

EDUCATION IN THE INNER CITY AREA OF SINAIA-BUȘTENI-AZUGA-PREDEAL-RÂȘNOV-BRAȘOV (POIANA BRAȘOV)

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ABSTRACT – Education is highly significant for the functional system of a nation, which eventually reflects the vitality and the real possibilities of development and creates some potential interrelations at national and continental level. In Romania, the numbers regarding the educational indicators registered in the last years reflect a certain state of facts, valid for the entire national area. They reveal a significant decrease in the number of students for all educational levels and a precarious qualitative state of school infrastructure and teaching staff. This phenomenon is becoming more concerning especially in rural areas, where the threats from this perspective are greatest. *The Inner city area of Sinaia-Bușteni-Azuga-Predeal-Râșnov-Brașov (Poiana Brașov)* reflects a similar situation. Therefore, this study reveals the current complex analysis of the major educational indicators.

Key words: education, development, level, school, teaching, study

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is extremely important in the *Inner City Area of Sinaia-Bușteni-Azuga-Predeal-Râșnov-Brașov (Poiana Brașov)*. Based on the educational component, the analysed areas are very important for the southern half of Transylvania, because they have a complete and complex retreat infrastructure. Some institutions are best known for their extended traditions and a national exposure, due to the positive results of the educational process. Such results were obtained in various national and international competitions.

The act of learning is *integrated on both the vertical* (there is an entire education structure, from preschool to university and post-university - in the city of Brașov) and *the horizontal* (represented in the rest of the territory, through its undergraduate components).

National education, as well as the one we are analyzing, is in a vast process of restructure, reorganization and modernization, in order to meet the requirements of a diversified undergraduate and graduate school population.

It is well known that in the developed countries, birth rate and the rate of natural increase are constantly diminishing. Unfortunately, Romania is following the same downward path, which, if continued, will induce insurmountable problems. *The Inner City Area of Sinaia-Bușteni-Azuga-Predeal-Râșnov-Brașov (Poiana Brașov)* is in a similar situation, the preschool and elementary school contingent having dropped within the last 20 years.

The analysis of the main educational parameters within the *Inner City Area of Sinaia-Bușteni-Azuga-Predeal-Râșnov-Brașov (Poiana Brașov)* is done here, for each educational cycle (from preschool to graduate and university post-graduate), detailing the main characteristics.

2. PRESCHOOL CYCLE

The adjacent infrastructure of the *preschool cycle* presents the following aspects in the *Inner City Area of Sinaia-Bușteni-Azuga-Predeal-Râșnov-Brașov (Poiana Brașov)* (table 1):

- there are 75 functional nurseries, each having a sufficient number of available places for the preschool education act (except for 5 institutions in the central area of the City of Brașov);

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Table 1. *The situation of the preschool educational cycle “The Inner City Area of Sinaia-Bușteni-Azuga-Predeal-Râșnov-Brașov (Poiana Brașov)” (2008)*

Crt. no.	City/ Town/ Municipality	Local unit/ Belonging villages	Number of nurseries/ public/ private	Preschoolers enrolled in nurseries	Total population	Ratio (%)
1	Brașov	Brașov	45+9	6,338	282,525	2.24
2	Ghimbav	Ghimbav	1+1	110	5,278	2.08
3	Cristian	Cristian	1	68	4,119	1.65
4	Râșnov	Râșnov	4	472	15,887	2.97
5		Râșnov Romacril				
6	Predeal	Predeal	2	94	5,239	1.79
7		Pârâul Rece				
8		Timișul de Jos				
9		Timișul de Sus				
10	Azuga	Azuga	1	80	5,099	1.57
11	Bușteni	Bușteni	5	232	10,292	2.25
12		Poiana Țapului				
13	Sinaia	Sinaia	7	289	12,250	2.36
Total			75	7,683	340,749	2.25

Source: National Institute of Statistics, NIS Brașov and NIS Prahova (2009)

Note: The School Inspectorates work with approximate data about the total population

- the contingent of preschoolers enrolled is 7,683, sufficient and sometimes larger than the available places in public and private nurseries, made available by the Department of Education, Research and Development, through the School Inspectorates of the counties of Brașov and Prahova;

- out of the 75 nurseries and nursery units, the highest number is within public institutions (65 nurseries – 86.67% of the total);

