

## THE ROLE OF THREE-DIMENSIONAL PARTNERSHIP IN SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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**Abstract:** *The business environment has a key contribution to make to improving the quality of education and social performance through strategic investments, institutional collaborations and practical training initiatives. In the context of a globalized economy, labour market requirements are changing rapidly, which requires the education system to constantly adapt to these changes. Forming partnerships between companies and higher education institutions is proving to be an effective way of bridging the gap between academic theory and the practical skills that are indispensable in a professional career. In today's context, many education systems face significant challenges, including a lack of modern infrastructure, insufficient adaptability of curricula to the demands of the digital economy and weak links with the business environment. These shortcomings can be addressed by attracting private investment to develop technology labs, digital learning platforms and internship programs. In addition, companies have an important role to play in supporting education through mentoring initiatives, offering scholarships and creating business incubators dedicated to young entrepreneurs. To maximize the impact of these initiatives, it is crucial to develop public policies that encourage collaboration between the private and education sectors. Such an approach would facilitate the transition of graduates into the labor market and contribute to the sustainable development of the economy.*

**Keywords:** *Quality education, sustainable development, public-private partnership, social responsibility.*

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*Motto: "Education for All  
is not only a powerful lever for economic development,  
but it is also a strategic investment - one of the best investments  
for individuals, economies and society as a whole."  
(Audrey Azoulay, Director-General, UNESCO) [1]*

### 1. Introduction

Undeniably, nowadays, the activity of any economic unit can only be carried out in collaboration with other entities, which conditions their development strategies not only on the economic dimension, but also from a socio-cultural perspective. Thus, the list of organizations' social responsibilities frequently includes concern for education. Education is a fundamental pillar of economic and social development. An effective education system not only supports economic growth, but also contributes to strengthening social cohesion and reducing inequalities. In a globalized context, marked by rapid developments in emerging

technologies and continuous changes in labor market requirements, collaboration between business and the education system becomes imperative. A three-dimensional public-private-civil partnership leading to sustainable social development is increasingly taking shape.

It should be recalled that the concept of sustainable development was originally aimed at environmental problems and resource scarcity, especially energy. The term itself "came into its own in 1992 after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro... Concerns about it continued with discussions at the 2002 Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development." [2]

"Another perspective offered by Professor Trevor M. Letcher is the concept of the three Ps (People, Planet, Profit). Sustainable development is often characterized by the three Ps: People, Planet and Profit. These three P's are based on the UN trichotomy of sustainable practices. People stand for socio-cultural issues; Planet stands for environmental issues and Profit stands for economic issues. Scientists can inform society about what needs to change, but society tends to be reluctant to change. Hence the need for a fourth 'P' will create synergies between people, planet and profit and that is politics and policies." [3]

A strategic point for transforming the world in which we live is the adoption by the UN, i.e. world leaders, of the 2030 Agenda, which aims to reduce poverty, protect the environment and human rights. Given that the most important factor of production for economic growth is human capital, education is an element of global, not just national, security. "Quality education and training systems accessible to the population are the foundation of lifelong learning, determining the capacity for innovation and participation in society. EU measures have focused on improving basic skills, early education and childcare, reducing early school leaving, increasing the scale of higher education, adult learning and increasing digital skills. This strategy aimed to improve young people's access to jobs at a time when big changes are expected in employment requirements driven by the green/digital transition and the spread of artificial intelligence that will lead to the elimination of many job categories today occupied by the low and medium educated." [4]

## **2. Methodology**

The present study is based on general and special scientific methods of research of social-economic processes and phenomena, in particular methods such as analysis, synthesis, deduction, induction, and scientific abstraction methods were used.

The informational basis of the research are the national and international scientific publications, annual reports prepared by the Ministry of Education and Research, etc., data published by Eurostat and other informational resources.

## **3. Results and Discussion**

"A public-private partnership is a specific form of collaboration, usually on a long-term basis, between a public authority and the private sector to solve problems of public interest." [5] Education in the Republic of Moldova is a strategic issue of major public relevance. A quality education system contributes to the formation of competent, qualified and resilient citizens to the challenges of contemporary society, i.e. an educated population is more economically productive, more innovative and more capable of contributing to the country's development, reducing dependence on external factors and strengthening economic security.

