

# JOURNAL OF RESEARCH — IN — HIGHER EDUCATION

---

VOLUME IV, 2020, No. 1



CENTRE FOR UNIVERSITY STRATEGY AND  
QUALITY MANAGEMENT

# Journal of Research in Higher Education

• **Vol. IV, No. 1, 2020**

Published twice yearly by  
© Qualitas Centre, University Babeş-Bolyai

**ISSN 2559 - 6624**  
**ISSN-L 2559 - 6624**

<https://doi.org/10.24193/JRHE.2020.1>

**Edited by:** *Qualitas Centre, University Babeş-Bolyai*

**Editor-in-Chief**

Prof. Dan Chiribucă, University Babeş-Bolyai, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

**Editorial Board**

Professor Daniel David, University Babeş-Bolyai, Romania

Professor Ioana Bican, University Babeş-Bolyai, Romania

Professor Marko Balint, University Babeş-Bolyai, Romania

Professor Adrian Hatos, University of Oradea, Romania

Associate Professor William Yat Wai Lo, Hong Kong Institute of Education, China

Professor Ian McNAY, University of Greenwich, UK

Associate Professor Bogdan Nadolu, West University of Timișoara, Romania,

President of Romanian Sociologists Society

Professor Marian Preda, University of Bucharest, Romania

Professor Horatiu Rusu, Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Romania

Associate Professor Pedro Teixeira, University of Porto, Portugal

Professor Robert Toutkoushian, University of Georgia USA

Professor Eyüp Artvinli, Eskisehir Osmangazi University, Turkey

**Executive Editors**

Dr. Sonia Pavlenko

Dr. Oana Mihaela Tămaș

Simona Mălăescu

**Language Editor:**

Dr. Sonia Pavlenko

**© Cover design**

Edit Fogarasi

All material copyright ©2020 by the Qualitas Centre, University Babeş-Bolyai. Reproduction or use without written permission is prohibited.

e-mail: [journal.rehe@ubbcluj.ro](mailto:journal.rehe@ubbcluj.ro)

<http://jrehe.reviste.ubbcluj.ro/>

## Contents

Ioana-Mihaela Bonda Cecilia Cârja	<i>A Century of Romanian Higher Education in Cluj. The Beginnings</i>	5
Florin Nicolae Ardelean	<i>International University Networks and Academic Mobility in Political Context: Six decades of cooperation between "Babeş-Bolyai" University in Cluj-Napoca and the University of Geneva (1919-1979)</i>	18
Bogdan Nadolu	<i>Perspectives of Romanian Students about Life in Social Isolation</i>	32
Cohen Shirly & Sabag Ziva	<i>The Influence of Corona Epidemic on Teaching Methods of Higher Education Institutions in Israel</i>	44
Carmen Țăgşorean	<i>Student Life in Medieval Times in France and Marius Mircu's Student Experience in Romania</i>	72

# ***A Century of Romanian Higher Education in Cluj. The Beginnings***

**Ioana-Mihaela Bonda**

*Scientific Researcher II, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca*

*Email: ioanabonda@yahoo.com*

**Cecilia Cârja**

*Scientific Researcher II, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca*

*Email: ceciliacarja@yahoo.it*

**Abstract:** The organization of the University of Upper Dacia in Cluj was the result of an admirable solidarity of the Romanian academic environment. Prestigious names from the universities of Bucharest and Iaşi ral lied around the project of establishing a Romanian higher education institution right in the heart of Transylvania. The phenomenon is not surprising. A simple look at the historical process of organizing the Romanian universities in the Old Kingdom shows that both the educational institutions from Iaşi and Bucharest owed their systematization and progress to some Transylvanians as well. They applied the principle they adhered to and upheld, according to which the evolution of a nation can be done only through culture. They were convinced that only in this way could a dialogue with the great European nations be reached. Thus, they put the theory into practice.

Therefore, the inter-Romanian university mobility took place, initially, from Transylvania to the Romanian extra-Carpathian territory. Later, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the meaning of this movement was reversed, i.e. from the Old Kingdom to Transylvania. In 1919, when they were asked to contribute with their experience and expertise to the organization of Romanian higher education in Cluj, the teachers of the universities of Iaşi and Bucharest answered affirmatively. Our approach highlights the contribution of these teachers to the organization of *Alma Mater Napocensis*.

**Keywords:** universities, Cluj, Iaşi, Bucharest, professors, Romanian higher education, academic mobility

The events of 1918, which culminated in the achievement of full national unity and the formation of Greater Romania, generated the favourable context for the realization of another ideal of great value for the Romanians of Transylvania: the University that taught in Romanian in Cluj. The mission of this institution was extremely important for the era that was opened by the Great Union, namely the creation of generations of intellectuals with modern thinking, which would contribute to the consolidation of the entire nation state and connect it to the new European order, configured based on the principle of self-determination of nations. *Alma Mater Napocensis* was, thus, throughout its existence, as defined by Professor Vasile Pușcaș, a university “in the service of the nation” (Pușcaș, 1988: 129-138).

In the Romanian space, the modern university was a reality of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with previous evolutions, whose debut can be identified at the beginning of modern times.

For example, in Transylvania, which was connected from a confessional and cultural point of view to the space of Central Europe, university-level instruction was organized in the form of colleges, which functioned alongside monasteries since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. A first structure of this type created in Cluj, at the initiative of Father Antonio Possevino, in 1581, was the *Major Jesuit College*. It was, moreover, the institution that foreshadowed over time the modern university of Transylvania (Pop, 2012).

With an ephemeral existence, the college was disbanded in 1605. The same monastic order constituted a new institution of higher education after almost a century, in 1698. The suppression of the Jesuit order in 1773 resulted in the takeover of the College by the Piarist order, in 1776. A few years later, with the reforms promoted by Emperor Joseph II, the institution lost its university rank, being called a “royal academic high school” (Costea, 2012), and since 1822 only a “high school”, being left with a semi-university status. The language of instruction was also changed, i.e. Hungarian instead of Latin.

After the Revolution of 1848, the leaders of the Romanian national movement in Transylvania were on the verge of gaining a victory in this field. Thus, the Vienna Court finally accepted the creation of a Romanian university in Transylvania, for pragmatic reasons, of a political nature.

The Court wanted to stop the exodus of young Transylvanians, tempted to study in Iași and Bucharest, after the establishment of universities here in 1860 and 1864, respectively. In addition, it wanted to send a message to the Romanian state through the benevolent attitude of the Monarchy towards Romanians. Thus, in 1865, just one year after the establishment of the University of Bucharest, the Viennese Court approved the project of establishing a Law Academy. But the Romanians' desideratum was not realized, due to the conclusion of the dualist pact in 1867 (Sigmirean, 2000: 100).

Fortunately, the initiative of the intellectual circles in the Romanian Principalities did not have the same end. The evolution towards the modern nation and the formation of a national culture imposed the establishment of university structures in accordance with the requirements of the time.

The University of Iași had already had, in 1919, a modern educational experience of almost 60 years. With "roots" going back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, when Despot Vodă founded a College in Cotnari, where Latin, rhetoric and dialectics were studied, the Mihail's Academy (Academia Mihăileană) was founded in 1835, and in 1860 the inauguration, in the presence of Prince Alexandru Ioan. Cuza, of the University of Iași (Iacob, 2013: 15-16). Even if the three Romanian provinces had a different historical evolution, they were always united by national consciousness and culture. Books, ideas and people of culture circulated between the three Romanian historical provinces, so that in Bucharest and Iași we meet Transylvanian teachers throughout the modern era. When it was founded in 1860, the University of Iași had at its professors the Transylvanians Simion Bărnuțiu, Petru Suci, Ștefan Emilian, Ioan Popp, Ștefan Micle, famous names, with European level training, who laid the foundations of higher education in Iași (Iacob, 2013: 42). When Cluj needed the enlightened minds of Iași, they came to contribute to the building of the new university fortress, in Transylvania which was united with the motherland.

In the case of Bucharest, too, one could speak of an academic tradition. Since the time of Constantin Brâncoveanu, a Royal Academy functioned in Wallachia, organized in 1694 alongside the monastery of Saint Sava (Sfântul Sava). Later, Gheorghe Lazăr (1779-1823), a Transylvanian refugee in Bucharest and a visionary of his time, succeeded in 1818 to lay the foundations of a higher education

institution in Romanian, which operated in the old building in St. Sava. (Berciu-Drăghicescu, Bozgan, 2004).

A few years later, in 1842, another Transylvanian, August Treboniu Laurian, would link his name to the Romanian school in Bucharest. At the invitation of Prince Alexandru Ghica, he arrived in the town on Dâmbovița to fill a teaching position at St. Sava College. (Balaci et al., 1964: 17-20).