- there are also 10 private functional nurseries, licensed by the responsible official bodies, representing 13.33% out of the total (a lower value compared to the developed states in the European Union, where private institutions reach 50.00%);

- the quality of the infrastructure and of the teaching material rises, in most cases (especially in urban areas) to the present educational predictions, which is favourable. It needs to be extended to the level of each institution, in each local unit of the analysed territory;

- the average regional value of the ratio between the number of preschoolers enrolled in nursery and the number of nurseries is 102.44 children/nursery, which is more than fair according to Romanian preschool teachers, and it fits in the quality and quantity parameters of the Romanian educational system;

- compared to this regional average, there are two higher values in two local units: Brașov (117.37) and Râșnov (118.00); the lowest values (reduced pressure of preschoolers/nurseries) is recorded in the local units of Ghimbav (55.00 children/nursery), Predeal (47.00), Bușteni (46.40) and Sinaia (41.29);

- out of the 75 existing nurseries, 10 are private, destined for early education or step by step education. The surprising thing is at regional level. The reduced number of private nurseries represents a legitimate form of education within the European Union exactly because the work groups have a low number of children, unlike public nurseries where the work groups are too crowded;

- the percentage of preschoolers is low within the total population in the area we have analysed (the average regional number is only 2.25%);

- compared to the average regional number, we noticed the local units of Râșnov (2.97%), Bușteni (2.25%) and Sinaia (2.36%), numbers which are equal or higher; in the rest of the local units, the values are inferior, the lowest being the local unit of Azuga (1.57%);

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- the above situation is not encouraging - it reflects a discrete demographic behaviour of the population in the area we have analysed. In time, it will have a definite impact on the administrative systems. In such conditions, if the phenomena continue, the contingent of preschoolers will be reduced more and more, the vitality of the institutions connected to the preschool cycle will disappear, thus, the units will be closed down - a situation that nobody wants, since it implies important and severe negative consequences.

Starting with this fact, there is a series of dimensions for the *preschool cycle* of the children's instruction, and they need to reflect the attention they have been given. The growth in the quality of education and infrastructure in the preschool cycle may represent a stimulus for the change of demographic behaviour in the analysed area, when young parents will be made aware that they have all the support in raising and educating their children.

Definite criteria have to be decided, such as: *supporting a nursery in each local unit, as an elementary cell in acquiring a positive social and ethical behaviour; hiring only qualified staff on each position; offering the possibility to school staff in the preschool cycle to a continuous professional training; supply with the adequate furniture and diversified teaching material; educating the preschoolers in the spirit of the local community, in order to preserve and develop the local and regional way of life, etc.*

These actions have to represent the result of a focused action of at least three educational partners: *preschool education institution, local decision makers and parents*, the last as indirect beneficiaries of the educational process.

3. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

A quantification of the data on the *elementary school cycle* (divisions I-IV), and a comparison with the previous years, shows the following situation in the *Inner City Area of Sinaia-Bușteni-Azuga-Predeal-Râșnov-Brașov (Poiana Brașov)* (table 2):

Table 2. *The situation of the elementary school cycle in "The Inner City Area of Sinaia-Bușteni-Azuga-Predeal-Râșnov-Brașov (Poiana Brașov)" (2008)*

Crt. No.	City/ Town/ Municipality	Local units included/ villages included	Number of schools/ Divisions I-IV	Number of students	Number of school teachers	Ratio students/ teacher
1	Brașov	Brașov	29	8,417	448	18.79
2	Ghimbav	Ghimbav	1	132	4	33.00
3	Cristian	Cristian	1	101	3	33.67
4	Râșnov	Râșnov	3	619	30	20.63
5		Râșnov Romacril				
6	Predeal	Predeal	1	125	4	31.25
7		Pârâul Rece				
8		Timișul de Jos				
9		Timișul de Sus				
10	Azuga	Azuga	1	219	5	43.80
11	Bușteni	Bușteni	3	308	8	38.50
12		Poiana Țapului				
13	Sinaia	Sinaia	2	421	12	35.08
Total			41	10,549	514	20.52

Source: data from the National Institute of Statistics, NIS Brașov and NIS Prahova (2009)