By the way, according to economics professors at the University of Padua, Giorgio Brunello, Lorenzo Rocco, and UNESCO representative Matthias Eck, Section of Education for Inclusion and Gender Equality, the consequences of not investing in

education for all are drastic "If no measures are taken to change course, by 2030, globally, the annual cost to society of children leaving school early will reach 6 trillion dollars. Similarly, the annual cost to society of children without minimum levels of basic skills [1] is \$10 trillion. These costs are higher than the combined annual gross domestic product (GDP) of France and Japan, two high-income countries (OECD, 2023). [6]

In the Republic of Moldova, the education system faces multiple challenges, including the lack of sufficient funding, inadequate infrastructure, educational programs that do not correspond to economic realities and insufficient preparation of graduates for integration into the labor market. And investing in education is a long-term strategic investment in the country's ability to protect its interests and ensure a secure and prosperous future for its citizens. According to a UNESCO report, "Economic costs are borne by individuals (private costs) as well as the government (fiscal costs), while those borne by society (social costs) include costs for both individuals and the government." [6]

"The Republic of Moldova directs a significant proportion of the National Public Budget (NPB) to education. The share of public spending on education as a percentage of total BPN expenditure has fluctuated between 2016 and 2023. After an increase from 17.7% in 2016 to 18.4% in 2019, this indicator decreased in 2020 to 17.2% due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic." [7] Certainly, one of the indicators showing the state of the educational infrastructure is the state investment in education. According to the 2024 Progress Report on the Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Republic of Moldova, "The share of the budget allocated for education in the national public budget amounted to 15.9% in 2023. The data indicate a relative stability in the percentage between 2014-2019, followed by a significant and steady decrease in the share of this expenditure in the total national public budget expenditure from 2020 to 2023, with a minimum of 15.8% in 2022. It is important to note that investment in education is vital for a country's long-term development, impacting labor productivity and quality of life." [8]

Developing a quality education ecosystem requires a collective effort, hence the three-dimensional nature of the education partnership.

Thus, the public partner in the person of the government has the responsibility to establish coherent educational policies, to ensure adequate financing of the education system and to monitor the quality of education, in the person of the educational institution - it must provide relevant and high quality curricula, create a safe and stimulating learning environment and support the professional development of teachers, including scientific and teaching staff - are meant to train/develop the skills of the learner, and the students have the responsibility to assume their own academic progress of vital socio-professional importance.

The private partner, in our case the business environment, has a vested interest in a quality education that will generate the skilled human capital that entrepreneurs need to thrive. Business has the potential to play an important role in bridging these gaps by investing directly in education, supporting vocational training and developing sustainable partnerships with educational institutions. Through mentoring programs, offering scholarships, facilitating internships and equipping educational infrastructure, companies can make a significant contribution to improving the quality of the educational process. This would make education more practical, relevant and accessible to all young people. Strengthening cooperation between business and education must be achieved through well-defined strategies, long-term investment and active involvement of all stakeholders. This partnership can be essential for preparing a society capable of facing future challenges and building a globally competitive economy.

Among the main social partners of education, we mention the family, which provides the first educators for children, the local community, which through various organizations, cultural institutions, libraries, youth centers, etc., provides non-formal learning opportunities and support for schools.

At the international level, the European Commission considers corporate social responsibility to be the responsibility of enterprises for the impact they have on society by integrating social, environmental, ethical, consumer, environmental, consumer and human rights concerns into the value system and organizational culture, business strategy and operations, to ensure that strategic and operational decisions are taken in a transparent and accountable manner, respecting the rule of law, and thereby establish better practices within the firm to benefit society. Among the main social partners of education we mention the family, which provides the first educators of children, the local community, which through various organizations, cultural institutions, libraries, youth centers, etc., provides non-formal learning opportunities and support for schools. [9]

The collaboration between business and the Government of the Republic of Moldova on modernization of schools and universities is remarkable. Thus, in April 2024, during the Education Week, the Government of the Republic of Moldova, in part the Ministry of Education and Research, launched the "Moldova for Education" Campaign, more precisely, a National Partnership under the patronage of the Presidency of the Republic of Moldova. "The aim of the partnership is to unite the efforts of the Government, business and external partners for the modernization of education in the Republic of Moldova." [10] Within the framework of the Campaign, 12 private companies have made a public commitment to contribute to the improvement of the educational system in our country by investing about 18 million lei in the infrastructure and equipment of the 35 institutions of the Model Schools Network. They are Orange, Moldcell, Starnet, Premier Energy Foundation, Kaufland, Linella, Mixbook, MAIB, OTP, Moldinconbank, DiTA EstFarm and Huawei. [10]

