in other contexts. Policies should be tailored for the respective system of education, taking into account regional and local development goals. When governments do borrow a policy, it should be fit for purpose. One of the problems in the decentralisation of the Romanian education system is that the underlying structure of the administration was/is not set up to implement the decentralisation of education. For instance, the establishment of regions did

not help and decentralisation has led to the empowerment of local authorities, instead of schools. Another example is that the legislation for decentralisation *preceded* the financial empowering legislation, which was needed for the various authorities to exercise the roles and funds transfers, in line with legislation. In addition, the Body of Experts in Educational Management was set up *after* the 2011 Education Act passed (and thus headteachers could not be appointed in line with the new legislation). More coordination and collaboration between Ministries would make this situation simpler.

Thirdly, when a policy is decided upon nationally, for example, the decentralisation of the education system in Romania, the stakeholders at regional, local and school level should have more input into its design. Moreover, legislation should allow for more freedom of interpretation. In Romania, the need for high prescription goes back to communism and the overly centralised type of state. More than two decades after the fall of communism, there are still cultural expectations that the state, through its ministries, should enact legislation through a series of implementation guidelines (called 'methodologies'). With little room for manoeuvre in the interpretation of legislation and no agreed methodologies, Romanian headteachers are often unable to implement the legislation in force.

Fourthly, the multiple changes of government in Romania lead to changes of Ministers, Directors, Inspectors and Heads. All this is particularly disruptive of the decentralisation process, indeed of the education system as a whole. It leads to a lack of coherence and cohesion in policy design at the macro level and implementation at the micro and meso levels. A political system which allows for governments to be elected for 4 years but for ministers to only serve a number of months (due to changing coalitions etc.) is not conducive to good governance and stability. The country has moved from one extreme (single political party rule) to a plethora of parties and coalitions. Whilst this situation is unlikely to change any time soon (without political legislation or constitutional amendments), it is possible to reduce the influence of politics

on the lower levels of the education system. For many readers outside of Romania, it will sound archaic that headteachers still need to belong to the right political party to either gain or retain their post.

Fifthly, the Romanian government should be realistic about the amount of time a policy needs to work. In Romania, policy changes rapidly and new amendments are continuously made. These generate confusion amongst all stakeholders. Therefore, it is very difficult to see what effect the policy of decentralisation really has on professionals when many things change at the same time. Change takes time, especially when the historical, economic, political and cultural context are far removed from the policy to be adopted.

Sixthly, the global financial crisis should not bring to a halt the decentralisation policy as was the case in Romania. With less money to go round and budgets cut, it was still possible for the Romanian Ministry of Education to have administered fewer funds using the same formula and actors, albeit with smaller budgets to play with.

Finally, the composition of the school board is another important contributor to the success of decentralisation in Romania. This is a contentious matter. In theory, I do not believe there is a problem with parents and local authorities being represented in such a large proportion. However, when the local authority is also a key player in allocating funds between schools *and* is highly politicised, then there is a conflict of interest. At the time of writing, I believe that the Government recently passed in December 2012 a Government Ordinance (OG 92/2012) which suggests changes to the composition of school boards. This would revert to the situation before the 2011 Education Act whereby teachers and heads would comprise 50% of board membership. Without knowing the details, it is difficult to judge whether this will be successful but, in principle, it could be a solution to the over- politicisation of education by local authorities.

Heads' responses to decentralisation

As illustrated in Chapters Six and Seven, the responses of Romanian headteachers to decentralisation varied. This might impact on the future developments in a decentralised education system. Being a nationally top-down imposed policy, all Romanian headteachers interviewed accepted the policy with no overt resistance. They all feared an excessive interference of the local public authorities to the instructional process. Nevertheless, whilst some headteachers embraced the changes to their roles and adapted quickly to the new situations, others continued to believe their immediate accountability was to the County School Inspectorates and consequently to the Ministry of Education.

The former understood they had to start building new fruitous relationships with the Town Hall and mayors and take advantage of the closeness to them. In many cases, this translated into being allocated larger maintenance budgets to manage and solving problems at a much a faster pace than before. These heads played the game and were winners of the restructuring processes. The heads that resisted accountability to local authorities and mayor arguing they were 'only accountable to them form the financial point of view', experienced more challenges in running their schools. It is worth re-emphasising the fact that local public authorities are now ensuring approximately 70% of funding in Romania.

I believe that the reasons for the variety and richness of the Romanian heads' attitudes to decentralisation depends on a series of both objective and cognitive constraints and possibilities. It might well be that the heads in the first category are younger, hence more open to new. Or, it is purely down to personal characteristics of a head. For example, Adam has been a head for thirty years (including in communism). However, he is ready for the opportunities for autonomy decentralisation is currently offering. Taking into account the cultural communist past and the constant fear for error and lack of personal input, as well as the novelty of the chief executive role, the heads

in the second category might be too afraid to make the leap towards a more autonomous headship.

Matters for professionalism

Firstly, if a fuller and more comprehensive educational decentralisation is to be achieved in Romania, more power needs to be transferred from the local authority level to the school level. One example here might be the allocation of complementary funding for maintenance and capital investments. If this were also based on a national formula, and only then allocated to schools to be spent as they see fit, then more empowerment of heads as Chief Executives would result.

Secondly, the Romanian government should make amendments to the Employment Law and/or to heads' employment contracts with regards to dismissal and compensation. This should help to protect heads from being demoted/fired with each change in government and so contribute to stability in headships. This of value to the headteachers and the schools they manage as headteachers would be able to set up longer-term development plans and a vision for their schools without being under the constant threat of being changed and their strategies for school development abandoned.

Thirdly, the professionalization of the headteacher position should be continued. Related to this, Romanian headteachers need more (and more frequent) training and support in their new roles. This is especially important, given the frequent changes of headteachers. For example, in the late 1990's the Education Research Project trained inspectors and headteachers in the new inspection systems and yet, less than ten years later, I believe, most of those trained were no longer in post.

Fourthly, the arrangements for teacher tenure in Romania need to be clarified. This is important as it could seriously affect the ability of schools to

hire, fire and retain their staff. Implicitly, this impacts on headteachers as they feel they cannot ensure a better quality of instruction if they are not selecting the staff most suitable for their schools.

Further research agenda

Whether decentralisation has or will achieve its aims in Romania is unclear (and not an objective of this thesis), largely because it is too soon to say. The experience of other countries that implemented decentralisation indidicates there is no direct correlation between educational decentralisation and an improvement of the education system as a whole. More research is needed in the near future to look at the changes in Romanian education post decentralisation. This should include a comprehensive description of the components and the levels at which decision making is transferred. It would also be worth looking at the other dimensions too such as the perceptions of stakeholders and any differences that still exist between legislation and implementation.

Specifically, this research could be taken forward through a series of new projects that look at educational decentralisation and its effects on the professional roles of national policy-makers, county school inspectors, headteachers, and teachers. The best way to achieve all this is through longitudinal studies at national level. If this is not possible due to the vast amount of resources involved, then local or regional studies would represent a good start.

Another avenue of investigation could be opened by looking at the impact of decentralisation on student outcomes. To achieve these aims, there is a need for a lifecycle of policy implementation to follow through the results of at

least two cohorts of students. A mixed method approach would be most suitable for this type of project.

In decentralisation, it is the first time when parents in Romania exercise an incipient form of educational choice. They also express a more powerful voice through their participation in the school board. The other category of stakeholders that recently started participating more in education at the school level is local authorities. In the near future, it would be interesting to see if and in what ways this could develop. A project looking at the involvement of parents and local authorities in decision-making at school level in all schools (or a representative sample) in the forty two counties could illuminate the experiences of these stakeholders.

Finally, I would recommend a review of the interplay between *national* assessment, inspection and testing and decentralised *local/school* decision-making. This would attempt to explore the dynamics between the decentralisation hybrid that exists: whilst, standards are set and regulated centrally, financial and human resources are being allocated at local or school level. What level of empowerment really exists in a decentralised system, when the decisions that are taken locally need to reflect national academic standards?