- the student contingent has decreased gradually after 1990, but in the last 2-3 years there was a slight increase. Still, unlike other areas in the counties of Brașov and Prahova, in the area under consideration, the situation is not critical yet (the dominant establishments are urban, with a

complexity, vitality and resilience superior to rural establishments). There is a sufficient number of elementary students in all the local units in this area, to help keep working each elementary educational cell (elementary school);

- the trend of decrease in the number of students needs to be prevented, in order to stay on the current coordinates in all local units. In some administrative areas (e.g. Ghimbav - 132 students, Cristian - 101 students, Predeal - 125 students) the situation could become difficult, because the minimum number of students required to keep the existing elementary school functional has not been met. The school could be closed down, and the elementary students sent to other viable schools. The picture in which an elementary school has to be closed down due to the reduced number of students is dramatic, elementary school being the stronghold of basic education, which no local unit should be without;

- there are 41 elementary schools, where 10,549 students learn. All these elementary schools represent parts of schools within preparatory school and high school;

- the highest number of elementary schools is recorded in the city of Braşov (29), followed by the towns of Râşnov and Buşteni (3 in each local unit) and the town of Sinaia (2). In the rest of the local units, there is one single elementary school;

- the average regional value of the ratio between the number of students/elementary school within the *Inner City Area of Sinaia-Buşteni-Azuga-Predeal-Râşnov-Braşov (Poiana Braşov)* is 257.29, higher than the national average value;

- the number of teaching staff is fair, there are 514 school teachers. All teaching staff hired in the elementary school institutions in the analysed territory has teaching degrees;

- the average regional value of the ratio between the number of students and the number of teaching staff is 20.52% students per teacher. The average is positive, included in the educational rigors of the European Union and it reflects normality, out of two reasons: the fair amount of teaching staff and the number of students in elementary school;

- compared to the regional average, we notice Braşov (18.78 students/teacher) and Râşnov (20.63 students/teacher), with an extremely favourable situation. As for Ghimbav (33.00 students/teacher), Cristian (33.67), Predeal (31.25), Azuga (43.80), Buşteni (38.50) and Sinaia (35.08) there is a need to step in and reduce the values by training professionals amongst the teaching staff. In developed countries across the European Union, the value of the above-mentioned parameter is 15-20 students/teaching staff.

Out of the major coordinates which are at stake in the vitality and functionality of the elementary school cycle in the area of our concern, we notice: *maintaining the education facilities in each local unit; employing only professional staff; continuously cleansing and modernizing the educational facilities* (most of the educational institutions at elementary level in the area under consideration have properly modernized and utilised spaces); *introducing various subjects in the curricula at the school's decision, which aim at preparing the students in practical areas of the territory in order for them to become good professionals*, etc.

4. SECONDARY EDUCATION

The secondary educational cycle is characterised by a special dynamics, a situation that adheres to the existent reality throughout the country. The dynamics is a trend that introduces *contracting school units* to make them more viable, *staffing them with qualified personnel, equipping them with up to date, practical teaching material, wisely using their finances*, etc.

A closer look at the coordinates for the applicability of secondary education in the *Inner City Area of Sinaia-Buşteni-Azuga-Predeal-Râşnov-Braşov (Poiana Brasov)* brings out the following existing particularities (table 3):

- the secondary school institutions have a large number of peculiarities (identical with the elementary school cycle), which is considered an advantage for the analysed area (at national level, the number of schools in the secondary cycle is much lower than in the elementary);

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Table 3. *The situation of the preparatory school cycle in “The inner city area of Sinaia-Bușteni-Azuga-Predeal-Râșnov-Brașov (Poiana Brașov)” (2008)*

Ref. No.	City/ Town/ Municipality	Local unit	Schools/ divisions V-VIII	Students	Teaching staff	Ratio students/ teaching staff
1	Brașov	Brașov	29	9,215	754	12.22
2	Ghimbav	Ghimbav	1	207	18	11.50
3	Cristian	Cristian	1	128	16	8.00
4	Râșnov	Râșnov	3	673	64	10.52
5		Râșnov Romacril				
6	Predeal	Predeal	1	171	15	11.40
7		Pârâul Rece				
8		Timișul de Jos				
9		Timișul de Sus				
10	Azuga	Azuga	1	248	16	15.50
11	Bușteni	Bușteni	3	315	54	5.83
12		Poiana Țapului				
13	Sinaia	Sinaia	2	442	58	7.62
Total			41	11,399	995	11.46