Based on these antecedents, on July 4/16, 1864, through the decree of Alexandru Ioan Cuza, the University of Bucharest was established. Thus, the higher education institution that functioned since 1694 under the name of the Royal Academy of St. Sava, which later became, in 1818, St. Sava College, reached another level of its evolution.

In Transylvania, however, in this period of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, despite the efforts of the Romanian intellectuals, it was not possible to organize a higher education institution with Romanian as the language of instruction. However, the university tradition continued in Cluj, through a new form of organization. In 1872, the political authorities agreed to the creation of the “Ferenc József” University, with Hungarian as the language of instruction (Csucsuj, 2012).

The first world conflagration would change the situation. Immediately after the outbreak of the Great War, the leadership of the University of Bucharest sent a memorandum to King Carol I and the Prime Minister requesting Romania's entry into the war on the side of the Entente. The main argument invoked was the liberation of Transylvania and its union with Romania. This position was not new. For the most part, the teaching staff had supported over time the national movement of Romanians in Transylvania (Berciu-Drăghicescu & Bozgan, 2004: 94–96). Then, we must not omit the fact that the education of Bucharest owed its organization and progress to some Transylvanians who did nothing but understand that the evolution of a nation can only be done through culture. However, this objective could not be achieved without a modern higher education system in the national language. Only in this way could a dialogue with the great European nations be reached.

The achievement of Greater Romania at the end of the First World War also led to the development of the Romanian higher education



system. What Transylvania gave to Wallachia through Gheorghe Lazăr or August Treboniu Laurian, both trained at the Academic College in Cluj, was returned a century later, in 1919, as a duty of honour. It was the turn of the great intellectuals and teachers from Bucharest and Iași to support the organization of higher education in Romanian at the University of Cluj.

According to the Resolution of the Grand National Assembly from Alba Iulia of December 1, 1918, the Board of Directors had to deal with the takeover and organization on a modern basis of the University of Cluj. In March 1919, taking advantage of the favourable context created by the withdrawal of Hungarian troops on the demarcation line, important measures were taken for the organization of the university by Valeriu Braniste, the new head of the Cult and Public Instruction Resort within the Governing Council. Thus, on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1919, the Ministry of Public Instruction in Bucharest was notified of the initiative of the Directing Council to take over the University of Cluj starting with the academic year 1919-1920. It was expressed, at the same time, the intention to consult the Universities of Bucharest and Iași, for support and suggestions. Also, the Minister of Public Instruction from Bucharest was requested to mediate the secondment of qualified personnel from the Universities of Bucharest and Iași, to ensure the organization and development in the best conditions of the Romanian language teaching process at the University of Cluj. A university commission was formed, consisting of delegates of the Governing Council and representatives of the two universities in the Old Kingdom. The members of this commission were to examine, on the basis of a regulation, the candidates' files, and then to make proposals to the Governing Council. The response of the two Romanian Universities was prompt, both in Bucharest and in Iași sending renowned specialists to lay the foundations of Romanian higher education in Cluj (Pascu, 1972: 17-19).

In the University Commission, which was meant to reorganize the University of Cluj and to select the teaching staff, out of the 20 members, 12 were from the Universities of Bucharest and Iași, three for each field that was expected to be part of the institution. Thus, the teachers from Iași Dimitrie Gusti, Petru Poni, Em. Teodorescu, M. Cantacuzino or M. Manicatide together with those from Bucharest: G. Țițeica, Șt. Longinescu, Iulian Teodorescu, Ernest Juvara, Gh. Marinescu and the Transylvanians Vasile Goldiș, Ioan Lupaș, Onisifor Ghibu,

Alexandru Borza, Emil Hațieganu, P. Poruțiu, Iuliu Moldovan, Iuliu Hațieganu, under the coordination of Nicolae Iorga, analysed each file of those who applied for the positions opened for competition at the future departments of the University of Cluj. The proposals of the members of the Commission were sent to the Governing Council, which was responsible for appointing the teachers. The work of the members of the Commission was not easy at all, given that the University of Cluj had to be organized in a few months.

After completing the first stage, namely the selection of candidates, the organization of faculties, departments, laboratories and institutes was started. The professors from Iași stood out again, through their experience, leaving their mark on each of the four faculties that were being set up. Thus, the suggestions of the Iași academician Petru Poni (one of the pioneers of Romanian chemistry) along with those of Țițeica, Mrazec or Alexandru Borza had an important weight in the establishment of the Faculty of Sciences. Regarding the Faculty of Letters, the main role was undertaken by Vasile Pârvan, but also supported by Nicolae Iorga, along with Onisifor Ghibu, Ioan Lupaș and Dimitrie Gusti, the historian, sociologist and aesthetician from the University of Iași, who is considered the founder of Sociology in Romania. The Faculty of Law was structured on the ideas supported by Bucharest professors Cătuneanu and Răducanu and Iași law professors Iulian Teodorescu, rector of the University of Iași between 1919 and 1920, and Vasile Dimitriu, professor of commercial law at the same university, who became the first dean of the Faculty of Law in Cluj and the second rector of the Romanian university in Transylvania. The Faculty of Medicine was also organized through the experience of the doctors-professors Gheorghe Marinescu from the University of Bucharest, of the paediatrician M. Manicatide from the University of Iași, with the contribution of the Transylvanians Iuliu Moldovan and Iuliu Hațieganu.

In the organization of the Romanian University of Cluj, the Romanian legislation was taken into account, as well as the functioning of the two already existing universities, from Bucharest and Iași. In Cluj, four faculties were organized: Medicine, which had two departments - medicine and pharmacy; Law and State Sciences; Letters and Philosophy, with three sections - history philology, philosophy; Sciences, with five sections - mathematics physics, chemistry, natural

sciences, geography. Each faculty of the Cluj institution had its own structure, which incorporated the departments, institutes, but also the auxiliary units, generically called services and offices, among which were, among others, laboratories, museums, and research stations (Pascu, 1972: 21-22).

After a period of only five months of sustained activity of the commission and with a teaching staff selected under exceptional conditions, in a very short period, on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1919, the Romanian University of Cluj opened its doors. As its first rector, Sextil Pușcariu, remarked, *“at the beginning of the summer (the university) still had foreign institutions and no teachers, and in autumn it opened its doors wide to young people eager to learn”* (Celebrations, 1920). The impressive number of students, over 1800, entitled the same rector to announce, full of pride: *“We have opened and are operating four faculties”* (Pușcariu, 1983: 463), respectively: the Faculty of Medicine, the Faculty of Law and State Sciences, the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy and the Faculty of Science. Officially, however, the inauguration of the University took place later, respectively, between January 31<sup>st</sup> and February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1920.

In recognition of the efforts made for the organization of the higher education institution in Cluj, the renowned professor of the University of Bucharest, Vasile Pârvan, gave the inaugural lecture. It was also the first conference in Romanian held at the Napocense academic institution (Sălăgean, 2012: 130). The impact it had was exceptional, being considered both at the time and later a true ethical and deontological charter of the university profession. In fact, the professor appreciated the academic environment in Cluj, including materially supporting the new institution. He donated his salary and daily allowance to support the students. His donation was turned into a fund, used to reward students who wrote the best works in the field of Romanian history and ancient archaeology. In the opinion of some personalities who had taken the pulse of the beginning of the road of the Cluj institution, such as the historian Ioan Lupaș, Pârvan was considered *“the spiritual founder of the University of Cluj”* (Pușcaș, 2003: 129).

Together with the selected staff, the Commission decided to invite professors or famous researchers to teach courses or hold lectures and

to organize research institutes. Once again, the two sister universities in Iași and Bucharest sent professors of the highest academic standing. The contribution of these scientists, established as specialists at the University of the Old Kingdom, was essential in the organization and affirmation of the Cluj higher education institution.

Among the great school personalities in Cluj, who came from the University of Bucharest, whether they were already teachers or only its graduates, can be mentioned Gheorghe Bogdan-Duică, Florian Ștefănescu-Goangă, Alexandru Lapedatu, Nicolae Bănescu, Ion Popescu-Voitești, Nicolae Abramescu or Dimitrie Pompeiu.

A sign of the collaboration of the two Romanian higher education institutions, but also as an expression of gratitude for the support that the University of Bucharest granted to the University of Cluj, especially in its first years of existence, the only doctorate *honoris causa* awarded to a teacher from Romania by *Alma Mater Napocensis* was awarded to the professor from the Faculty of Medicine in Bucharest, Gheorghe Marinescu.

Among those invited to the Faculty of Letters was the historian **Ioan Ursu** (1875-1925), professor at the University of Iași. His mentors were Dimitrie Onciul and Nicolae Iorga, who noticed his intellectual potential and encouraged him to continue his studies abroad. Ioan Ursu obtained the title of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Berlin. In Cluj, he was full professor of Universal History and director of the Institute of Universal History. Originally from Transylvania, born in the Brașov area, he left the department at the University of Iași to settle in Cluj. Militant for the union of Transylvania with Romania, he had been a member of the National Council for the Unity of Romanians, based in Paris. He was actively involved in structuring Romanian education from the position of chairman of the Parliamentary Instruction Commission. In 1910 he became a corresponding member of the Romanian Academy (*Anuarul Universității din Cluj*, 1923).