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Appendix A

Table 1: Advantages and Disadvantages of Decentralisation

Advantages of decentralisation	Disadvantages of decentralisation
Means of overcoming limitations of centralised planning	
Means of cutting through red-tape and highly-bureaucratic procedures	Can lead to greater inequity in the distribution of resources and services if decentralised units are not concerned about equitable distribution – centre often has more flexibility to redistribute
Means of increasing decision-makers' knowledge of local conditions and needs	
Allows better 'penetration' of national government policies to the local level	Can create nuclei of political opposition to central government policies and programs
Allows greater representation of diverse ethnic, religious and political interests in planning and management of public programs	
Expands administrative capacity among wider variety of organisations and allows them to perform functions not efficiently, nor effectively performed at the centre	
Increases efficiency of central government by relieving top officials of routine management tasks.	Local officials or organisations may be hesitant or reluctant to take initiative in performing decentralised functions
Provides focus for coordinating activities of ministries on problems at local level	
Means of offsetting adverse influences of local elites who are opposed to change by "opening up" decision making processes	Programs and services can be "captured" by economic and political elite at local level who appropriate benefits to themselves
Can reduce the "diseconomies of scale" associated with over-concentration of responsibility at the centre	For some functions, central governments have advantages of expertise, resources, and economies of scale to deliver routine services more effectively
Increases flexibility of administration and ability to experiment with innovative solutions to unique local problems	Lack of financial resources and management skills at local level may lead to inefficient or ineffective service delivery
Increases people's stake in the political system by providing them with greater opportunities for participation	Local beneficiaries may not be organised strongly enough to participate effectively or protect their interests in planning and decision-making

Source: Rondinelli, 1986, pp. 4-5

Table 2: Degrees of autonomy in school management

	Centralised + regulated	*Moderately centralised +moderately regulated*	*Decentralised +deregulated*
Teaching and curriculum			
Subjects	Prescribed subjects	Compulsory+ optional school subjects	Free choice of subjects+ groups of subjects
Timetable	Prescribed timetable	Prescribed for the total number of lessons for the entire school period	Free timetable
Content	Content of lessons is prescribed	National core curriculum specified	Indication of broad aims
Exams	National examination	Combined national and school examination	School exams
Staff			
Qualification of staff	Determined by law	Partly centrally regulated, partly determined by the school board	At the discretion of the school as employer

In-service training	National obligatory programme	The school chooses from government sponsored courses	Free choice of programme that fits the schools needs
Appointment +dismissal	By national government or national inspector	By the school board	By the school director
Appraisal	By the inspector	By the school board or director	By a co-ordinating teacher
School organisation			
Structure of school	Regulated by law	Main lines determined by law, details by the school board	Free choice for the school
Differentiation (streaming +setting)	Regulated by law	Main lines determined by law, details by the school board	Free choice for the school
Decision making structure	Regulated by law	Main lines determined in an agreement between authorities and school	Free choice for the school
Finances, buildings, facilities			
Sources of finances	Financed entirely by government	Partly financed by the government + partly by participants' contribution	Partly financed by government, rest sponsoring, contract activities
Management of finances	By a governmental organisation	Partly by the school	Entirely by the school management
Responsibility for buildings and facilities	With the government	Partly by government (for example ownership), partly by the school	Responsibility of the school
Information system	Information is for external use (e.g. national statistics)	Information is both for statistics and for the management	Information for school improvement
Salary of staff	Determined and paid by government	Determined centrally, paid by the school board	Determined and played by the school board as employer
Legal status of staff	Civil servants	Similar conditions to civil servants (e.g. salary scales and pensions)	Private employee
External relations			
Recruitment of pupils	From a fixed catchment area	From members of a certain church or denomination	Open admission
Competition between schools	Non-existent	Slight competition between schools	Strong competition between schools
Relationship with other schools and business	None	Only with schools	Intensive relationships with organisations outside school
Negotiations with unions	None	About minor issues	About salaries and legal status

Source: Karstanje, 1999, pp.39-40

Table 3: The various forms of reallocation responsibilities in education systems

Form of responsibility transfer	Target of responsibility transfer
De-concentration	Lower level (e.g. regional) units of the state
"Real decentralisation"	Elected bodies of local and regional communities, self-governments
School autonomy	Schools gaining autonomy but continuing their operation as public institutions (management power delegated to the school leader or the staff)
Privatisation, "marketisation"	Private schools or public schools placed under the control of autonomous governing bodies behaving as owners
Participation, partnership	Responsibility shared horizontally with social partners and civil society (parents, employers, civil organisations)
Community control	Responsibility shifted to linguistic, cultural, national, ethnic communities
Deregulation	No real target – overall withdrawal of regulations

Source: Halasz, 2003, p.6

Table 4: Education Reform Acts in England

ERA	Features
1986	Depending on the number of students in a school, the governing bodies consist of 9-19 members (Maclure, 1989). In the light of the new Act, LEAs proposed new financial delegation plans for Local Management of Schools (LMS). Kandel (cited in Turner, 2006:8) argued that "decentralising decision-making was enough to ensure that decisions in the local arena were authentic and responded to the local conditions". Parents gained "legal representation on the governing board of each school" (Chapman et al., 1996:11) and thus represented one third of the members of the governing body. The other two thirds were represented by LEA appointees and representatives of the staff/headteacher.
1988	The most important post-1944 Act in education
1989	Brought additional provisions to the 1988 ERA
1993	It was introduced as a White Paper for discussion in 1992 that became legislation in the following spring (Chapman et al., 1996). It modified many of the 1988 ERA provisions in order to address implementation issues (Chapman et al., 1996). Among the changes: centralising initiatives concerning 'ineffective schools'; opting out arrangements, thus LEAs losing the remaining control functions over the system (most of the powers being lost following the 1988 Act).

Table 5: Outcomes of Reform in New Zealand

The Picot Task	The Picot Report (1998)
Was meant to review education administration. It had "administering for excellence" (Abu-Duhou, 1999:43) and "the need for 'systems and structures…flexible and responsive to changes in the educational needs of the community in mind'" (Lauder and Wylie, 1990:5)	Presented the education system as highly bureaucratised "endorsing the popular belief that all bureaucracy is inherently and fundamentally bad" (Codd et al., 1990:25) The middle tier of responsibility would be completely eliminated: "the creation of more choice in the system as a way of ensuring greater efficiency and equity" (Picot Report, 1988:4).

Table 6: School Governance in Italy

Bodies and membership
The teachers' assembly (Collegio dei Docenti): all teaching staff; chaired by the headteacher. It establishes and monitors school policy with respect to the pedagogical issues as well as the main administrative ones, prepares and finalises the school plan and decides on teachers' CPD.
The school board (Consiglio di Istituto), comprised of the headteacher, elected representatives of teachers, parents and non-teaching staff and chaired by a parent elected by the other members**.** The number of components is either 14 (schools with less than 500 pupils), or 19 (schools with more than 500 pupils). The school board meets regularly and its task is to take the final decisions concerning aspects of school life such as timetable, school trips, relationship with the local community and external institutions, approval of the school budget and monitoring of the school development plan.
The administrative board (Giunta Esecutiva) composes of the headteacher, the administrator, the president, one teacher and two parents (members of the school board). It implements the decisions made by the school board as far as financial matters are concerned.

Source: after Barzano, (2007: 86-87)

Table 7: Stages in the educational reform in the USA

Stages in reform in the USA
The first set of reforms appeared as a consequence of the official fears that the USA was "losing its competitiveness in the world marketplace" (Chapman et al., 1996:9) and took the form of "A Nation at Risk" (1983), a report that suggested the USA must: "increase rigour, raise graduation standards for students and extend the school year" (Chapman et al., 1996:9).
In 1986, "A Nation Prepared" and "Time for Results", reports released by the Carnegie Task Force and the National Governors Association, explored ways in which the new aims could be achieved. Five years later, in 1991, President George Bush proposed "America 2000" a strategy to achieve the 6 national education goals agreed on at the first "education summit" in 1989 (Chapman et al., 1996:9): school readiness, school completion, student academic achievement, leadership in math and science, adult literacy, and safe and drug-free schools (Paris, 1994): "America 2000 is a (…) nine-year crusade to move us towards the six ambitious national education goals…(Alexander, 1993:11)
When President Clinton came into power, he proposed Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994), mainly based on "America 2000" and adding 2 new goals encouraging parental participation and teacher professional development. The Act has also established a national curriculum framework, National Education Standards and Improvement Council meant to develop national evaluation standards and contents as well as a National Skill Standards Board to develop occupational skills (Paris, 1994). This reform was as significant as the 1988 ERA in Britain: "America 2000, for all its localism, is a top-down strategy that makes schools the target for reform but writes the key-actors within them out of the action" (Milbrey and McLaughlin in Trend, 1995:99). Trend (1995:99) refers to the strong bureaucratic and managerialistic features of the report and attributes that to the private-sector consultants "with little or no direct involvement in the institutions under review".