Source: The National Institute of Statistics, NIS Brașov and NIS Prahova (2009)

- in the secondary cycle there are 11,399 students enrolled, an average value of 278.02 students/secondary school. With this value, the analysed area has higher values compared to the present national average;

- compared to the average regional value, the only local unit with higher values is the city of Brașov (317.76 students/secondary school. In this case, also, the approach should be qualitative, since it brings out a series of major discrepancies. To be more specific, schools situated in the central area have a larger number of students than those in the suburbs (a reality present in all urban Romania). It is proven by the “central” presence of parents’ work places and their perception, which is that central schools are qualitatively superior to neighbourhood ones;

- in all other local units, the number of students/secondary school is below the regional average and is clearly below the city of Brașov; here we mention the local units of Cristian (128 students/secondary school), Predeal (171) and Ghimbav (207);

- at the moment, we notice a sufficient number of students to make each respective institution efficient, in each local unit. An analysis of the Department of Education, Research and Development, based on a financial matrix of the school infrastructure, number of teaching staff, student number, personnel expenses, etc, has reached the following conclusion: a school cannot be viable unless it has at least 50 students enrolled and active. All the schools with a lower number have to be closed down (the process is ongoing), and the respective students have to be guided to the nearest functional secondary school (for this there is a program to equip rural schools with a sufficient number of busses, intended for the development of the school act). It is absolutely normal, if we take into consideration the educational inefficiency resulted from a low number of students;

- some students from the rural surroundings of the *Inner City Area of Sinaia-Bușteni-Azuga-Predeal-Râșnov-Brașov (Poiana Brașov)* prefer to attend town and city secondary schools, simply because the education offered there is more diversified (mainly intensive foreign languages classes), the facilities are superior and the staff is entirely professional;

- the level of professionals amongst the teaching staff in the secondary school cycle from the analysed area is positive, in line with the educational requirements within the European Union;

- the average regional value of the number of secondary level students, compared to the number of existing teaching staff is 11.46 secondary level students/teaching staff (the average in most European states with a modern educational system - Finland, Norway, Germany etc, is of 10-15 students/teaching staff);

- this causes a series of territorial differences. For example, the surprising situation of Bușteni (5.83 secondary level students/teaching staff), compared to Azuga (15.50 secondary level students/teaching staff), both meeting the educational requirements of the European Union;

- the surprisingly positive situation of Bușteni (from this view point) is merely apparent, since the value of the above mentioned report has not always been a favourable one but it is one resulted from the gradual reduction of the number of students;

- what is surprising is that within the *Inner city Area of Sinaia-Bușteni-Azuga-Predeal-Râșnov-Brașov (Poiana Brașov)* (from the analysed data, made available by the Brașov School Inspectorate and the Prahova School Inspectorate) is that there are no functional private secondary schools and there are no requests for the creation of such institutions. We believe it is a negative fact compared to the European Union area that promotes private educational structures and opportunities.

If we made an analysis of the efficiency of the secondary educational cycle within the *Inner City Area of Sinaia-Bușteni-Azuga-Predeal-Râșnov-Brașov (Poiana Brașov)*, based on all components, we should establish two separate entities: *the urban component*, superior in quality and *the rural component*, where some of the flaws are evident and difficult not to take into consideration. As for the first entity, the advantages are *the sufficient number of students, the quality of the teaching staff, with a complete specialized training and a continuous adequate professional instruction, the equipment of schools with up to date teaching material, the existence of specialized laboratories in every school, the accessibility by urban means of transportation, the rich educational environment provided, etc.* The rural component of the secondary cycle confronts with some real threats: *threats connected to the decrease (in some situations) in the number of students and, at the same time, to the inefficient performing, hiring of unqualified personnel, the difficult access (especially in the cold season), the migration of a part of students towards the schools in the city, the insufficient attention to hygiene, the poor supplying, etc.* If a qualitative evolution of rural education is wanted, there is, theoretically, a simple solution: to reach the qualitative level of the urban education (from all viewpoints). It will be hard to reach but not impossible.