The Faculty of Letters also benefited from the experience of a native of Iași, Professor **Vasile Bogrea** (1881-1926). Trained at the School of Letters and Philosophy of the University of Iași, he left in 1910 for Berlin to study classical philology and comparative linguistics, obtaining a doctorate in 1913. He was one of the lecturers of the University from Vălenii de Munte (organized in 1908 by Nicolae Iorga, as a form of national propaganda), and took part in ASTRA's actions, as

he resonated with the ideal of uniting all Romanians in one state. Thus, in 1919, when the University of Cluj needed him, he did not hesitate to answer affirmatively, becoming an adjunct professor and later full professor of the discipline of Classical Philology (Latin) within the Department of Classical Languages. He held the position of director of the Seminar of Classical Studies, he worked side-by-side with Sextil Pușcariu in establishing the Museum of the Romanian Language and the Ethnographic Society. In 1920 he became a corresponding member of the Romanian Academy. His untimely death, in 1926, at only 45 years old, stopped his exceptional professional ascension (Macrea, 1965: 249-260). In honour of the great professor, one of the amphitheatres of the University of Cluj, where entire generations of history students studied, was named after him.

The Faculty of Sciences was organized and consolidated through the activity of some teachers from Iași, who set up schools, in their fundamental meaning, in Cluj in the fields in which they worked. This is the case of **George (Gheorghe) Vâlsan** (1885-1935), the one who laid the foundations of the geographical education of Cluj. In 1919, he created the Institute of Geography within the University, thus giving birth to the Geographical School in Cluj. G. Vâlsan was considered, at the same time, the father of modern Romanian geography education (Bârsu et al., 2000: 332). A graduate of the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy in Bucharest, he further specialized in Berlin and Paris, being a scholarship holder of the *Romanian Society of Geography*. In 1915 he obtained the title of doctor, and a year later he began his activity as a university teacher in Iași, where he remained until 1919. There he taught physical geography, and in Cluj he was a full professor of general geography. He also founded, together with Emmanuel de Martonne and Romulus Vuia, the Ethnographic Museum of Transylvania, where an open-air section was organized. His name is also linked to the founding in Cluj, in 1923, of the *Romanian Ethnographic Society*, of which he was president until 1927. George Vâlsan was the one who introduced the ethno-geography course at the University of Cluj. In 1930, he left Cluj to work at the University of Bucharest. Member of various international geographic societies, in 1919 he became a corresponding member of the Romanian Academy, and in 1920 a full member (Predescu, 1999: 882).

The School of Chemistry in Cluj also owes a lot to the University of Iași and especially to Professor **Petru Poni**, the founder of the Romanian School of Chemistry, who formed the team at the Department of Chemistry of the beginnings of the Romanian Transylvanian University. He managed to convince **Gheorghe Spacu** (1883-1955), who was one of his most brilliant students, to come to Cluj. Spacu came from Iași, from the position of associate professor to the position of associate professor, and in 1922 he became a full professor of analytical and inorganic chemistry at the Faculty of Sciences of the University of Cluj (Cluj County Service of National Archives, *Ferdinand University* fund). He held the positions of vice dean of this faculty in the academic year 1923/1924, dean the following year, and in 1925/1926 he led the University from the position of rector. Extremely disciplined and rigorous, demanding with his students, he has the merit of laying the foundations of a real “nursery” of young chemists at the University, a real school of chemistry that will stand with dignity next to the one in Bucharest or Iași, standing out through prodigious scientific activity. Representative names for the field of chemistry were formed here, future academics who carried on the fame of the Cluj school of chemistry and of Professor Gh. Spacu (Marcovici & Munteanu, 1982:26). The most famous of them was that of Raluca Ripan, the first woman dean, the first woman rector of a university in Romania and the first Romanian academician, who was in fact the successor of Professor Spacu's work in Cluj, after he moved to Bucharest. The professor saw in his doctoral student the same work force and the same dedication for the profession that he had, which determined him to request her transfer in 1920 from Iași, to the position of head of works. Raluca Ripan defended her doctorate in Cluj, in 1922, becoming the first Romanian doctor woman in chemical sciences (SJCAN, *Ferdinand University* fund). In 1931, as a lecturer, she took over the master class in general chemistry from Professor Ostrogovich.

Raluca Ripan went, together with the entire educational institution in Cluj, through the difficult educational moments of the refuge between 1940 and 1945, when she had to move to Timișoara so that the faculty could continue its activity. In 1945, after returning to Cluj, she played an important role in restoring everything that the Cluj school of chemistry meant (Coman & Copaciu, 2017: 13).

The founding of the University of Upper Dacia in Cluj was thus the result of an admirable solidarity around the same Romanian university project in the heart of Transylvania, around which prestigious names from the universities of old Romania, Bucharest and Iași, rallied. In this way, Romanian language education was institutionalized at the University of Cluj and the foundations were laid for an academic centre that will prove its strength and viability over time, establishing itself as an important player on the national and international academic scene.

The establishment of the Romanian university in Cluj was an event of the greatest importance for the intra-Carpathian province united with the Country. Within it, we managed to co-opt the best researchers, professors, first-rate specialists, national and international reference names.

Thus, Romanian language education was institutionalized in Cluj and the foundations were laid for an academic centre that would prove its strength and viability over time. In fact, the University of Cluj has established itself over time both at a national and international level as a successful institution.

## References

- Anuarul Universității din Cluj pe anul universitar 1921-1922*, (1923), Cluj: Institutul de Arte Grafice "Ardealul".
- Balaci Alexandru, Ionașcu Ion, Ion Angela, Halanay A., Bălan I.D., Nedelea I. (1964), *Universitatea din București 1864-1964*, București: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică.
- Bârsu Cristian, Bob Ion, Brudașcu Dan, Iancu Tiberiu (2000), *Clujeni ai secolului 20 – dicționar esențial*, Cluj-Napoca: Casa Cărții de Știință.
- Berciu-Drăghicescu Adina, Bozgan Ovidiu (2004), *O istorie a Universității din București 1864-2004*, București: Editura Universității din București.
- Coman Virginia, Copaciu Florina (2017), "In memoriam, Academician Profesor Doctor Raluca Ripan – O viață dedicată științei", în *Buletinul Societății de Chimie din România*, XXIV, 1, București.
- Costea Ionuț (2012), "Învățământul academic la Cluj în secolul al XVIII-lea", în *Istoria Universității "Babeș-Bolyai"*, coord. Ovidiu Ghitta, Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 43-57.
- Csucsja István (2012) (in collaboration with Sigmirean Cornel), "Universitatea «Ferenc József» între anii 1872-1919", în *Istoria Universității "Babeș-Bolyai"*, coord. Ovidiu Ghitta, Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 69-126.
- Iacob Gheorghe (2013), *Universitatea din Iași 150 ani*, Iași: Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza".
- Macrea D. (1965), "Un mare umanist român: V. Bogrea", *Cercetări de lingvistică*, X, 2, Cluj.
- Marcovici Const. Gh., Munteanu Georgeta (1982), *Raluca Ripan*, București: Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică.
- Pascu Ștefan (1972), *Universitatea "Babeș-Bolyai" din Cluj*, Cluj: Dacia.
- Pop Ioan-Aurel (2012), "Începuturile: Colegiul Iezuit din 1579-1581", în *Istoria Universității "Babeș-Bolyai"*, coord. Ovidiu Ghitta, Cluj-Napoca: Mega, 15-29.
- Predescu Lucian (1999), *Enciclopedia României: Cugetarea: material românesc: oameni și înfăptuiri*, București: Editura Saeculum – Vestalia.
- Pușcariu Sextil (1978), *Memorii*, ed. Magdalena Vulpe, București: Minerva.



- Pușcariu Sextil (1920), "Discursul D-lui Sextil Pușcariu, Rectorul Universității", *Serbările pentru inaugurarea Universității din Cluj 31 ianuarie-2 februarie 1920*, București.
- Pușcaș Vasile (1988), "Universitatea din Cluj în serviciul națiunii (1919-1940, Cluj-Sibiu 1940-1944)", *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie și Arheologie "A. D. Xenopol"*, XXV/2, Iași.
- Pușcaș Vasile (2003), *Universitate – Societate – Modernizare*, Cluj-Napoca: Eikon.
- Sălăgean Marcela (2012) (in collaboration with Ana-Maria Stan, Emilia Cismaș, Szilárd Tóth), *Istoria Universității "Babeș-Bolyai"*, Ovidiu Ghitta (ed.), Cluj-Napoca: Mega.
- Serviciul Județean Cluj al Arhivelor Naționale (SJCAN), fond *Universitatea Ferdinand*, Dosare de cadre, *Gheorghe Spacu*, f. 3; *Raluca Ripan*, f. 18.
- Sigmirean Cornel (2000), *Istoria formării intelectualității românești din Transilvania și Banat în Epoca Modernă*, Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană.