Appendix B

Table 1: Reforms in education in communist Romania

Reforms and documents consulted
Decree No. 175* from 3 August 1948 (shortly after the establishment of Communism in December 1947) Abrogated on January, 8th, 1998 through Law No.7/8Jan/1998, published in the Official Gazette, Part I no. 9 from January, 13th, 1998, following the application of the provisions stipulated in Art. 150 of the Romanian Constitution.
December 1955, was undertaken under Decree No. 1380/1956-of 20 July-and-Decision-No.1003/1957
Law No. 11 of 13 May 1968 followed by 3 decrees It has abrogated Law No. 11/1968 and a number of previous decrees;
May 1973, an amendment to Law. No. 11 (Decree No. 278 of the Council of State) On June 12, 1975, the Council of Ministers (through Decision No. 577)
Three Decrees that were passed at the Plenary Meeting of the Communist Party held in November 1976. These represented additions to the basic legislation described earlier. The first one dealt with the organisation of the high school educational system; the second referred to the the organisation and operation of vocational schools; the third decree amended Decree no. 147 of 1974 through bringing changes to the classifying list of specialties and branches of study in institutions of higher education as well as on the classifying list of institutes and faculties of the Ministry of Education".
Education Act No.28/Dec, 21/ 1978 (published in the Official Gazette, no. 113.Dec, 26/1978). Abrogated and replaced by Law No. 84/1995.

Table 2: Categorisation of CEECs

Countries	Group/region
Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia	Visegrad Group
Romania, Bulgaria, Albania and the former Yugoslav republics other than Slovenia and Croatia	South-Eastern Europe
Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania	the Baltic Republics
The Russian Federation, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova	countries that used to form the Soviet Union

Source: After Cerych, 1997, pp. 80-81

Table 3: World Bank's loans for education in Romania

World Bank Group Net Disbursements to Romania	Amount in million $
1991	
1992	42.1
1993	303.7
1994	167.5
1995	227.8
1996	214.7
1997	167.7
1998	305.7
1999	86.7
2000	353.6
2001	155.0

Source: After Faint, 2004, p. 46

Table 4: Government Ordinance no. 1618/2009

No	Level/specialism	Average no of students in a class	Standard cost per pupil, in urban areas and levels of education (RON)	Standard costs per student, per urban/rural and levels of education in the languages of national minorities (RON)
1	Pre-primary education	20	1895	1895
2	Primary education	22	2180	2616
3	Vocational primary education	22	2555	3066
4	*Secondary education*	*25*	*2857*	*3257*
5	Vocational secondary education	25	3196	3643
6	High school (upper secondary education) Academic profile	28* 30 from 2010-2011 academic year	2713	3066
7	Vocational high school (Technical Specialism, Sports, Military, Teacher Training, Theology)	28* 30 from 2010-2011 academic year	2953	3337
8	Vocational high school (Arts and Music)	28* 30 from 2010-2011 academic year	3272	3697

Source: After, Government Ordinance no. 1618/2009, Annex 1, Standard

costs per student

Diagram 1: Financial flows in the Romanian Education System

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                    ┌──────────────────────────────┐
           ◄────────│     ROMANIAN GOVERNMENT       │────────►
           │        └──────────────────────────────┘        │
           ▼                                                 ▼
┌──────────────────────────┐              ┌──────────────────────────────┐
│   MINISTRY OF EDUCATION,  │              │  MINISTRY OF PUBLIC FINANCES  │
│                           │              └──────────────────────────────┘
│ RESEARCH, YOUTH AND SPORT │                            │
└──────────────────────────┘                            ▼
           │                              ┌──────────────────────────────┐
           │                              │       COUNTY COUNCIL          │
           │                              └──────────────────────────────┘
           │                                            │
           │                                            ▼
           │                              ┌──────────────────────────────┐
           │                              │      GENERAL COUNTY           │
           │                              │  DIRECTORATE FOR PUBLIC        │
           │                              │        FINANCES               │
           │                              └──────────────────────────────┘
           │                                            │
           │                                            ▼
           │                              ┌──────────────────────────────┐
           │                              │   LOCAL AUTHORITY – LOCAL     │
           │                              │    PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION      │
           │                              └──────────────────────────────┘
           │                                            │
           ▼                                            ▼
┌──────────────────────────┐              ┌──────────────────────────────┐
│ COUNTY SCHOOL INSPECTORATE│──────────►   │           SCHOOLS             │
└──────────────────────────┘              └──────────────────────────────┘
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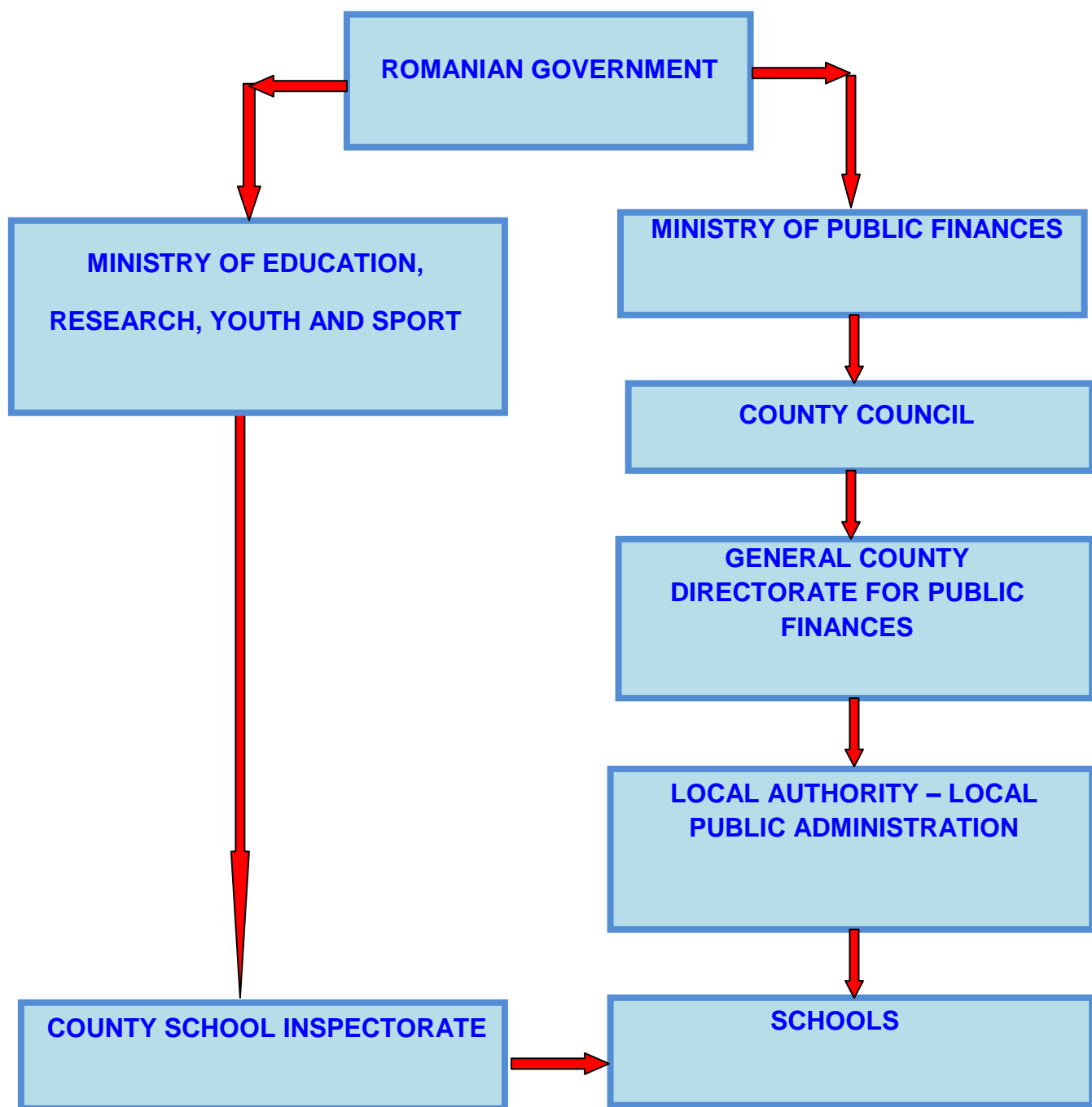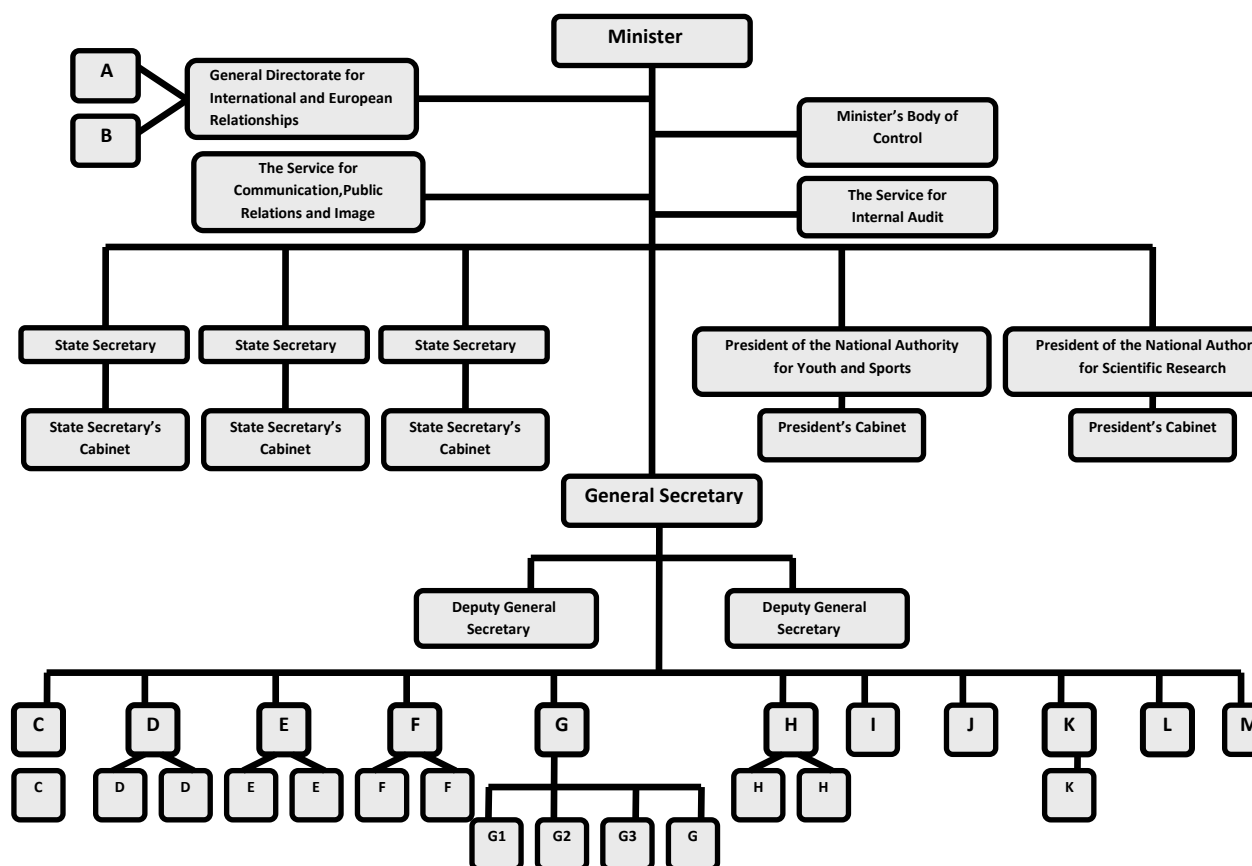
Diagram 2: The structure of the Ministry of Education