In this context, the Minister of Education and Research, Dan Perciun said that "It takes a healthy and involved community to raise a child. We believe that our role is to strengthen these efforts and join forces to build a project for the country. This partnership is a long-term investment in education, in the future of children, in future employees and researchers. We are making this effort because we have every confidence that despite all the challenges and difficulties, we can have a high-performing education system".[11]

Among the partners of quality education, we find Kaufland Moldova, which has reconfirmed its commitment to support the community in which it operates through involvement and dedication. Since 2016, Kaufland has invested more than 30 million lei in social responsibility projects, with education being one of the basic pillars.... Dona Răpciugă, Executive Director of Kaufland Moldova, emphasized that it is our responsibility to invest in Moldova's most important resource - its people. Thus, through the "Model School" project we want to create a safe, interactive and attractive space for children, where they are motivated, encouraged and enjoy coming to school. Through this project we will provide children with a friendly environment to encourage innovation and creativity - qualities that can be extremely valuable to companies looking for future employees." [11]

Another strategic partner of Quality Education is Moldindconbank, on behalf of the company reconfirmed the commitment to participate in the initiative of the Ministry of Education and Research, the bank's First Vice-Chairman of the Management Committee, Victor Cibotaru, who noted that "Moldindconbank is permanently involved in large-scale social projects. "Moldova for Education" is a very important project and we could not but

accept the invitation to participate in it and we come with a contribution of 2 million lei. Taking into account the fact that Moldindconbank has been more and more involved in various projects for the development of sports for young people and children, we would like to channel this donation for the repair and improvement of sports halls and sports fields in schools in the Republic of Moldova." [12]

"StarNet also recognizes the role of education for the future of the country and supports the "Moldova for Education" project. StarNet is a company that is constantly involved in supporting projects aimed at developing the well-being of the country and has joined the national project "Moldova for Education" which fully resonates with the values that the company holds. Since 2012 and until now, StarNet supports many educational and cultural projects, which it presented during the official launch event of the Moldova Education Week. The event was organized under the patronage of the Presidency of the Republic of Moldova and had as its central theme - Model School. Alexandru Machedon, Founder of StarNet, said that Education is the most important pillar of a nation. Everything starts from education, as both the social and economic development of a community depends on it. By investing in education, we invest in the future of our own country. Alexandru Machedon also briefly presented some of the educational projects supported over the years by StarNet: We value intelligence; StarNet supports chess; StarART Project; ROBOCLUB Project; A computer for every student; Innovative Entrepreneurship for sustainable employment; Gigabit Internet for your school; TIMPUL Magazine Project in Romania, Molodva Republic edition; "eTIMPUL for the Book" Project. Only together we can change the future, that's why StarNet supports Education!"[13] We emphasize that StarNet undertook within the "Moldova for Education" project to develop the IT infrastructure and free Internet connection of 35 schools.

Giorgi Shagidze, President of Maib, subscribed to the "Moldova for Education" campaign by investing 2 000 000 lei for the development of a broad financial education program, while stressing that "Maib shows its support for the educational field through numerous initiatives: technical equipment of educational institutions in the country, through the maib edu program, organization of financial education lessons in the bank, through the maib brand internship programs, dual education and many others. Year after year MAIB's team of trainers develops various educational programs which they deliver to both the bank's employees and the interested public aiming to develop professional and personal skills. Among the most requested courses we mention: Data Analytics, IT, financial education for children and teenagers, etc.

The bank also pilots various partnerships with the country's largest universities and develops educational programs, getting involved through public lectures held by the bank's professionals and curriculum expertise, conducts internship programs and integrates dual education students into the real work environment." [14]

Huawei Moldova representative Guo Min appreciated the launch of the National Partnership "Moldova for Education", expressing the company's openness to contribute to improving the quality of education in Moldova. The Huawei Company has joined with an investment of 1 million lei for the creation of "digital classrooms" in some of the educational institutions of the Model Schools Network"[10] and the Huawei Company.