# ***International University Networks and Academic Mobility in Political Context: Six decades of cooperation between “Babeş-Bolyai” University in Cluj-Napoca and the University of Geneva (1919-1979)***

**Florin Nicolae Ardelean**

*The Archive of Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania*

*Email: florin.ardelena@ubbcluj.ro*

**Abstract:** The aim of this paper is to analyse academic mobility and other forms of scientific cooperation against a larger political background. The relations between “Babeş-Bolyai” University in Cluj-Napoca and the University of Geneva, between 1919 and 1979, were marked by radical political changes. The shifting international context had a particularly great impact on the Romanian institution, which made a difficult transition from a democratic to a totalitarian regime after World War II.

In the first part of the paper, we identified contacts between the Romanian University in Cluj and the Swiss academic community during the interwar period (1919-1939). It was a favourable period for international scientific collaboration, when a “tradition” of cooperation between the universities of Cluj and Geneva was born. The second part of the paper is focused on the various forms of cooperation between the two institutions in the following decades (1939-1979), with a special emphasis on academic mobility. A significant moment was the signing of a cooperation convention in 1971. The information provided by official documents issued by the two universities during the following years reveals the numerous obstacles they faced in their efforts to implement the provisions of the convention.

**Keywords:** “Babeş-Bolyai” University, University of Geneva, university networks, academic mobility, higher education, communism

## ***Introduction***

Academic mobility, in its various forms of manifestation, is an important aspect in many fields of research, including the history of higher education. It is generally perceived as a socio-professional process connected to scientific networking, collaboration and internationalization of research and education. Today, mobility is a dominant aspect of academic life, but the roots of this phenomenon are very old (Welch, 2008). Throughout my research I have addressed the concept of “academic mobility” in a wider sense, which includes not only permanent or long term relocation of scholars, but also medium and short term direct contacts with foreign institutions. International conferences, invited lectures, research grants and scholarships awarded by foreign institutions can be considered types of “scholarly mobility”.

Communication in science is transactional, and is achieved through interactions, be them personalized (face-to face) or depersonalized (indirect) (Oleinik, 2014). Academic travels were, and still are, the best way of expanding scientific networks based on personalized interactions. Both types of interactions have increased over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with a significant intensification after World War I. In the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the expansion of scientific networks reached an unprecedented level. Cooperation between universities and research institutes overcame geographical, political and cultural boundaries, leading to the formation of international research teams and generating thus a transition from “little science” to “big science” (Beaver, 2001).

Scientific ideas, as well as research and education methods, are influenced by the social environment in which they take shape. Knowledge is generated and validated within large intellectual communities, which have been labelled as “invisible colleges” (Crane, 1972). In addition, these webs of communication have always been influenced by the political context. The state of international relations has always impacted scientific cooperation and transnational academic mobility (Kim, 2009). This is also the main premise of this study.

***The Romanian University of Cluj and its Contacts with the  
Swiss Academic Community between the two World Wars  
(1919-1939)***

During the interwar period, the University of Cluj started building a network of international cooperation that expanded all over Europe and beyond. The construction of this institutional network was based on the intricate webs of personal connections developed by the founding professors, before World War I. The Romanian intellectual elite had strong ties with the French academic community, thus the first international contacts of the University of Cluj were established with institutions from this country. The overwhelming influence of the French academic world is demonstrated by the significant number of French professors who worked at the University of Cluj, especially during the first decades of its existence. Short term academic travels were also dominated by the French professors. Between 1926 and 1935, 91 foreign specialists delivered lectures in Cluj, with more than half of them (47) representing French institutions. Among the other 44 lecturers, five came from Switzerland (Sergescu, 1937).

The Swiss professors who travelled to Cluj during this period (1925-1935) were: Karl Jaberg, a linguist from the University of Bern; Eugène Pittard, a famous anthropologist, founder of the Ethnographic Museum at the University of Geneva; Edouard Chapuisat, an economist from the University of Geneva (AUC, 1924-1925); William Rappard, the director of the Institute of High International Studies in Geneva (AUC, 1930-1931) and Hans W. Hartman, professor and journalist at the "Neue Züricher Zeitung", who held a conference on the medieval fortifications in Switzerland (AUC, 1934-1935). One year later, in 1936, Professor Rolin Wavre, a mathematician from the University of Geneva, held a conference at the Faculty of Sciences of the University in Cluj (AUC, 1936-1937). Four of the six Swiss professors, who travelled to Cluj during the interwar period, came from Geneva.

Pierre A. Chappuis, a Swiss biologist educated at the University of Bern, was one of the close collaborators of Emil Racoviță. He had a significant contribution to the organization of the Speleology Institute in Cluj. From 1922 to 1940, Chappuis was also a professor at the University of Cluj (Breazu, 2019; AUC, 1934-1935).

The academic mobility from Cluj to Switzerland was more intense, and it involved a larger range of situations. The most important group of academics who created connections between the two communities was represented by the Romanians who studied in Switzerland and later became professors at the University in Cluj. Ioan Grințescu, professor of botany in Cluj, obtained a diploma in pharmacy at the University of Geneva in 1898 and continued his studies at the same university until 1903. He was also a member of the Helvetic Society for Natural Sciences (AUC, 1934-1935). Gheorghe Pamfil, professor of technical and pharmaceutical chemistry, obtained his PhD at the University of Geneva in 1911. During the following two years, he continued his work at the Swiss University (AUC, 1929-1930). Gheorghe Sofronie, professor of international law, studied in Geneva, as a fellow of the Rockefeller Foundation. In the following years he published several articles on international law in the *Revue de Droit International*, edited at the University of Geneva (AUC, 1935-1936). Radu Bădescu, from the Faculty of Sciences in Cluj, obtained a title of doctor in mathematics at the University in Geneva (AUC, 1938-1939). In addition, a few other professors from Cluj, were elected members of Swiss Scientific Societies: Gheorghe Spacu (World Academy of Sciences, Geneva) (AUC, 1931-1932), Constantin Urechia (Swiss Society of Neurology and Psychiatry) (AUC 1934-1935) and Gheorghe Popoviciu (International Association of Preventive Paediatrics, Geneva) (AUC, 1937-1938).

Scholarly traveling towards Geneva was encouraged by the fact that this city was the headquarters of the League of Nations. Many scientific and cultural events were initiated by this intergovernmental organization that attracted scholars from around the world. International conferences were a good opportunity to establish connections abroad but, because of financial difficulties, only a small percentage of the teaching staff at the University in Cluj was able to benefit from such a professional experience. Coriolan Petranu, professor of art history in Cluj, attended the XIV International Congress of Art History in Switzerland, in 1936. On this occasion he became a collaborator of two prestigious Swiss reviews, *Die Neue Pallas* and *Nachrichtenblätter für Kunst und Archäologie*, both edited in Geneva (AUC, 1937-1938). In 1937, Mihail Zolog, represented the Hygiene Institute from Cluj at the Conference of the Directors of Hygiene Institutes from Europe, organized by the League of Nations (AUC, 1937-

1938). The Faculty of Medicine was represented by Gheorghe Popoviciu at the International Congress for the pedagogy of children with special educational needs. During the same year he attended another international event, organized by the League of Nations in Geneva, on the topic of rural life (AUC, 1938-1939). Ioachim Crăciun, history professor and librarian, attended The XV International Congress on Scientific Documentation in Zürich, in 1939. On this occasion he also performed work visits to some of the largest Swiss libraries in Zürich, Bern and the Library of the League of Nations in Geneva (AUC, 1938-1939).

Exchange of publications between university libraries was another important strategy of international scientific cooperation in the interwar period. It was the most efficient way of transferring knowledge between centres of research and education around the world. For a young institution of higher education, such as the University of Cluj, book donations and exchanges were extremely important. Between 1925 and 1935, a significant amount of foreign scientific literature was received by the University library in Cluj: 18.203 volumes were sent from France, 4.747 from Germany, 748 from Switzerland and 341 from the United States of America (Sergescu, 1937). *Mathematica*, a review edited by a collective from the Faculty of Sciences, was exchanged with similar publications from all over Europe and America. Issues of this publication were regularly sent to the University of Geneva and, in exchange, issues of the *Archives des Sciences Physiques et Naturelles* were sent to Cluj (AUC, 1936-1937).

The Botanical Garden and Museum of the university were very well connected on an international level. In a few years the teaching staff and researchers of these departments were able to build a vast network of cooperation that included many European and North-American institutions. In Switzerland, good relations were established with the Botanical Museum in Geneva, the *Botanical Museum A. Guyot* in Basel and the *Conservatoire Botanique de la Ville de Genève* (AUC, 1935-1936). Although World War II had already begun, Alexandru Borza, the director of the Botanical Garden in Cluj, travelled to Geneva where he held lectures at the University and the Botanical Society (AUC, 1940-1941).