Table 5 – Inspector roles historically:

Time/Act	County School Inspectorates (roles)
Past: Communism- Education Act No. 11/1968	Art. 220: "County School Inspectorates fulfil the guidance and control functions within their respective administrative-territorial units. Direct operational supervision of the educational process, including periodic evaluation of teachers' performance in-class and of the content of the subject matters, is the responsibility of County School Inspectorates, which are under the dual jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education and the executive committees of their respective local people's councils- the local organs of state power (after Braham, 1978:7)
Past: Post-communism- Education Act No. 84/1995 until 2010	Art. 142: a) in line with the national educational policy, monitor the ways in which the pre-university school network is structured and operated b) ensure the implementation of the legislation regarding the organisation, leadership and the evolution and progression of the education process c) ensure the quality of education and the compliance with national standards through school inspection d) with the approval of the Ministry of Education, they establish state (public) school units: kindergartens, secondary schools, schools of arts and craftsmanship e) advance the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth the school network in their area based on the educational policy, prognostic studies following consultation with local authorities, businesses and other co-interested social partners f) Ensure, alongside the local authorities, the schooling of students and monitor their attendance throughout compulsory education g) coordinate the processes of vacancy and occupancy of teaching posts in schools in line with the provisions of the Statute of the teaching staff h) organise and guide teacher CPD, scientific research and other similar complementary activities i) coordinate the use, development and protection of the didactic material base from educational institutions alongside local public authorities j) coordinate high-school entry, graduate national examinations and school competitions in the county k) control the activities and services undergone by businesses, NGOs, associations, societies, cults and other legal or individual entities in their respective area; observe and take note of the prospective infringement of the legal provisions and take action according to the law l) coordinate the activity of the libraries within the subordinated educational institutions m) coordinate and control the activity of Teacher Training Centres
Present and Future: The National Education Act- Act No. 1/2011 to present	Art. 95: a) implement the policies and strategies devised by the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports (MERYS) at county-level and respectively at the municipality of Bucharest b) check the implementation of legislation, monitor the quality of the teaching-learning processes and check that the national standards and performance indicators are being respected through the process of school inspection c) check, monitor and assess the quality of the management of schools d) Ensure, alongside the local authorities, the schooling of students and monitor their attendance

	throughout compulsory education.
	e) coordinate high-school entry, national examinations and school competitions in the county
	f) monitor and implement the national programmes initiated by MERYS at county level and respectively at the municipality of Bucharest as well as the projects implemented by individual schools within the broader framework of European Union's educational projects in the fields of education and youth
	g) mediate the conflicts and litigations intervening between the local authorities and school establishments
	h) coordinate and evaluate the activity of the MERYS' units in the respective counties and in Bucharest
	i) present an annual report regarding education at the county-level and in Bucharest. This report is to be made public
	j) approve, based on the proposals made by the local or county councils, the establishment of early, primary and secondary education schools
	k) implement the national educational policies at county-level and respectively at the municipality of Bucharest
	l) ensure consultancy and assistance to the school units in dealing with human resources issues and vacant teaching posts at county level and in Bucharest
	m) monitor the activities of vacancy and occupancy of teaching posts in schools
	n) administer the database of qualified teaching staff in the county and in Bucharest as well as the entire educational database
	o) advance the school network in the county and the municipality of Bucharest approval, based on the proposals made by the local public administration, in line with the educational policies in place alongside strategic documents regarding the economic and social development at regional, county and local levels, prior to consultations with school units, economic stakeholders and other social partners
	p) perform the recurrent audit of human resources in pre-university education
	q) ensure collection of statistical data for the national system of indicators regarding education

Vignette 1: Teacher Tenure Process

The national examination for Teacher Tenure used to be held once a year in mid-July and was organised by County School Inspectorates. The topics for examination were designed nationally by a team of experts. In order to avoid leaking, two possible set of topics was put together by the national experts in the week before the examination day. Also in order to avoid corruption, the national teams of experts were working in rooms where CCTV was in operation.

On the morning of the national examination, the candidates arrived in the centres of examination at 8.00 a.m. At 9.a.m. one set of examination topics was randomly extracted by the Ministry. The number of the option was then communicated to the County School Inspectorates that were now responsible for the process. The examination centres multiplied the extracted option for all subjects and took them to all examination rooms in all examination centres. This was a massive mobilisation of resources and organisation.

The national examination for tenure lasted for four hours (10 a.m.-2 p.m.) and consisted of a written exam in the subject area (representing two thirds of the final grade) and teaching methodologies, i.e. how to teach the respective subject (representing one third of the final grade).

Appendix C

Table 1: Documents consulted

Title	Document type
Decree No. 175* for education reform from 3 August 1948	Education Act
December 1955, was undertaken under Decree No. 1380/1956-of 20 July-and-Decision-No.1003/1957	Education Act
Education act no. 11 of 13 May 1968 followed by 3 decrees	Education Act
May 1973, an amendment to Education Act No. 11 (Decree No. 278 of the Council of State) On *June 12, 1975, the Council of Ministers (through Decision No. 577).*	Education Act
Three decrees that were passed at the Plenary Meeting of the Communist Party held in November 1976.	Secondary legislation
The educational system in Romania. Education around the world (Braham, 1978)	Report
Education Act No. 28/December 1978 published in the Official Gazette, no. 113/26th December 1978	Education Act
Law no. 88/17th December 1993 (Higher Education)	
The reform of education in Romania; conditions and prospects (Birzea et al., 1993)	Report
Education act no.84/ 1995	Education Act
Law no.128/ July 12 1997	Secondary legislation
Law no.151/ 30 July 1999	Secondary legislation
Law no.98/ 2 March 2001	Secondary legislation
Law no.713/ 3 December 2001	Secondary legislation
Law no.719/ 4 December 2001	Secondary legislation
Ordinance of emergency184/ 20 December 2001	Education act
The status of the financial implementation of state pre-higher education (Dogaru, 2002)	Case-study
Romania: Education Reform Project (The World Bank, 2002)	Report
Romania: Education Development Project (Center Education 2000+, May 2002)	Preliminary final report
The reform of compulsory education in Romania (2003)	Report
Romania: decentralisation strategy. An analytical framework (US AID, July 2005)	Report
Decentralisation of pre-higher education in Romania (project) (August 2005)- debates	Seminar minutes
The evaluation of the project: "Financial and Administrative Decentralised Educational Management". Counties: Dolj, Harghita and Iasi (2006)	Evaluation report
The Law of Public Administration (2006)	Law
The Decentralisation of pre-Higher Education (Project)(2006)	
The Decentralisation of pre-Higher Education (Final)(2007)	
The Post-EU Accession Strategy for education: 2007-2013 (January 2007)	Strategy
Romania: Education Policy Note (The World Bank, 2007)	
Law regarding the decentralisation of pre-higher education (public debate) (July 2009)	Press release
Policies of decentralisation in the Romanian education system. Financial management and decisional factors (Blendea et al., 2008)	Research report
Government Ordinance no. 1618/2009	Government Ordinance
Law 1/2011 (the 2011 Education Act)	Education Act
100 Methodologies (secondary legislation to the 2011 Act)	Secondary legislation
Government Ordinance 92/2012	Government Ordinance