On the other hand, "The Ambassador of the European Union to the Republic of Moldova, Janis Mazeiks, emphasized that the EU Member States support the efforts of the Chisinau authorities to provide all citizens with equal access to quality education through the repair of kindergartens and schools, educational exchange programs and scholarships from European funds." [15]



OTP Bank has also shown openness to support education in Moldova. The company has come up with two beautiful initiatives, which will lead to the creation of students' well-being, to the creation of opportunities for creative development, such as:

- "a contribution of 2 million lei for the renovation of solar libraries and their transformation into multifunctional educational spaces. By providing modular furniture, individual and group staging areas, resources for interactive education and digital tools;
- delivering, in partnership with the "OK" Foundation, free financial and entrepreneurship education courses." [16]

Last but not least, the Orange Foundation strengthens education in Moldovan schools through various projects:

- "The Orange Foundation and UNHCR have donated 90 digital kits - three for each school - that make learning more interactive and engaging. Each kit includes tablets for students, a server for distributing materials, headphones for focused learning, an audio speaker for group activities, a projector for visual lessons and a laptop to support teachers." [17]
- "The free program "Digital Education and Career Guidance for Women", which runs from March to December 2025, offers 36 hours of free training, conducted over two weeks, in physical format, at the Orange Digital Center, located within the State Pedagogical University "Ion Creangă" in Chisinau." [18]
- "#SuperCoders is an international project, conceived and developed by the Orange Group since 2014." [19]

Orange Moldova Foundation contributes to the creation of digital laboratories for schools, providing equipment and educational materials necessary to improve the quality of education.

And one of the most important business initiatives supporting education in the Republic of Moldova is the program "Tekwill in every school". This project was launched by Tekwill in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and various companies from the IT industry. The main goal of this program is to bring a new dimension in education through digitalization and the introduction of modern courses such as programming, graphic design and artificial intelligence. Also, in 2024, 1299 teachers from all regions of the country have joined this program, taking part in a comprehensive training offer that runs throughout the 2024 - 2025 academic year. Thousands of students across the country now have the opportunity to benefit from digital educational resources and participate in hands-on technology sessions. In this way, Tekwill in Every School not only enhances students' skills, but also prepares them for the challenges of their professional future. [20]

In order to maximize the benefits and minimize the risks in the collaboration between the private sector and education, it is essential to have a well-defined regulatory framework and a well-balanced strategy. We propose several key issues, such as transparent public policies, i.e. the authorities must clearly define the boundaries of collaboration between the private sector and the education system in a way that protects the overall interests of society. These policies should ensure a level playing field for all actors involved.

Another aspect would be diversification of financial support. Private funds need to be fairly distributed across different areas to avoid favoring some industries at the expense of others. A diversified approach helps to maintain a well-balanced education system adapted to society's needs. It is important that government and educational institutions regularly evaluate the effects of working with business. This monitoring can help to adjust

strategies according to the results, ensuring a constant and adaptable evolution of educational initiatives.

Collaboration between universities, companies, NGOs and authorities is vital for creating an inclusive and sustainable educational ecosystem. Each party has an important role to play, and effective cooperation can bring significant benefits to all involved.

#### 4. Conclusions

Based on the above, we conclude that education is not only a fundamental right, but also an essential pillar of national security. A strong and relevant educational system contributes to the formation of valuable human capital, strengthening national identity through critical thinking and preparing citizens to face the complex challenges of the contemporary world, including those related to security.

"The world risks losing enormously if we fail to fulfill the right to education and allocate the financial resources necessary to achieve it." [21] Accordingly, collaboration between educational institutions, government authorities, the business environment and civil society is indispensable to raise awareness of the relevance of education and to ensure the quality of education in relation to national security imperatives.

By joining our efforts, we can contribute to the modernization of the national education system and, as a result, we contribute to the preparation of a competitive workforce capable of responding to current challenges. Undoubtedly, such collaboration also requires a well-founded legal framework. By implementing a well-thought-out strategy, the benefits of public-private partnerships can be maximized, leveraging the resources and expertise of the business environment in favor of education, but, at the same time, measures must be taken to avoid the risks associated with this collaboration. Thus, we can create a sustainable and inclusive educational ecosystem that prepares young people for a future full of opportunities.

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