All the above mentioned examples indicate strong connections between the Romanian University of Cluj and similar Swiss institutions during the decades that separated the two World Wars. A tradition of cooperation was built especially with the University of Geneva.

Academic mobility and exchange of publications were the most important ways of building connections between the two centres of research and education.

### ***Relations between the Universities of Cluj and Geneva from World War II until the Signing of the Cooperation Agreement in 1971***

The end of World War II brought significant political changes in Romania. The communist regime had a profound impact on all aspects of life. Universities lost their traditional freedom and scientific research was strictly controlled by central authorities. The political division symbolized by the “iron curtain” was also felt in the field of academic cooperation. Contacts with universities and research institutes from the so called “capitalist countries” were drastically reduced.

The situation began to change during the 1960s. Romania made efforts to rebuild its diplomatic and economic relations with western European countries. In 1962, Switzerland was the first country, outside the “Soviet Bloc”, where the new Romanian regime organized an embassy. Relations between the two states improved constantly over the following years. An important milestone was reached in 1969 when the Swiss federal councillor, Willy Spühler, visited Romania. Scientific and cultural cooperation between the two countries was an important issue discussed during the official meetings (Chinez, 2011).

Between 1965 and 1971, the communist regime in Romania went through a phase of so called “liberalization”. Political relations with non-communist states were significantly improved and, as a consequence, academic contacts with democratic countries were re-established. However, academic mobility was limited and strictly controlled. Communist authorities recognized, in principle, the importance of international scientific cooperation and its impact on national education, research and economic development. Cultural and scientific agreements between Romanian and foreign institutions were accepted but under the strict supervision of central authorities. It was estimated that during 1960-1965, 900 Romanian specialists benefited from professional experience abroad, of which 437 were higher education teaching staff and researchers of the Romanian Academy, and the rest

were employed in the industrial sector. Certain fields of research with direct applicability (physics, electronics, geophysics, economy) were favoured because industry was considered a national priority (Berindei, Dobrinu, Goşu, 2012, doc. 18).

International mobility improved significantly over the following years. This situation was reflected, for example, by the increased number of Romanian scholars who applied for Humboldt Fellowship Programs (Jöns, 2003). During the academic year 1965-1966, 683 Romanian specialists travelled abroad: 167 benefited from scholarships awarded by international organizations (UN and UNESCO), 130 were involved in exchange programs between research institutions (including universities) and the rest (386) represented the industrial sector. Although economic activities were still a priority, it is relevant to note that most travels, including the academic ones, were directed towards “capitalist countries” (83.1%). For the following year, professional travels abroad were planned, once again, according to the needs of the economy: 40% technical sciences, 14% mathematics and physics, 13% medicine and biology, 12% agriculture, 12% humanities and social sciences and 3% arts and culture (Berindei, Dobrinu, Goşu, 2012, doc. 38).

Rigid planning, a dominant feature of the communist regime in Romania, was also affecting the fields of research and higher education alike. Nevertheless, the political context improved considerably and Romanian universities were able to rebuild and to expand their international networks of cooperation. Between 1965 and 1972, “Babeş-Bolyai” University signed cooperation agreements with several foreign universities: Strasbourg (France), Freiburg (German Federal Republic), Sarajevo (Yugoslavia), Zagreb (Yugoslavia), Teheran (Iran), Cracow (Poland), Geneva (Switzerland), Valparaiso (Chile), Brno (Czechoslovakia), Colorado (USA) and Pécs (Hungary) (Vese, 2012).

### **1971-1979**

A long tradition of cooperation and a favourable political context led to the signing of an official agreement between “Babeş-Bolyai” University in Cluj and the University of Geneva on 27<sup>th</sup> May 1971. More than five decades of relations between the two institutions and the



willingness of the communist regime in Romania to consolidate political, economic and cultural ties with countries beyond the “iron curtain” completely justified such an act. However, during the same year, Nicolae Ceaușescu returned from his visits to North Korea and China, and the political situation in Romania was about to change. Inspired by his Asian comrades, Ceaușescu decided to implement a “cultural revolution” based on the revival of Marxist-Leninist education, reduction of foreign influence and an increased ideological control over cultural and scientific activities (Cătănuș, 2005).

This new political situation had a strong impact on the implementation of the cooperation agreement between the two universities. The convention consisted of five articles referring to: exchange of scientific material and publications and a regular exchange of teaching staff. Two types of mobility were specifically mentioned: short term mobility – consisting of a two weeks stay at the guest university for one or two specialists every year, and long term mobility – consisting of a yearly exchange of one or two specialists who were expected to spend one whole academic year at the guest university (AUBB, Rector’s Office, box 2, file 2, f. 1-3).

Both partners made constant efforts to respect the provisions of the convention but the Romanian communist authorities raised many obstacles in their way. The first years were the most difficult. The regular exchange of research and teaching staff was almost completely obstructed. According to official documents, one exception was made in 1973, when a member of the Physics department from Cluj spent 10 months at the University of Geneva (AUBB, Rector’s Office, box 1, file 5, f. 250).

In 1974, during a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Romanian Communist Party, the subject of travels abroad for academic purpose was discussed. A radical change of attitude among authorities is revealed by the official report issued on this occasion. The scholarships offered by the Swiss state are specifically mentioned, but Ceaușescu himself insisted that he should have the final call on which were the fields of research who would benefit from this exchanges and the persons selected for the exchange programs. Social sciences were excluded from all forms of external contacts with foreign countries, regardless of their political orientation, and priority was given to

technology, medicine and biology (Berindei, Dobrinu, Goşu, 2016, doc. 36).

The situation began to change in 1976 due to repeated pleas sent by representatives of the University of Geneva. They were expressing a genuine interest in their cooperation with the Romanian university, and their partners from Cluj-Napoca (in 1974 the official name of the city changed from Cluj to Cluj-Napoca), were also very eager to resume their contacts with the Swiss institution. Ion Vlad, Rector of "Babeş-Bolyai" University at the time, made constant efforts to convince the Ministry of Education that cooperation with Geneva would be of great benefit for his institution. He invoked the convention signed in 1971, an act that was sanctioned by the Romanian government at the time, and made a short overview of the few achievements made during this period: one long term mobility in 1973 and a discontinuous exchange of correspondence and publications (AUBB, Rector's office, box 1, file 5, f. 250).

André Hurst, professor from the Faculty of Letters in Geneva and renowned specialist in Mycenaean civilization, visited Cluj-Napoca during the autumn of 1976. On this occasion he held several lectures at "Babeş-Bolyai" University and at the University of Bucharest. During the same year, Professor Hadrian Daicoviciu, travelled to Switzerland and held lectures in Geneva, Fribourg and Lausanne. Two other members of the Faculty of Letters from Cluj-Napoca travelled to Geneva in 1976, in response to an invitation sent by George Steiner, the famous writer and linguist, who was teaching at the University of Geneva since 1974 (AUBB, Rector's office, box 1, file 5, f. 247-249).

Erwin Parthe, director of the Laboratory of X Ray Crystallography, from the University of Geneva, travelled to Cluj-Napoca in late March 1977. His lectures were attended by many Romanian specialists in Cluj-Napoca and in Bucharest. He was also entrusted with the task of offering a one year scholarship at the University of Geneva and a substantial material contribution for the Faculty of Chemistry in Bucharest (AUBB, Rector's office, box 1, file 5, f. 217, 218, 244).

On 4<sup>th</sup> March 1977, Romania was struck by a devastating earthquake. The Rector of "Babeş-Bolyai" University informed his Swiss colleague about this tragic event and asked for help in rebuilding the lost scientific patrimony (AUBB, Rector's office, box 1, file 5, f. 169). Justin Thorens, the Rector of the University of Geneva responded with

solidarity, but only one year later was he able to send a large book donation to Cluj-Napoca, consisting of 1.501 volumes (AUBB, Rector's office, box 1, file 5, f. 169).

In 1978 "Babeş-Bolyai" University received another guest from Geneva. Peter Martin was the former Rector of the Swiss university who signed the convention in 1971. His return to Cluj-Napoca, after seven years, was meant to symbolize a renewal of contacts between the two institutions. During discussions with his Romanian colleagues, Peter Martin noticed that Physics and History were the two domains which benefited most from the cooperation between the two universities. He also expressed his disappointment with the inability of the Romanian institution to respect the provisions of the convention (AUBB, Rector's office, box1, file 5, f. 145-150).