Participant Information sheet (English and Romanian versions)

Investigarea procesului de descentralizare a sistemului românesc de educaţie după căderea comunismului

Directori de unităţi şcolare

Fişă de informaţii

Sunteţi invitat(ă) să luaţi parte la un studiu de cercetare. Este foarte important să înţelegeţi scopul cercetării şi ce presupune aceasta înainte de a vă decide dacă doriţi sau nu să luaţi parte. Vă rog să citiţi cu atenţie următoarele informaţii şi să le discutaţi şi cu alte persoane dacă doriţi. De asemenea, vă rog să mă întrebaţi dacă aveţi vreo neclaritate sau dacă doriţi mai multe informaţii. Acordaţi-vă suficient timp înainte de a decide dacă doriţi sau nu să luaţi parte. Vă mulţumesc că veţi citi cele ce urmează.

În prezent studiez pentru obţinerea titlului de Doctor la Universitatea din Manchester, Departamentul Educaţie (Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL). În acest demers, sunt îndrumată de Profesorul Universitar Doctor Helen Gunter (Helen.Gunter@manchester.ac.uk) şi de Lectorul Universitar Doctor Christopher Chapman (Chris.Chapman@manchester.ac.uk). Teza mea are ca subiect impactul descentralizării învăţământului preuniversitar din România, o atenţie deosebită fiind acordată muncii directorilor de unităţi şcolare în contextul descentralizării. Ca parte a culegerii de date, intenţionez să intervievez autori naţionali de politici educaţionale, inspectori judeţeni şi directori. Vă scriu azi pentru a vă întreba dacă doriţi să fiţi intervievat(ă).

Unul dintre obiectivele cercetării este întelegerea scopurilor descentralizării învăţământului preuniversitar din România prin prisma autorilor de politici educaţionale şi rolul inspectorilor

în implementarea acestei reforme. Cel mai important obiectiv îl reprezintă înţelegerea implicaţiilor pe care descentralizarea învăţământului preuniversitar le are asupra rolului şi identităţii directorilor de unităţi şcolare.

Voi intervieva doisprezece directori de unităţi şcolare liceale (teoretice sau tehnice) din două judeţe de două ori. Se estimează ca interviul să dureze aproximativ o oră de fiecare dată. Interviul este semi-structurat, ceea ce înseamnă că, în timp ce există întrebări care să ghideze discuţia, detaliile sunt în controlul dumneavoastră, astfel încât vom explora aspectele pe care dumneavoastră le consideraţi importante. Nu există răspunsuri corecte, greşite sau aşteptate.

Aş dori ca în timpul primului interviu să explorăm percepţiile şi atitudinile dumneavoastră generale legate de descentralizarea învăţământului preuniversitar românesc. De asemnenea, doresc să aflu care a fost impactul acestei reforme educaţionale asupra rolului dumneavoastră profesional până acum. Al doilea interviu se va desfăşura la 12-14 luni după primul. Aş dori ca atunci să explorăm impactul descentralizării asupra atribuţiilor profesionale, a rolului şi identităţii dumneavoastră de la primul interviu şi până la data celui de-al doilea.

Aş dori să înregistrez interviurile spre a le putea transcrie, cu permisiunea dumneavoastră. Transcrierea interviului vă va fi trimisă pentru verificarea acurateţii şi pentru a putea adăuga ceva dacă doriţi. Cercetarea va fi realizată în biroul dumneavoastră sau într-un loc public, stabilit de comun acord.

Confidenţialitatea va fi păstrată pe toată perioada cercetării, numele dumneavoastră va fi anonimizat şi orice alte detalii legate de identificarea dumneavoastră vor fi schimbate. Datele vor fi depozitate şi păstrate în siguranţă. Înregistrările audio ale interviului vor fi şterse la un an după confirmarea titlului de Doctor.

Este foarte posibil ca rezultatele cercetării să fie prezentate la conferinţe şi seminarii şi să fie publicate (articole în jurnale, rapoarte, etc). Un scurt raport cu rezultatele cercetării vă va fi trimis la terminarea studiului. Decizia participării depinde de dumneavoastră. Veţi primi această fişă spre păstrare şi veţi fi rugat(ă) să semnaţi un formular prin care consimţiti

decizia de a lua parte. Chiar şi în acest caz, sunteţi liber(ă) să vă retrageţi oricând fără să trebuiască să spuneţi motivul şi fără a vi se aduce prejudicii.

Dacă doriţi să înaintaţi o plângere oficială cu privire la modul în care s-a desfăsurat cercetarea, contactaţi Directorul Biroului de Cercetare, Clădirea Christie, Universitatea din Manchester, Strada Oxford, Manchester.

Aştept răspunsul dumneavoastră.

Cu respect,

Ana-Cristina Popescu

E-mail: Ana-cristina.popescu@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk

Numere de mobil: +44 (0) 796 4700 282 (Anglia); + 40 742 111 981 (România)

An investigation into the process of decentralisation in the Romanian education system after the fall of communism

Headteachers Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

I am currently studying towards the PhD at the University of Manchester, School of Education (Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL). I am supervised by Professor Helen Gunter (Helen.Gunter@manchester.ac.uk) and Doctor Christopher Chapman (Chris.Chapman@manchester.ac.uk). My thesis is about the impact of decentralisation on Romanian education, with a special emphasis on headteachers' work in the decentralised context. As part of my field work, I plan to interview national policymakers, county inspectors and headteachers. I am writing to ask if you would be willing to be interviewed.

By the end of research, I aim to have an informed understanding of the aims of decentralisation in education in Romania from the policymakers; the role of the inspectors in the implementation of this reform. More importantly, I seek to understand the implications of decentralisation for headteacher roles and identity.

I will interview twelve headteachers leading urban secondary schools/FE colleges in two counties on two different occasions. The interviews would be expected to last for

approximately one hour each time. The interview is semi-structured, which means that, while there are questions to guide the discussion, the detail is in your control so that we will explore the issues of importance to you. There are no right, wrong or expected answers.

During the first interview, I would like to explore with you general perceptions and attitudes around decentralisation in Romanian education. I also aim to find how this reform has impacted on your professional practice so far. The second interview will be conducted within twelve-fourteen months. I would like to explore with you the impact of decentralisation on your professional duties, role and identity since the first interview.

With your permission, I would like to record the interviews in order to transcribe and analyse them. The transcripts will be sent to you to check for accuracy and if you wish to add anything at that time, you are welcome to do so. The research will be conducted in your office or mutually agreed public place.

Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the research, your name will be anonymised and any details leading to your identification will be changed. The data will be stored and kept secure. The audio recordings of the interview will be destroyed 1 year after the confirmation of the PhD degree.

It is highly possible that the outcomes of the research will be presented at seminars and conferences and published (journal articles, reports). A short research report will be sent to you on completion of the study.

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to yourself.

If you want to make a formal complaint about the conduct of the research you should contact the Head of the Research Office, Christie Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Ana-Cristina Popescu

E-mail: Ana-cristina.popescu@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk

Mobile phone numbers: +44 (0) 796 4700 282; + 40 742 111 981

Investigarea procesului de descentralizare a sistemului românesc de educaţie după căderea comunismului

-Autori de politici educaţionale şi inspectori -

Fişă de informaţii

Sunteţi invitat(ă) să luaţi parte la un studiu de cercetare. Este foarte important să înţelegeţi scopul cercetării şi ce presupune aceasta înainte de a vă decide dacă doriţi sau nu să luaţi parte. Vă rog să citiţi cu atenţie următoarele informaţii şi să le discutaţi şi cu alte persoane dacă doriţi. De asemenea, vă rog să mă întrebaţi dacă aveţi vreo neclaritate sau dacă doriţi mai multe informaţii. Acordaţi-vă suficient timp înainte de a decide dacă doriţi sau nu să luaţi parte. Vă mulţumesc că veţi citi cele ce urmează.