5. ARTS AND CRAFTS SCHOOLS

The complementary and apprenticeship educational components, also known as “*Arts and Crafts Schools*” are well represented in the analysed area. Standing as proof is the region’s economic tradition (especially industrial and of tourism). The economy within the *Inner City Area of Sinaia-Bușteni-Azuga-Predeal-Râșnov-Brașov (Poiana Brașov)* is an important element for the southern part of Transylvania. It implies the existence of some formative schools for the necessary work force. It is self implied that the existing specialisations within the Arts and Crafts Schools are based on the industrial, commercial and tourist branches: nutrition, textile industry, electric industry, electronic and electro technical industry, chemical industry, wood exploitation and manufacturing, mechanical, agro tourism, auto industry, etc.

There are 16 such institutions in Brașov (12), Râșnov (1), Predeal (1), Bușteni (1) and (Sinaia (1). They have 4,758 students, potential employees in economy (agriculture, trade, industry and other services) in the counties of Brașov, Prahova and those near them. There are two private arts and crafts schools in the city of Brașov (out of the 12 existing ones). The present situation allows a positive judgement on the importance of this professional form of education. The structuring of the students on different types of crafts is a fair adjustment to the labour market in the counties of Brașov and Prahova. Still, there should be a match and distribution of crafts in the territory according to the local request. The arts and crafts schools, which specialise in industry and services, are very much appreciated; they are the main institutions that provide the local labour force.

Within the Arts and Crafts Schools in the *Inner City Area of Sinaia-Bușteni-Azuga-Predeal-Râșnov-Brașov (Poiana Brașov)* there are 162 specialized teaching staff. Thus, it results a regional

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average of 29.37 students/teaching staff, which fits in the operational plan of the Department of Education, Research and Development. There are no meaningful differences in the average regional value and the values recorded for each local unit with such educational structures.

We believe such Arts and Crafts Schools could be created in the other administrative units in the area of our concern (Ghimbav, Cristian and Azuga).

The Arts and Crafts Schools within the *Inner City Area of Sinaia-Bușteni-Azuga-Predeal-Râșnov-Brașov (Poiana Brașov)* form educational structures affiliated to school units, theoretical high schools and technical colleges.

6. HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION

High school education is very well represented in the *Inner City Area of Sinaia-Bușteni-Azuga-Predeal-Râșnov-Brașov (Poiana Brașov)*. There are some old and famous high schools here, with national or international notoriety. They cover an entire pallet of specialisations, through their educational curricula. The competence of the teaching staff is in most cases without flaws. This is shown by the students' results in different school contests.

In the analysed area, there are 34 high school institutions (*national colleges, technical colleges, high schools, school groups, normal schools*) public and private, with a total number of 16,949 students. The high school institutions are present in the local units of Brașov (29), Râșnov (1), Predeal (1), Azuga (1), Bușteni (1) and Sinaia (1).

In the 34 educational structures at high school level within the area, there is 1,443 teaching staff, for the entire discipline pallet in the school curricula. The distribution on local units (those with high school units) of the number of students and teaching staff is as follows: Brașov (14,899 students; 1,257 teaching staff), Râșnov (574 students; 58 teaching staff), Predeal (272 students; 23 teaching staff), Azuga (102 students; 13 teaching staff), Bușteni (455 students; 41 teaching staff) and Sinaia (647 students; 51 teaching staff).

The average number of high school students/teaching staff, in the analysed area is of 11.75 high school students/teaching staff, thus making it a match with the educational rigors of the European Union and of the Department of Education, Research and Development. Compared to the average regional value of the analysed parameter, we notice superior values (regardless if positive or negative) in the local units of Brașov (11.85 students/teaching staff), Predeal (11.83 students/teaching staff) and Sinaia (12.69 students/teaching staff). In the rest of the local units, the values are below the regional value such as Râșnov (9.90 students/teaching staff), Azuga (7.85 students/teaching staff) and Bușteni (11.10 students/teaching staff).

The number of high school institutions and their types are a reflection of the reality of the territory, representing the educational requirements of the counties of Brașov and Prahova, as well as of the Romanian Southern Transylvanian space.

- there are 13 *national colleges* and *theoretical high schools* for the educational training of a solid knowledge background and acquiring of a superior linguistic competence. They meet all the students' needs. Out of these, 11 are in the city of Brașov and the local units of Predeal and Azuga (one institution each);

- 3 schools are meant for training students in arts and sports and they are all in the city of Brașov;

- the industrial development of the region and the diversity of the economies have lead to the creation of 15 specialized high schools (technical colleges, industrial, economic and administrative school groups, science colleges);

- to those we can add an Orthodox High School Seminary, meant to prepare students, in the city of Brașov;

- out of the 34 high school institutions, 32 are public and 2 are private, with accreditations from the responsible Department.