This official visit produced a certain effect and, during the same year, mobility between the two universities reached an unprecedented level. The administration of the university in Cluj-Napoca initiated formalities for sending two young specialists to Geneva for one year, but central authorities were hesitant and delayed their final decision. Six students from the Faculty of Letters in Geneva travelled to Cluj-Napoca and, under the supervisor of Professor Hadrian Daicoviciu, participated in archaeological excavations at Sarmizegetusa Regia and Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa (AUBB, Rector's office, box1, file, f. 85). Vladimir Hanga, honorary dean of the Law Faculty in Cluj-Napoca, travelled to Geneva as member of the International Committee for Human Rights. On this occasion he also visited the University of Geneva and held a lecture entitled: *Actualité du droit romain* (AUBB, Rector's office, box 1, file 5, f. 65). Invited by the Association of Swiss-Romanian Friendship, Hadrian Daicoviciu was in Geneva on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 1978. He held a lecture entitled: *Le double nom des Daco-Gétes*, during an event dedicated to the celebration of 60 years from the Great Union of Romania (AUBB, Rector's office, box 1, file 5, f. 64).

The progressive trend was maintained in 1979, when four professors from Geneva visited "Babeş-Bolyai" University. Lucien Dällenbach, dean of the Faculty of Letters at the University of Geneva, arrived in Cluj-Napoca on the 28 May and stayed until the 1<sup>st</sup> of June. During his short stay he was involved in several activities with the Faculty of Philology, especially with the Department of French Language

and Literature, where he held a lecture on the works of Honoré de Balzac. He also had a meeting with the Romanian literary critic, Adrian Marino (AUBB, Rector's office, box 1, file 5, f. 28). Other professors from Geneva who came to Cluj-Napoca during this year were: Ivo Rens (historian and jurist), Alberto Munari (psychologist) and Michelangelo Flückiger (psychologist) (AUBB, Rector's office, box 1, file 5, f. 26).

In the official correspondence between the two universities in 1979, André Hurst is mentioned as head of a Commission for the cooperation with "Babeş-Bolyai" University. He was entrusted with the coordination of all activities established in the convention signed in 1971, a document that was recognised by the Swiss federal authorities. This was yet another indication that the University of Geneva was investing a significant amount of time and resources in developing its relations with its Romanian partner institution (AUBB, Rector's office, box 1, file 5, f. 3).

The repeated visits of Swiss scholars to Cluj-Napoca and the regular requests sent by the Rector of the "Babeş-Bolyai" University determined the authorities from Bucharest to accept, in principle, the cooperation between the two institutions. On 29<sup>th</sup> July, the *Office for External Relations and Foreign Students* from the Ministry of Education approved a mobility of 3 months for two specialists from the university in Cluj-Napoca to Geneva. A larger delegation, representing the leadership of "Babeş-Bolyai" University, was allowed to travel for 5 days to Geneva. A similar approval, for ten days, was given to a group of ten members of the teaching staff representing various faculties (AUBB, Rector's office, box 2, file 1, f. 13).

Cooperation between the universities in Cluj-Napoca and Geneva, during the period 1976-1979, reached an unprecedented level of intensity in spite of the unfavourable political context. It is an example which shows the limits of political influence on academic cooperation. For Romanian universities, the ability to maintain and develop contacts with foreign institutions was a symbolic survival of academic freedom.

## ***Conclusion***

In the first six decades of cooperation between the universities of Cluj and Geneva, two main periods are distinguishable: the interwar period and the post-war period, marked by the communist regime. The communist period lacks homogeneity and several distinct phases can be identified within this larger time frame, until 1979. The communist leadership made constant efforts to control education and research, as they did with all aspects of social life. A radical reform of the education was implemented in Romania in 1948. Universities lost their traditional autonomy and a system of censorship and control was implemented in all education and research institutions. However, communist authorities were unable, and sometimes unwilling, to interrupt all contacts with the scientific communities from the “capitalist countries”. Under strict supervision by central and local political authorities, “Babeş-Bolyai” University in Cluj-Napoca was allowed to maintain and to expand its network of cooperation with foreign institutions around the world, regardless of their political orientation. This evolution was particularly strong during the so called “liberalization phase” (1965-1971). The attempt of communist authorities to implement the “cultural revolution” of 1971 was met with resistance by the academic community. Although the political context was becoming increasingly unfavourable, “Babeş-Bolyai” University insisted on keeping and developing its international contacts, including the one with the University of Geneva. The determination of the Swiss partners to honour the provisions established by the convention signed in 1971 was also crucial in maintaining this contact. This particular case of cooperation between universities shows that there was an undeniable influence of domestic and international politics on academic cooperation, but there was also a tendency of higher education institutions to overcome the limitations imposed by these external factors.

## References

- Anuarul Universității "Regele Ferdinand I", 1919-1942 [The Yearly Book of the "King Ferdinand I" University], (1919-1942), Cluj: Institutul de Arte Grafice Ardealul.*
- Arhiva Universității „Babeș-Bolyai” [Archive of “Babeș-Bolyai” University], Fond Rector’s Office, International Cooperation, box 1-2.*
- Beaver Donald DeB. (2001), “Reflections on scientific collaboration (and its study): past, present, and future”, *Scientometrics*, Vol. 52, No. 3 (2001), 365-377.
- Berindei Mihnea, Dobrinu Dorin, Goșu Armand (eds) (2012), *Istoria comunismului din România [The History of Communism in Romania]*, volume II (Documents. Nicolae Ceaușescu 1965-1971). Iași: Polirom.
- Berindei Mihnea, Dobrinu Dorin, Goșu Armand (eds) (2016), *Istoria comunismului din România, [The History of Communism in Romania]*, volume III (Documents. Nicolae Ceaușescu 1972-1975), Iași: Polirom.
- Breazu Ion (2019). *Universitatea Românească “Regele Ferdinand I” din Cluj [The Romanian University “King Ferdinand I” of Cluj]*, edition curated and introductive study by Vasile Pușcaș, Cluj-Napoca: Editura Școala Ardeleană.
- Cătănuș Ana-Maria (editor) (2005), *Sfârșitul perioadei liberale a regimului Ceaușescu: Minirevoluția culturală din 1971 [The end of the liberal period of the Ceaușescu regime and the cultural revolution of 1971]*, București: Institutul Național pentru Studiul Totalitarismului.
- Chineză Claudia (2011), *Relațiile dintre România și Elveția: abordări diplomatice, economice și culturale [Relations between Romania and Switzerland: diplomatic, economic and cultural aproches]*, București.
- Crane Diana (1972), *Invisible colleges: Diffusion of Knowledge in Scientific Communities*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Heike Jöns (2003), “Geographies of international scientific exchange in their political context: The case of visiting scholars to Germany in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century”, in *Frontiers of Geography*,

- Nemes Nagy, J. and Jakobi, Á. (eds), Budapest: Department of Regional Geography, Eötvös Loránd University, 227-247.
- Kim Terri (2009), "Shifting patterns of transnational academic mobility: a comparative and historical approach", *Comparative Education*, Vol. 45, No. 3, August (2009), 387-403.
- Oleinik Anton N. (2014), *Knowledge and networking: on communication in the social sciences*, New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 19-37.
- Sergescu, Petre (1937). "Les relations franco-roumains a l'université de Cluj", *Revue de Transylvanie*, Tom III, no. 3: 313.
- Vese Vasile (2012), "Universitatea „Babeş-Bolyai” în perioada regimului comunist, 1959-1989" ["Babeş-Bolyai" University during the communist regime, 1959-1989], in *Istoria Universităţii "Babeş-Bolyai" [History of "Babeş-Bolyai" University]*, Ovidiu Ghitta (ed.), Cluj-Napoca: Editura Mega, 261-267.
- Welch Anthony (2008), "Myths and modes of mobility: The Changing Face of Academic Mobility in the Global Era", in *Students, Staff and Academic Mobility in Higher Education*, Mike Byram, Fred Dervin (eds), Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 292-311.

# ***Perspectives of Romanian Students about Life in Social Isolation***

**Bogdan Nadolu**

*Associate Professor, West University of Timișoara, Romania*

*Email: bogdan.nadolu@e-uvv.ro*

**Abstract:** The global crisis of COVID-19 represents, because of the measures adopted, an unprecedented social natural experiment. All over the globe, a common rule was to impose measures of social isolation at home, with a very limited and restricted possibility to go outside. The daily routine was massively changed for all the people that were not considered essential workers. A significant part of economic activities were shut down, others were moved to the online environment. Education was a privileged domain that was able to easily take the step towards distance learning. But how did the students receive the new challenges? How did they reconfigure their new lifestyle in insolation? Trying to get an answer to these questions, we designed and applied two sociological studies. First, at the beginning of the pandemic crisis (15 March - 30 April) we conducted a qualitative interview of the life-story type ( $N_1=50$ ), followed up by a quantitative survey ( $N_2=518$ ) in the last days of the state of emergency in Romania ( $N_2=518$ ). The combined and compared results from both studies reflect very complex and interesting new configurations of the daily life style of students.