În prezent studiez pentru obţinerea titlului de Doctor la Universitatea din Manchester, Departamentul Educaţie (Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL). În acest demers, sunt îndrumată de Profesorul Universitar Doctor Helen Gunter (Helen.Gunter@manchester.ac.uk) şi de Lectorul Universitar Doctor Christopher Chapman (Chris.Chapman@manchester.ac.uk). Teza mea are ca subiect impactul descentralizării învăţământului preuniversitar din România, o atenţie deosebită fiind acordată muncii şi atribuţiilor directorilor de unităţi şcolare în contextul descentralizării. Ca parte a culegerii de date, intenţionez să intervievez autori naţionali de politici educaţionale, inspectori judeţeni şi directori. Vă scriu azi pentru a vă întreba dacă doriţi să fiţi intervievat(ă).

Unul dintre obiectivele cercetării este întelegerea scopurilor descentralizării învăţământului preuniversitar din România prin prisma autorilor de politici educaţionale şi rolul inspectorilor în implementarea acestei reforme. Un alt obiectiv îl reprezintă înţelegerea implicaţiilor pe care descentralizarea învăţământului preuniversitar le are asupra rolului şi identităţii directorilor de unităţi şcolare.

Voi conduce interviuri cu patru autori de politici educaţionale selectaţi din Ministerul Educaţiei, Cercetării şi Sportului şi centrele şi agenţiile sale şi cu patru inspectori judeţeni (doi Inspectori Generali şi doi Inspectori de Management). Se estimează ca interviul să

dureze aproximativ o oră. Interviul este semi-structurat, ceea ce înseamnă că, în timp ce există întrebări care să ghideze discuţia, detaliile sunt în controlul dumneavoastră, astfel încât vom explora aspectele pe care dumneavoastră le consideraţi importante. Nu există răspunsuri corecte, greşite sau aşteptate.

Aş dori ca în timpul interviului să explorăm percepţiile şi atitudinile dumneavoastră legate de descentralizarea învăţământului preuniversitar românesc. Din discuţia cu autorii de politici educaţionale am ca obiectiv aflarea scopurilor descentralizării, chestiunile cele mai importante şi cum au fost ele rezolvate şi incluse in textul acestei politici educaţionale. Mi-aş dori de asemenea să aflu care au fost implicaţiile descentralizării asupra rolului dumneavoastră profesional şi ce impact a avut asupra relaţiei dumneavoastră de comunicare cu autorităţile locale, Inspectoratele Şcolare Judeţene şi unităţile şcolare. În timpul discuţiei cu inspectorii şcolari judeţeni, am ca scop întelegerea impactului pe care descentralizarea l-a avut asupra Inspectoratelor Şcolare Judeţene în general, ca parte integrantă a sistemului românesc de educaţie. Un al doilea scop îl reprezintă rolul dumneavoastră în organizaţie şi mai ales, relaţia dumneavoastră cu Ministerul Educaţiei, Cercetării şi Tineretului pe de o parte şi şcolile individuale şi conducătorii acestora pe de altă parte.

Aş dori să înregistrez interviul spre a-l putea transcrie, cu permisiunea dumneavoastră. Transcrierea interviului vă va fi trimisă pentru verificarea acurateţi şi pentru a putea adăuga ceva dacă doriţi. Cercetarea va fi realizată în biroul dumneavoastră sau într-un loc public, stabilit de comun acord. Confidenţialitatea va fi păstrată pe toată perioada cercetării, numele dumneavoastră va fi anonimizat şi orice alte detalii legate de identificarea dumneavoastră vor fi schimbate. Datele vor fi depozitate şi păstrate în siguranţă. Înregistrările audio ale interviului vor fi şterse la un an după confirmarea titlului de Doctor. Este foarte posibil ca rezultatele cercetării să fie prezentate la conferinţe şi seminarii şi să fie publicate (articole în jurnale, rapoarte, etc). Un scurt raport cu rezultatele cercetării vă va fi trimis la terminarea studiului.

Decizia participării depinde de dumneavoastră. Veţi primi această fişă spre păstrare şi veţi fi rugat(ă) să semnaţi un formular prin care consimţiti decizia de a lua parte. Chiar şi în acest caz, sunteţi liber(ă) să vă retrageţi oricând fără să trebuiască să spuneţi motivul şi fără a vi se aduce prejudicii.

Dacă doriţi să înaintaţi o plângere oficială cu privire la modul în care s-a desfăsurat cercetarea, contactaţi Directorul Biroului de Cercetare, Clădirea Christie, Universitatea din Manchester, Strada Oxford, Manchester.

Aştept răspunsul dumneavoastră.

Cu respect,

Ana-Cristina Popescu

E-mail: Ana-cristina.popescu@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk

Numere de mobil: +44 (0) 796 4700 282 (Anglia); + 40 742 111 981 (România)

MANCHESTER
1824

An investigation into the process of decentralisation in the Romanian education system after the fall of communism

Policy-makers and Inspectors

Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

I am currently studying towards the PhD at the University of Manchester, School of Education (Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL). I am supervised by Professor Helen Gunter (Helen.Gunter@manchester.ac.uk) and Doctor Christopher Chapman (Chris.Chapman@manchester.ac.uk). My thesis is about the impact of decentralisation on Romanian education, with a special emphasis on headteachers' work in the decentralised context. As part of my field work, I plan to interview national policymakers, county inspectors and headteachers. I am writing to ask if you would be willing to be interviewed.

By the end of research, I aim to have an informed understanding of the aims of decentralisation in education in Romania from the policymakers; the role of the inspectors in the implementation of this reform. More importantly, I seek to understand the implications of decentralisation for headteacher roles and identity.

I will conduct interviews with four national policy-makers selected from the Romanian Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation and its bodies and four county inspectors (two Chief Inspectors, two Management Inspectors). The interview would be expected to last for approximately one hour. The interview is semi-structured, which means that, while there

are questions to guide the discussion, the detail is in your control so that we will explore the issues of importance to you. There are no right, wrong or expected answers.

During the interview, I would like to explore with you general perceptions and attitudes with regard to decentralisation in Romanian education. From the discussion with the policy-makers I seek to find what the aims and issues of decentralisation were and how were they dealt with in the policy texts. I would also like to know what the implication of decentralisation for your professional role was and if and how was communication with local authorities, county school inspectorates and schools affected. During the discussion with the county inspectors, I aim to understand what decentralisation has meant for county school inspectorates in general in the education system; their own role in the organisation and more importantly, their relationship with the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth on one hand and individual schools and school leaders on the other hand.

With your permission, I would like to record the interview in order to transcribe and analyse it. The transcript will be sent to you to check for accuracy and if you wish to add anything at that time, you are welcome to do so. The research will be conducted in your office or mutually agreed public place.

Confidentiality will be maintained throughout the research, your name will be anonymised and any details leading to your identification will be changed. The data will be stored and kept secure. The audio recordings of the interview will be destroyed 1 year after the confirmation of the PhD degree.

It is highly possible that the outcomes of the research will be presented at seminars and conferences and published (journal articles, reports). A short research report will be sent to you on completion of the study.

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to yourself.

If you want to make a formal complaint about the conduct of the research you should contact the Head of the Research Office, Christie Building, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PL.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Ana-Cristina Popescu

E-mail: Ana-cristina.popescu@postgrad.manchester.ac.uk

Mobile phone numbers: +44 (0) 796 4700 282; + 40 742 111 981

Investigarea procesului de descentralizare a sistemului românesc de educaţie după căderea comunismului

FORMULAR DE ACORDARE A CONSIMŢĂMÂNTULUI

Dacă sunteţi de acord să participaţi, vă rog să completaţi şi semnaţi formularul de acrodare a consimţământului de mai jos

Vă rog bifaţi căsuţa corespunzătoare

1. Confirm că am citit fişa de informaţii ataşată cu privire la proiectul de mai sus şi că am avut ocazia de a mă gândi la informaţiile furnizate acolo şi de a pune întrebări la care să mi se fi răspuns într-o manieră satisfăcătoare.

2. Înteleg că participarea mea la acest studiu este voluntară şi că sunt liber/ă să mă retrag în orice moment fără a trebui să dau explicaţii în legătură cu motivaţia mea şi fără a mi se aduce vreun prejudiciu

3. Înteleg că interviurile vor fi înregistrate audio

4. Sunt de acord cu folosirea de citate anonime

5. Sunt de acord ca datele colectate să fie transmise altor cercetători

Sunt de acord să iau parte în proiectul de mai sus

Numele participantului	Data	Semnătura

Numele persoanei care obţine consimţământul	Data	Semnătura

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An investigation into the process of decentralisation in the Romanian education system after the fall of communism

CONSENT FORM

If you are happy to participate please complete and sign the consent form below

**Pleas
tick
Initial
Box**

5. I confirm that I have read the attached information sheet on the above project and have had the opportunity to consider the information and ask questions and had these answered satisfactorily.