The training of the teaching staff in all high school institutions within the area under consideration is of high quality (there are no teachers without specialized training).

Out of the threats against high school education in the analysed area, we want to mention *truancy* (encountered especially in peripheral high schools); *the reduced presence (or lack thereof) of the economic entities, potential employers; the lack of supplies of specialized schools* (in some situations); *the weak safety provided to students in the peripheral high schools*, etc;

The high school institutions within the area should focus more on developing certain fields of specialisation which are on high request on the labour market: *economy, IT, electronics, communication, agriculture and related fields (field mechanics, mountainology, veterinary medicine, horticulture), construction, tourism*, etc.

7. POST HIGH SCHOOL EDUCATION

Post High School Education is closely related to high school, being in equal proportion with the number of inhabitants, resources and economic specialisations of the two counties (Braşov and Prahova). Schools following high school level are properly oriented on the educational proposal. They are perfectly shaped according to the labour market. In the city of Braşov there are three such institutions (one public and two private), with 611 attendants.

If we analyse the proposal of the specialisations in these schools, we can easily realize the importance of the city of Braşov in the field of education and health. Basically, post high school specialisations are a direct link to the two major social fields. Still, we feel a series of specialisations are lacking from the post high school educational proposal. Specialisations such as those in the *agrozootehnic field, tourism, IT*, etc.

8. VOCATIONAL AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

Vocational Education and Training (VET), also called *Career and Technical Education*, is also well represented in the educational structure within the *Inner City Area of Sinaia-Buşteni-Azuga-Predeal-Râşnov-Braşov (Poiana Braşov)*. Under the direct authority of the County School Inspectorate of Braşov and Prahova, there are 21 such specialized profile educational institutions:

- for extraordinary physically endowed students, there are 6 highly complex *sports oriented institutions*, thus, 3 in the City of Braşov and one in each local unit of Râşnov, Predeal and Sinaia;
- students skilled in music and arts can attend the courses of 4 specialized institutions (2 in Braşov and one in each local unit of Râşnov and Sinaia);
- there are 7 educational centres for children with different types of disabilities (4 in Braşov; 1 in Buşteni and 2 in Sinaia), where the educational curricula are adequate and focused on the respective type of disability;
- Orthodox Theological specialisation is provided by the Orthodox High School Seminary "Dumitru Stăniloae" in Braşov; the other religions do not have educational institutions in the area we have analysed;
- the teaching staff can benefit from educational support, from research and information opportunities within 3 institutions (2 in Braşov and 1 in Sinaia).

The particular status of these specialized educational institutions is conferred by the presence of *various modules of training*, as well as their *shared management* (the Braşov or Prahova CSI, and authorities in the fields of sports, religion, arts, health, etc).

9. THE TEACHING STAFF

The analysis conducted on the territorial distribution and quality of the professional training of the *teaching staff* in the analysed area, shows a series of major attributes - some positive, some which need to be bettered as soon as possible. In the pre-university education level within the *Inner City Area of Sinaia-Buşteni-Azuga-Predeal-Râşnov-Braşov (Poiana Braşov)* there is a considerable number of teaching staff with a clear professional training. Their specialized knowledge and teaching skills are proven by the quality of the students' professional training. We want to point out that the Department of Education offers all teaching staff the possibility to acquire a continuous professional training through its territorial representatives (CSI Braşov, CSI Prahova, the Teaching-Staff Resource Centre

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Brașov, the Teaching-Staff Resource Centre Prahova, and the University of “Transylvania” Brașov, etc). Moreover, there are also programmes meant for rural education. The downside is that there are still untrained teachers in some rural school institutions.

The analysis of the quality level of the teaching staff reveals that 98.00% of the teaching staff has a specialized training and the remaining 2.00% is untrained teaching staff, a fact that needs to be corrected immediately. At territorial unit centre level the percentage of qualified teaching staff is of 100% which fits perfectly in the average of the major cities of Romania; the rare cases with untrained teaching staff are found only in some of the local units.