**Keywords:** social isolation, students, daily life pattern, Covid19, higher education.



## ***Introduction***

Due to its unprecedented magnitude, the forced social isolation imposed by the national emergency rules in the middle of March 2020 in order to avoid the community spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus represent a topic that will generate plenty of further research and theoretical interpretation. In Romania, the state of emergency was declared on 16<sup>th</sup> of March 2020 and it remained in force until 15<sup>th</sup> of May 2020, with a strict limitation of the possibilities to go outside of one's home, including a filled in self-assumed declaration (a new one for each trip outside) with included several reasons and mostly allowed one to go out only around their residential address.

From the perspective of the classical sociological theory, this issue can be approached at least from point of view of the paradigms of social control, public opinion theories, socialisation and Maslow's needs paradigm. The social isolation is generally a phenomenon related mostly with elderly people and usually represents a cause for deep trauma and health troubles (De Jong Gierveld & Havens, 2004, Nicholson 2012, Coyle & Dugan 2012, Steptoe et.al, 2013). A large series of studies prove that the social isolation and loneliness are directly related with depression and other psychological problems (Weiss, 1973, Hall-Lande et.al, 2007, Cacioppo&Cacioppo 2014). During the COVID-19 pandemic, a large part of population went into isolation together with family members or with friends, so the problem was not strictly related to the loneliness, but to the avoiding the social contacts with other people. In other words, a large amount of healthy people were forced to go into social isolation, quitting a normal lifestyle and thus this was surely a challenge, and not an easy one to take. Starting from a continuous source of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957) because of contradictory messages provided by the mass-media, the generation of a social phobia (or social anxiety disorder) remains only one step away (Clark, Wells, 1995). The two months spent at home, with very restrictive and minimal possibilities to go outside (usually weekly or more rarely) was not an easy period.

## ***Methodology***

Starting from the European Sociological Association initiative for a special issue of the *European Sociologist Journal* to collect contributions related to this crisis under the general topic *Pandemic (Im)Possibilities*, we decided to try a similar exercise with students, about their life. Trying to collect high valuable content, the call for this research was not related to the teaching activity, and thus involved only contributors with an intrinsic motivation, of those who wanted to share their feelings related to their lifestyle during the social isolation period. The main research question for this research was: *how did the students go through the pandemic crisis and what were they feeling about it?* For this we designed two studies, a qualitative one, based on a single question interview and a quantitative one, as a sociological online survey (Ilut, 1997, Gadamer 2006).

The qualitative interview included only one question: *What do you do during a day of social isolation?* These stories covered a period of time of one month and half, from the middle of March until the end of April 2020. The contributors were students from various specialisations: sociology, human resources, economical studies, architecture, psychology, arts and so on. The answers were analysed using the social hermeneutical techniques (Codoban, 2001) through which we identified 11 different themes. This hermeneutical analysis and the full stories offered by the students are available in the volume *Student during a pandemic. 50 stories about life in social isolation* that was published as an e-book, at Cluj University Press.

The sociological survey was applied online in the last three days of the state of emergency in Romania, 12<sup>th</sup> -14<sup>th</sup> of May, 2020. The main research question was: *how did the students go through the pandemic crisis and what are they feeling about it?* For this aim, we elaborated an online questionnaire using Google Forms with 10 items and we randomly promoted it online on various groups (on Classrooms and Facebook). We collected 518 answers, coming from students from various Romanian institutions (not limited to West University of Timisoara). The approach for selecting the subjects does not allow the

postulation of the representativeness of the results, so it is just a sample of availability. The subjects were informed about the purpose of the study and they offered their consent for filling in the questionnaire. The data were anonymously analysed and the confidentiality of each person was fully respected. For this paper we analysed only three items related by the daily life style during the social isolation imposed by the COVID-19 crisis: Q2 *Compared to the pre-crisis period, how much have you changed your lifestyle?* Q5. *What new activity/thing did you do during this period of isolation?* and Q9. *If such a situation of social isolation were to be repeated, what would you do differently?*

## Results

The hermeneutical analysis of these stories reflects several common topics that define the new profile of the daily life during this period. In what follows we italicized the hermeneutical interpretation of the students' papers (Nadolu, D. 2020, 8-16):

**“(I). the abandoned rituals:** *Hand shakes. Remembering a normal day. Far away from the city and from the office. The avoiding of hugging. Dreaming of the stuff being missed. The waking up in the morning.”*

One of the most frequent topic was related to various activities and habits that were suddenly cancelled due to the national rules for reducing the spread of the virus into the community. The *normality* defined by plenty of common gestures and habits was significantly changed during several days and this was a difficult adaptation.

**“(II). New feelings, the rediscovery of the emotion:** *We learn what longing means. Panic and compassion. Rediscoveries. Literal emotions. Hiding in myself. I want to cry. Experiencing emotions. Too sad. The isolation from my mind.”*

The completely new experience of social isolation has generated plenty of emotional tensions, mostly with a negative orientation due to the health risks of the situation and due to an unpredictable evolution. Under a large wave with negative news, the self-isolation at home was generally perceived as a strong negative situation.

**“(III). New dimensions of time:** *The accelerated time. Time seems to fly by. Too much time. Falling asleep in the morning. We have time for*

*everything. I have an obligation to enjoy time. Another 30 days! Time and peace. Every day is the same."*

Moving inside and cancelling of almost all outdoor activities meant a large amount of time for new daily routines but also some difficulties to manage it under the uncertain circumstances. At least at the beginning of the crisis it was difficult to estimate how long it would take and what were the best ways to deal with the new life schedule.

**"(IV). Between screens, online courses:** *I finish with one screen and stick to another. In the virtual world. I moved to the online environment. I get bored of courses in the form of a screen. I eat and listen. Time is passing slowly. Represented by an avatar. On YouTube. A society obsessed with the visual."*

The world has never before been better prepared for physical social isolation than today, due to the spread of the Internet all over the Globe (more than half of the world population has access to the digital universe). Of course, there is still a significant percentage of population who cannot afford the digital technology or does not have digital competences. But the students, with very few exceptions, are not part of the disconnected social reality. So, higher education in Romania, due to COVID-19 crisis went complete online and all the activities followed the regular schedule. The digital screens became the new windows towards the class, one's friends, the homework and they remain open almost 24/7. The smartphone has change its role from an entertainment provider to a work tool, so it became less attractive. But the academic life did not stop during these month.

**"(V). New rites, anti-COVID-19 behaviour:** *Watch out for the virus! Life at the window. Nothing interesting. Now history is being written. Why are our rights taken away? Doors close. On the basis of a certificate. Always have something to do. Another delivery. Those statements... Our friend, the disinfectant. Like the surgeon. Let's listen to the doctors' advice."*

The major changes of the daily routine came with new behaviours, new home rules and new rites concerning mostly one's hygiene, but also one's usual program. Returning at home with basic provisions has become a very strict procedure related to how to manage the stuff bought, how to clean it and eventually how to let them into the quarantine space. Any person or product coming from outside were potentially contaminated and they were treated consequently.

**“(VI). How did it start? - Last Saturday. I sigh for the past. A Wednesday morning. After the holidays in Italy. Life training. I'm talking to all of me. Chinese "from that" virus. Forced leave.”**

If at the beginning of March 2020 the duration of the restrictive rules would have been established, probably many people would have had a more planned approach of the crisis. But the pandemic came very quickly, the restrictions were imposed and updated every several days, and it is difficult to estimate when the news about COVID-19 became a serious subject, when it became a dangerous reality in Romania, when people started to avoid going outside.

**“(VII). Divine salvation, reconciliation, resignation: Relationship with Him. Everything happens for a reason. A great lesson. I like this break. I don't dislike it. Let's smile. I want to hear good news. There is also a good part. I breathe a sigh of relief. Quiet. I'm glad and I pray.”**

As it happens in any major crisis in life, the re-evaluation of one's main principles and values represents a usual approach, full of hope or full of resignation. The decreasing of the everyday life speed offered the possibility for introspection, for spending time with one's own things, to re-evaluate one's main values in life. The moving to online of the religious services helped a large part of the population to take part in these ceremonies more frequently than before the pandemic crisis<sup>1</sup>.

**“(VIII). With the health of the earth in mind: The empty city. The planet is breathing. Life lesson. You can hear the birds talking. Hiking in the woods. Spring in the village. A few fir trees.”**

The decreasing of the pollution level due to the reducing of the regular human activities represented another constant topic during the pandemic period. Even if this was a side effect, the pictures with clean waters from Venetia and the problems with the lack of storage capacity for not needed oil all over the Globe confirm the relevance of this topic.

**“(IX). Another approach: continuous movement, financial problems, materials, job: Extroverted in times of crisis. I feel entrepreneurial. Everyone has at least one instalment to pay. Life with goals.”**

---

<sup>1</sup>The Easter Religious ceremony at Partos Monastery located in a very small and marginal village from Timis County, where usually there are less than 100 participants, had have over 15.000 online views.  
(<https://www.facebook.com/ManastireaPartos/>).