6. I understand that my participation in the study is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving a reason and without detriment to any treatment/service

7. I understand that the interviews will be audio-recorded

8. I agree to the use of anonymous quotes

6. I agree that any data collected may be passed to other researchers

I agree to take part in the above project

Name of participant		Date		Signature	

Name of person taking consent		Date		Signature	

Table 2: Plan data collection stages

Stage	Interviewees
Stage I	20 stakeholders (4 national policy-makers; 4 county school inspectors; 12 headteachers) in the period April-May 2010
Stage II	Follow-up interviews with heads 12-14 months after the date of the first interviews (April/May-July 2011)

Amended Ethics Committee Approval

Sent: 21 July 2011 13:14

Subject: RE: Minor Amendment to Fieldwork Arrangements, UREC Approval 09227

Dear [],

We can treat this as a minor amendment which does not need specific approval. I will just record it on file.

Best wishes

[]

Dear [],

Ana-Cristina has made an application for a minor change to her original proposal. The change is the date when interviews take place and not the substance of the fieldwork.

I look forward to hearing from you, thanks [name, title, phone number and address].

Dear [],

I am writing formally to let you know that the approved plan and the fieldwork (ref 09227) need to be amended.

1. Due to changes in government and legislation, I will only be able to interview the final policy maker in October 2011. This policy maker was due to be interviewed in Phase I. While she did see me then, she informed me that because the legislation (the new education act) was still in Parliament, it made sense for me to re-schedule it for this autumn when the methodologies of application of the new act would have been completed.
2. Due to professional development courses, national exams and other commitments of the heads in the sample, I was not able to talk to all the heads last time I went to Romania. Therefore, 5 follow-up interviews with heads from Phase II (12-14 months after the initial interviews in April-May 2010) will have to be re-scheduled for October 2011- next time that I am going to Romania.

I would like to emphasize the fact that there is no change to the content of the interview schedules approved by the Ethics Committee, or the number of the interviewees. It is just a change of date. These will not alter the initial approved research proposal.

Kind regards,

Ana-Cristina Popescu

PhD candidate

School of Education

Interview schedules (main study: English and Romanian versions)

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The University of Manchester

School of Education

An investigation into the process of decentralisation of Romanian education after the fall of communism

Interview schedule

Heads

First interview

Past (historical context under communism):

- ***Could you tell me how have you come to be a headteacher?***

Probes

1. Who are you? Describe yourself in a few words.
2. What was your career path? Have you always thought of being a head?
3. When and why have you decided to take this on? Was that a challenging game to play?
4. Did your family support you in your decisions?

- *How was a school run in communist times? Do you think there are similarities regarding the performance of headship then and now?*

Probes

1. What were the features a school Director (head) needed to display then?
2. What was the relationship between teachers and directors before the fall of communism?
3. What was the relationship between Directors-County Inspectors-Ministry Inspectors before December 1989?

Present (early post-communism; contemporary post-communism):

- *What is like being a headteacher now? What are the communist-inherited cultures in headship and what is new?*

Probes

1. In your experience, is it any different than it was in the 1990s? Early 2000s? Why and how?
2. What is decentralisation? What was it that decentralisation brought new to post-communism education?
3. What are the most challenging issues related to implementing decentralisation?
4. How is it like to lead in a decentralised system of education?
5. What are the features a school Manager (head) need to display today? Are these in any way related to the decentralisation of pre-higher education?
6. To whom are heads accountable now as opposed to early 2000s or pre-1989?

- *How has this reform impacted on your professional practice so far? What are the new roles and responsibilities of the heads in the decentralised context?*

Probes

1. Is headship part of your identity? Do you feel headship has affected your professional identity?

2. What is your relationship with the teachers and staff in your school?

3. What is your relationship with County Inspectors-Local Authorities - Ministry Inspectors at the moment?

Future

- ***What do you think the future will bring to heads? How is that related to decentralisation?***

Probes

1. What do you think will be the most important changes in the field of education in the following 1-2 years? But in the long run?

2. What are the features a school Manager (head) will need to display in the future? Are these in any way related to the decentralisation of pre-higher education?

3. How would you see your relationship with the governing body, staff, students and parents in your school developing?

4. How do you see your relationship with the other heads-County Inspectors-Local Authorities-Ministry Inspectors in the future?

5. Do you consider decentralisation will improve the Romanian system of education? If so, how?

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Interview schedule

Heads

Second interview

- ***What is it like now to be the head of the school after the implementation of the reform of decentralisation in education?***

Probes

1. How has the decentralisation impacted on your practice? What were the most important changes in your practice?
2. How would you describe a really good day at work? How often does that happen?
3. How would you describe a really challenging day at work? How do you cope with that? How often does that happen?
4. How much time do you spend on instructional issues (teachers, students, curriculum, classroom instruction and professional development)?
5. What about managerial issues (school development plan, educational offer, financial management, communication with the local authorities and the Ministry of Education)?
6. Has anything changed in terms of accountability since the first interview? If so, how?

- ***Have your new headship roles and responsibilities impacted upon your personal and professional identity?***

Probes

1. What is your relationship with other headteachers? County School Inspectorates/Local authorities? Has that changed since our first interview?

2. Do you feel that by involving parents and local authorities more in the process of education has increased its quality? Why/ why not?

3. Overall, do you consider that decentralisation has improved the Romanian system of education (human resources, quality, equity, access)? If so, how?

Interview schedule

Policy makers

Past (historical context under communism):

- *Could you tell me how have you come to be a national policy-maker/inspector/director?*

Probes

1. Who are you? Describe yourself in a few words.
2. What was your career path?
3. What can you tell me about educational policies in communist times (policy making and implementation)?

- *What was the role of policy makers in education in communist times?*

Probes

1. How was a school run in communist times?
2. What was the relationship between the Ministry of Education and County School Inspectorates, Local Authorities and individual schools before the fall of communism?

Present (early post-communism; contemporary post-communism):

- *What led to the decentralisation of Romanian pre-higher education? What are the aims of decentralisation?*

Probes

1. What are the main differences in education in the 21st century as opposed to the 20th century? What are the main changes in education policy in the 1990s and 2000s?
2. What was the most important reform in post-communism education?
3. What is decentralisation?
4.

- *What are the main issues associated with the decentralisation in education? How are they dealt with in the policy texts?*

Probes

1. What are the means used towards the implementation of this reform? Are there any changes in the legislation? Why?
2. What are the most challenging issues related to implementing decentralisation?
3. How has this reform of decentralisation impacted on your professional role and practice?
4. What are the implications for county school inspectors/headteachers /local authorities/ teachers/students/parents?

Future

- *What do you think will be the most important changes in the field of education the following 1-2 years? But in the long run?*

Probes

1. How do you see the relationship between Heads-County Inspectors-Local Authorities-Ministry Inspectors be in the future?
2. Do you consider decentralisation will improve the Romanian system of education? If so how?

Interview schedule

County School Inspectors

Past (historical context under communism)

- *Could you tell me how have you come to be a county school inspector?*

Probes

1. Who are you? Describe yourself in a few words.
2. What was your career path?
3. In your knowledge, how was a school run in communist times?
4. What was the relationship between the Ministry of Education, County School Inspectorates and individual schools before the fall of communism?

- *What can you tell me about the role of county school inspectorates in communist times?*

Probes

1. What about the role of inspectors? What were their main responsibilities?
2. What was the relationship between teachers and directors and teachers before the fall of communism?
3. What was the relationship between County School Inspectors and Directors before December 1989?

Present (early post-communism; contemporary post-communism)

- *What are the main issues associated with the decentralisation in education?*

Probes

1. What are the main differences in education in the 21st century as opposed to the 20th century?
2. What are the main changes in education in the 1990s and 2000s?
3. What is decentralisation?
4. What led to the decentralisation of Romanian pre-higher education?
5. What are the means used towards the implementation of this reform (changes in legislation)? Why?
6. What are the most challenging issues related to implementing decentralisation?

- ***What can you tell me about the role of county school inspectorates in decentralisation? How is the reform of decentralisation impacting on your professional identity, role and practice?***

Probes

1. What are your main responsibilities in the decentralised context?
2. What is the relationship between County School Inspectors and School Managers (heads) at the moment?
3. How does that affect communication with schools and heads, local authorities and the Ministry of Education?

Future

- ***What do you think will be the most important changes in the field of education the following 1-2 years? But in the long run?***

Probes

1. What do you think the future will bring to inspectors? How is that related to decentralisation?
2. What will the relationship between Heads-County Inspectors-Local Authorities-Ministry Inspectors be in the future?
3. Do you consider decentralisation will improve the Romanian system of education? If so, how?