If we monitor the teaching staff according to the educational ranking, we notice that a major part have the 1st degree teaching rank; this is a positive aspect but there is also a downside to it- indicates the idea that a certain part of the teaching staff are not young people; still, in the category of young teaching staff we can also include those who have the 2nd degree teaching rank, and those who are just beginning, who are the great majority.

The advantages of the teaching staff indicator are *the high average percentage of qualified teachers; the overall presence of specialized teaching staff in almost all school institutions; the desire to continuously aim at superior training (78 of pre-university teaching staff have a Ph.D.); the positive results of the students at different school contests; the notoriety of various pre-university institutions (especially in the centre of the city of Brașov), etc.*

The disadvantages are not many but they need to be dealt with as soon as possible: *providing qualified teaching staff in all school institutions; enrolling as many representatives of the pre-university education to continuous training courses, attendance of Masters Studies, PhD studies, etc.*

10. ELEMENTS OF THE EDUCATIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE

A highly important aspect of the vitality and efficiency of the educational phenomenon is given by the *degree of coverage of students of the classrooms and gyms* (table 4).

Table 4. *Ratio of students (1st-high school graduates)/class rooms-gymnasiums “The inner City Area of Sinaia-Bușteni-Azuga-Predeal-Rășnov-Brașov (Poiana Brașov)” (2008)*

Crt. No.	City/Town/ Municipality	Students	Class rooms/ Laboratories/ Infirmaries/ School work shops	Ratio students/ Number work spaces	Standard gymnasiums	Ratio students/ gymnasiums
1	Brașov	36,262	2,239	16.20	52	697.35
2	Ghimbav	339	18	18.83	1	339.00
3	Cristian	229	16	14.31	1	229.00
4	Rășnov	2,113	78	27.09	1	2,113.25
5	Predeal	654	28	23.36	1	654.00
6	Azuga	569	18	31.61	1	569.00
7	Bușteni	1,507	90	16.74	1	1,507.00
8	Sinaia	1,775	88	20.17	1	1,775.00
Total		43,448	2,575	16.87	59	736.41

Source: data taken from the National Institute of Statistics, NIS Brașov and NIS Prahova (2009)

The analysed phenomenon, quantified by the data in the above table, has several important aspects:

- across the entire studied area, the number of classrooms, laboratories, infirmaries and school workshops amounts to 2,575. The average of students for each classroom is balanced, 16.87 students/classroom. The values do not show drastic differences, the maximum can be found in the local unit of Azuga (31.61 students/classroom), and the minimum, in the local unit of Cristian (14.31 students/classroom);

- the average value of the number of students/classroom in the *Inner City Area of Sinaia-Bușteni-Azuğa-Predeal-Râșnov-Brașov (Poiana Brașov)* indicates the presence of a sufficient school infrastructure for the number of students at present; the same applies to laboratories and workshops.

The situation is entirely different when we analyse the ratio between number of students and number of gyms, gyms that also are appropriately equipped and according to the norm. There are 59 gyms that meet the educational requirements of the Department of Education, Research and Development. They are located very unevenly, 52 of them are in the city of Brașov and one of each in all other local units.

The average value of the number of students /certified gym, within the *Inner City Area of Sinaia-Bușteni-Azuğa-Predeal-Râșnov-Brașov (Poiana Brașov)* is of 736.41 students, though it does not reflect a territorial reality at all. The differences from one local unit to another are fairly consistent.

The analysis of the information on the *school infrastructure* in the studied area points out the existence of modern and properly equipped school institutions. This situation is fairly common for the centre of the city of Brașov (national colleges, theoretical high schools, as well as some secondary schools). As a general view, the buildings of the school institutions meet the requirements for the optimal educational process. Even so, we have to point out that in the last year the investments in school infrastructure did not meet the existing needs. Total repairs were done in five schools, consolidation was provided to three institutions and funding and modernizing was provided for 29 schools.

11. UNIVERSITY AND POST GRADUATE EDUCATION

University and Graduate Education within the *Inner City Area of Sinaia-Bușteni-Azuğa-Predeal-Râșnov-Brașov-Poiana Brașov* is of high quality. There are several strong university profiled institutions. University and Graduate education are present in two of the local units of the analysed area, namely Brașov and Sinaia. In the city of Brașov, there are two public universities (“Transilvania” University and “Henri Coandă” Air Force Academy). Furthermore, there is the private “George Barițiu” University of Brașov, with its head office in the above mentioned local unit, and a series of private and public university extensions in Bucharest (“Sextil Pușcariu” University in Bucharest, “Dimitrie Cantemir” Christian University in Bucharest, “Spiru Haret” University in Bucharest, “Pro-Universitate” Foundation in Bucharest, the Romanian Bank Institute in Bucharest). In the local unit of Sinaia there is an extension of the Ecologic University of Bucharest. This is a private university, accredited by the DERYS (Department of Education, Research, Youth and Sports).

There are over 32,109 students attending all university levels: *bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, advanced studies, post-graduate studies and PhD studies*. The distribution of students in public and private universities is as follows: 17,830 students in public university and 14,279 students in private universities. There are 1,091 university teaching staff (heads of courses and associates), out of which 971 in the public universities and 120 in the private ones.

The main superior education institution is “*Transilvania*” *University of Brașov*. It has 16 faculties with an impressive number of specialisations in almost all educational fields. It has courses for all levels of study (campus education, low frequency, distance learning, master’s degree, PhD, advanced studies, post-graduate studies). In all these structures, there are 2,196 students enrolled. There is 968 teaching staff assigned to their training. “Transilvania” University of Brașov has the most complex educational curricula.

“*Henri Coandă*” *Air Force Academy* is meant for university training in the military field and it has one faculty (the Faculty of Aeronautical Management). It has 198 students (within five existing specialisations) and 58 civil and military teaching staff. It resides under the ownership of two departments, the Department of Education, Research and Development and the Department of Defence.

Within the other high-level institutions, there are several other specialisations (Economy, Law, Sociology, Education Sciences, Physical Education and Sports, etc.) and they represent an alternative education area (at least quantitatively) to public universities.

12. CONCLUSIONS. SWOT ANALYSIS

As a conclusion, a *SWOT analysis* of the educational integral part within the *Inner City Area of Sinaia-Bușteni-Azuga-Predeal-Râșnov-Brașov (Poiana Brașov)* should contain the following major vectors:

• *Strengths:*

- the existence of all levels of education (from preschool to post graduate);
- the consideration of the city of Brașov as the main educational centre in southern Transylvania and central Romania;
- the presence of a relatively well prepared/educated work labour;
- the gross ratio of primary, secondary and superior education is in a slight increase;
- the ratio of school and university drop out is decreasing;
- students appreciate the quality of education in their hometowns;
- the varied network of specialisations in the educational institutions;
- education satisfies most of the basic standards within the European Union;
- in Brașov and Sinaia as university centres, the average level of training of the dwellers is comparable to the country average;
- there is a strong relation based on cooperation with educational centres in the Euro-Atlantic space, a fact proven by the rising mobility of university students and teaching staff.

• *Weaknesses:*

- the decreasing ratio of school coverage especially at high school level;
- the decrease of school attendants;
- the incomplete collaboration between public and private superior education and the requirements of the labour market;
- the presence of identical or similar specialisations within several universities;
- the presence of the drop out phenomenon for economic reasons (especially university level teaching staff in the rural area);
- the presence of unqualified teaching staff in some institutions;
- the low wages of the teaching staff, of auxiliary teaching staff and of associates;
- the university campuses are situated in inaccessible locations and do not have all the necessary equipment on the premises or in the vicinity;
- the student canteens are not used at full capacity, the service is expensive and often of poor quality;
- there are insufficient places in school dormitories;
- there is no adequate job offer system for students, something similar to the EU or American students; at best it can be found in the form of partnerships with NGOs and private companies.

• *Opportunities:*

- diversifying qualifications/specialisations at all levels of education;
- hiring in the future only qualified staff for every course (which is primordial);
- modernizing and equipping adequately all lacking educational institutions;
- paying attention to institutions which could offer professional training in several fields (ensuring the flexibility of students on the labour market);
- involving organizations/institutions in making sure that information and consultancy on career options are accessible to all;
- implementing a university and post graduate modern management concept;
- developing multiculturalism and intercultural dialogue within educational institutions;
- re-thinking the relationship with civil society - provider of the contingent potential meant for the educational act;
- building authentic and original strategies for educational development.

• *Threats:*

- under utilizing the human potential;
- de-professionalising students;
- limiting the access to studies due to the need of financial support.

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