Universitatea din Manchester

Departamentul Educaţie

Investigarea procesului de descentralizare a sistemului românesc de educaţie după căderea comunismului

Ghid de interviu

Directori

Primul interviu

Trecut (context istoric în perioada comunismului)

- *Puteţi să-mi spuneţi cum aţi devenit director/manager şcolar?*

Întrebări suplimentare:

1. Cine sunteţi? Descrieţi-vă în câteva cuvinte.
2. Care a fost parcursul carierei dumneavoastră? V-aţi dorit dintotdeauna să deveniţi director?
3. Când şi cum v-a venit această idee? A fost un un drum lung, un joc greu de jucat?
4. V-a sprijinit familia în luarea acestei decizii?

- *Din ceea ce ştiţi, cum erau conduse şcolile în perioada comunismului? Credeţi că există similitudini în ceea ce priveşte prestaţia managerială a directorilor atunci şi acum?*

Întrebări suplimentare:

1. Care erau trăsăturile pe care trebuia să le aibă un director atunci?

4. Care era relaţia dintre profesori şi directori înainte de căderea comunismului?

5. Care era relaţia dintre directori- Inspectori Şcolari Judeţeni- Ministerul Educaţiei înainte de decembrie 1989?

Prezent (post-comunism timpuriu şi contemporan)

- ***Cum este să fiţi director în prezent? Care este cultura moştenită din perioada comunismului şi ce este nou?***

Întrebări suplimentare:

7. Din experienţa dumneavoastră, este diferit decât în anii '90? Anii 2000? De ce şi cum?

8. Ce este descentralizarea? Ce a adus ea nou învăţământului post-comunist?

9. Care sunt cele mai controversate aspecte legate de descentralizare?

10. Cum este/va fi să conduceţi o şcoală într-un sistem de educaţie descentralizat?

11. Care sunt trăsăturile pe care trebuie să le aibă un director/manager şcolar azi? Există vreo legătură între ele şi descentralizarea învăţământului preuniversitar?

12. În faţa cui răspund directorii acum? Dar la începutul acestui deceniu? Dar înainte de decembrie1989?

- ***Care a fost impactul acestei reforme asupra practicii dumneavoastră profesionale până acum? Care sunt noile roluri şi responsabilităţi ale directorilor în contextul descentralizării învăţământul?***

Întrebări suplimentare:

4. Este funcţia de director parte din identitatea dumneavoastră? Simţiţi că v-a afectat şi/sau adus aportul asupra identităţii dumneavoastră profesionale?

5. Care este relaţia dintre dumneavoastră şi personalul (didactic şi

nedidactic) din şcoala dumneavoastră?

6. Care este relaţia dintre dumneavoastră şi inspectorii şcolari judeţeni-autorităţile locale–inspectorii din Minister în prezent?

Viitor

- ***Ce credeţi că va aduce viitorul directorilor? Cum este acest lucru legat de descentralizare?***

Întrebări suplimentare:

6. Care credeţi ca vor fi cele mai importante schimbări în domeniul învăţământului în următorii 2 ani? Dar pe termen lung?

7. Care sunt trăsăturile pe care trebuie să le aibă un director/manager şcolar pe viitor? Sunt acestea legate în vreun fel de descentralizare?

8. Cum credeţi că se va dezvolta relaţia dumneavoastră cu personalul, elevii, părinţii, consiliul de administraţie al şcolii?

9. Care credeţi că va fi relaţia dumneavoastră cu alţi directori –inspectori şcolari judeţeni-autorităţi locale-inspectori din Minister pe viitor?

10. Consideraţi că descentralizarea va îmbunătăţi sistemul românesc de învăţământ? Dacă da, cum? Dacă nu, de ce?

Universitatea din Manchester

Departamentul Educaţie

Investigarea procesului de descentralizare a sistemului românesc de educaţie după căderea comunismului

Ghid de interviu

Directori

Al doilea interviu

- ***Cum este să fiţi directorul unei unităţi şcolare acum, după implementarea unora dintre măsurile reformei prin descentralizare în educaţie?***

Alte întrebări:

1. Ce s-a schimbat în practica dumneavoastră profesională în ultimul an? Care au fost cele mai importante schimbări? Ce rol a avut descentralizarea?
2. Cum aţi descrie o zi cu adevărat bună la lucru? Cât de des se întâmplă?
3. Cum aţi descrie o zi cu adevărat dificilă la lucru? Cât de des se întâmplă? Cum faceţi faţă problemelor ivite?
4. În activitatea dumneavoastră de zi cu zi, cât timp acordaţi aspectelor strict legate de proces instructi-educativ (profesori, elevi, curriculum, predare, formare continuă, perfecţionare)?
5. În activitatea dumneavoastră de zi cu zi, cât timp acordaţi aspectelor manageriale (planul de dezvoltare instituţională, oferta educaţională, în procesul de comunicare cu autorităţile locale, Inspectoratul Şcolar Judeţean şi Ministerul Educaţiei, Cercetării, Tineretului şi Sportului)?
- ***S-a schimbat ceva în ceea ce priveşte responsabilităţile şi responsabilizarea directorilor de unităţi şcolare de la data primului nostru interviu? Dacă da, puteţi să îmi povestiţi în câteva cuvinte ce s-a schimbat şi în ce sens?***

Alte întrebări:

1. Care a fost impactul noilor roluri şi responsabilităţi manageriale asupra identităţii dumneavoastră personale şi profesionale?
2. Care este relaţia dumneavoastră cu alţi directori/ISJ/autorităţi locale/MECTS? S-a schimbat de la data primului interviu? Dacă da, în ce sens?

3. Consideraţi că implicarea mai mare a părinţilor şi autorităţilor locale în procesul de învăţământ a dus/duce/va duce la creşterea calităţii actului educaţional? De ce/ de ce nu?

4. În încheiere, consideraţi că s-a îmbunătăţit ceva în sistemul românesc de învăţământ (resurse umane, calitate, echitate, acces) în urma descentralizării? Dacă da, în ce fel? Dacă nu, de ce şi când s-ar putea observa schimbări în acest sens?

Universitatea din Manchester

Departamentul Educaţie

Investigarea procesului de descentralizare a sistemului românesc de educaţie după căderea comunismului

Ghid de interviu

Inspectori Şcolari Judeţeni şi de Management

Trecut (context istoric în perioada comunismului)

- Puteţi să-mi spuneţi cum aţi devenit Inspector Şcolar Judeţean?

Întrebări suplimentare:

1. Cine sunteţi? Descrieţi-vă în câteva cuvinte.
2. Care a fost parcursul carierei dumneavoastră?
3. Din ceea ce ştiţi, cum erau conduse şcolile în perioada comunismului?
4. Care era relaţia dintre Ministerul Educaţiei, Inspectorate Şcolare Judeţene şi şcoli înainte de căderea comunismului?

- ***Ce puteţi să-mi spuneţi despre rolul Inspectoratelor Şcolare Judeţene în perioada comunismului?***

Întrebări suplimentare:

1. Dar despre rolul inspectorilor? Care erau principalele lor responsabilităţi?
2. Care era relaţia dintre profesori şi directori înainte de căderea comunismului?
3. Care era relaţia dintre Inspectoratele Şcolare Judeţene şi directori înainte de decembrie 1989?

Prezent (post-comunism timpuriu şi contemporan)

- *Care sunt principalele aspecte legate de descentralizarea învăţământului preuniversitar?*

Întrebări suplimentare:

1. Care sunt principalele diferenţe între educaţia secolului al XXI-lea în comparaţie cu secolul XX?
2. Care sunt principalele schimbări în educaţie în anii '90 şi 2000?
3. Ce este descentralizarea?
4. Care au fost factorii care au condus la descentralizarea învăţământului preuniversitar românesc?
5. Care sunt mijloacele folosite în implementarea acestei reforme (modificări în legislaţie)? De ce?
6. Care sunt cele mai controversate aspecte legate de implementarea descentralizării?

- *Ce puteţi să-mi spuneţi despre rolul Inspectoratelor Şcolare Judeţene în descentralizare? Care este impactul reformei descentralizării asupra rolului, activităţii şi identităţii dumneavoastră profesionale?*

Întrebări suplimentare:

1. Care sunt/vor fi principalele dumneavoastră responsabilităţi în contextul descentralizării?
2. Care era relaţia dintre Inspectoratele Şcolare Judeţene şi managerii şcolari (directori) în prezent?
3. Cum afectează acest lucru comunicarea cu şcolile şi directorii, autorităţile locale şi apoi pe cea cu Ministerul Educaţiei?

Viitor

- *Care credeţi ca vor fi cele mai importante schimbări în domeniul învăţământului în următorii 2 ani? Dar pe termen lung?*

Întrebări suplimentare:

1. Ce credeţi că va aduce viitorul pentru inspectori? Cum este acest lucru legat de descentralizare?
2. Care va fi relaţia dintre directori-inspectori şcolari judeţeni- autorităţi locale – inspectori din Minister pe viitor?
3. Consideraţi că descentralizarea va îmbunătăţi sistemul românesc de învăţământ? Dacă da, cum? Dacă nu, de ce?