Some of the students didn't stop working during this period, they had to adapt to the new conditions and to keep doing professional activities, even in a remote way. One of the most increased activity was the courier services and any idea of offering transport for goods was in very high demand.

**“(X). No one wants to be the next one- about death and serious things:** *You can't stop life. The virus does not forgive you. The end of the world. I can feel his panic in his voice. Let's isolate ourselves as much as possible.”*

The fear of death, against the background of continuously increasing of the casualties all over the world, was another common feeling, sustained by the incoherent medical responses to the pandemic crisis. One of the most expected daily news was the official announcement of the new confirmed cases and the evolution of deaths, a quite unusual and irrelevant type of content before the crisis. The idea of *plateau* and *descending trend* represent probably the most expected statistical data during this period.

**“(XI). At home, always at home - the little things at home:** *The smell of childhood. The rooster in grandma's garden. Home to me, home to you. I love to cook. Yoga before bed. I'm reshaping myself. I don't want to escape. A new recipe. I'm not in the mood today! There is always something to do.”*

Another very intense subject was related to the new dimension of the idea of *home* as a special space to spend the entire day, with parents and even with grandparents, as a return to childhood. From the small apartment to a house with garden, the *home* became the personal safety fortress, a very secure space which eventually became insufficient.

These are eleven subjects extracted from the fifty recorded life stories offered by the students that accepted to participate in our research. Their stories represent testimonies of their lives during the social isolation in the times of a pandemic. Their stories were also a good motivation for applying a sociological questionnaire about the students' feelings during the last days of social isolation. A part from the results of this sociological survey is presented below.

One of the questions included into this analysis was related to the changing of the lifestyle during the social isolation period, and the results are presented in Figure 1:

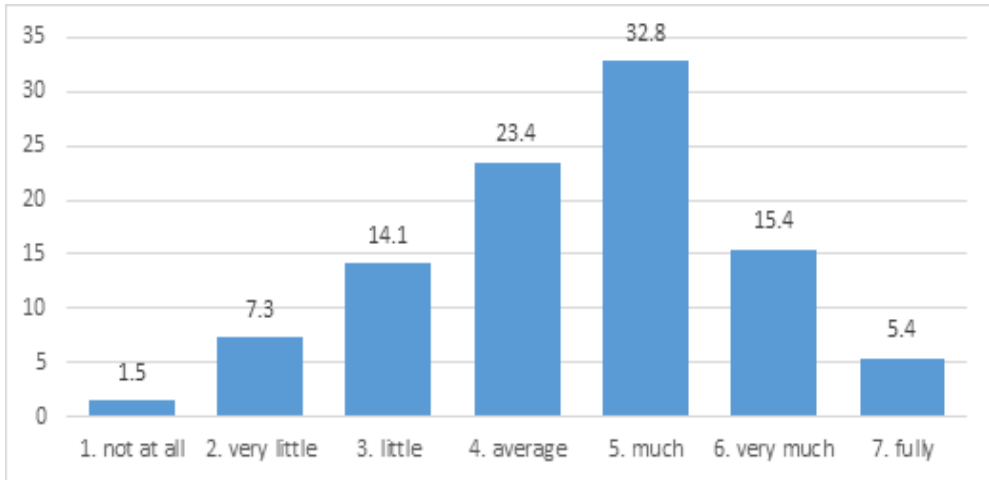


Figure 1 – *Compared to the pre-crisis period, how much have you changed your lifestyle?*

With the median value of 5 (out of 7), as it was somehow expected, the social isolation had a significant impact on students' life, firstly probably due to its novel and unusual aspects. There are statistical significant differences between genders, women felt a deeper change of the lifestyle (mean of group 4.56 for women vs. 4.06 for men and  $t = -2.944$ ,  $\text{sig} = 0.04$ ). There are not significant differences between age, type of studies, the place where they spent the time in isolation (the same city where they are studying or their residential city) and the persons who stay together (family, friends, relatives and so on).

But there is a significant difference in what concerns the professional status, namely the people that lost their job due to the pandemic were more affected than others (mean score 4.75 comparatively with the group that kept their jobs and had to go daily outside with a mean score of 3.88 and Pearson Chi Square = 59.842,  $\text{sig} < 0.0001$ ). We presented into a more descriptive way this item because it was used as a distinct index for the analysis of the next two questions: what new activities did the students do during the social isolation and how did they intend to prepare for the next potential wave of isolation (expected for the coming autumn).

Concerning these new habits discovered by the students during the period of social isolation and the intentions for the next possible wave,

there were several activities that define quite clearly the new lifestyle inside (Figure 2):

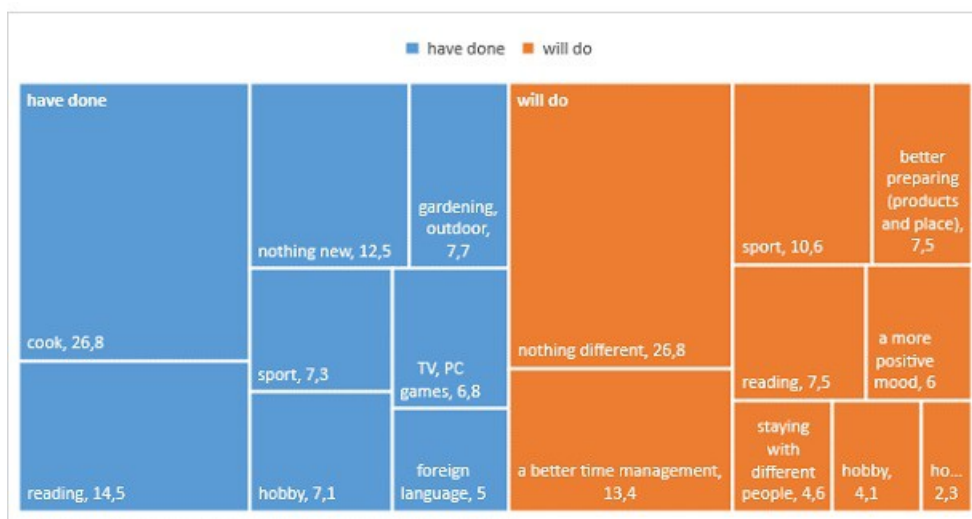


Figure 2 – What new things/activities the students did during the isolation period and what they intend to do differently if a new wave will occur

It can be observed that 85% of the subjects tried something new during this period (especially cooking and reading, that cumulate 41%). For the estimated behaviour related by an hypothetical second wave a quarter of the subjects did not want to change anything, and a significant percent of over 20% expressed their intention to have a better time management (schedule, daily program, goals) and also a better organisation during the isolation period, including the purchasing of the necessary products and the setup of a different place for isolation. The intention of cooking was transformed into a healthier lifestyle with sport and diet. A quite important percent (6%) expressed their intention to have a better emotional approach of the new (hypothetical) crisis with less panic and more rest. The students that intended to not change anything for the second (hypothetical) wave, in the previous one mostly cooked, read and also gardened and carried out outdoor activities.

The cross tabulation between these two questions and the perception of the life change is presented in Table 1 (compared mean, higher values represent a significant change of the lifestyle during the social isolation period):



Table 1 – *What the students did and what they intend to do, depending on the level of affecting of their life*

did			will do	
nothing new	4,08		nothing different	4,00
gardening, outdoor activities	4,25		hobbies	4,14
hobbies	4,27		reading	4,38
foreign language	4,46		sport	4,42
TV, PC games	4,50		homework	4,58
cooking	4,55		better preparing (products and place)	4,64
reading	4,61		a better time management	4,69
sport	5,03		staying with different people	5,04
			a more positive mood	5,23

Following these data, the students that did nothing new during this period were less affected by social isolation compared to the students more affected that carried out sporting activities. Also, the students less affected by social isolation would not change their approaching for the future hypothetical wave, compared to the students more affected that intend to have a more positive mood, with less panic and more rest.

## ***Discussion***

The social isolation imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic crisis massively affected the daily lifestyle for a large amount of people. Even though higher education went online, the students were also significantly influenced by this unprecedented situation. Despite the high amount of available free time, the incertitude of the process evolution made difficult the setup of the daily routine in a more efficient manner. But, a large part from the investigated sample of 518 students discovered new activities to fill this time, ranging from cooking and other hobbies to reading and personal development. The positive

evaluation of these new habits is reflected also into a large option for not changing anything in case of a hypothetical new wave of the pandemic crisis or to have a better organization of the daily agenda and the conditions of isolation. The factors that have contributed to this quite good adaptation are probably keeping their basic professional activity functional (i.e. learning) and the high level of digital literacy.

## ***Conclusions***

The rediscovery of the social interactions and the returning to the *normality* into the public space will keep for a while the traces of the pandemic period. If for the Romanian society to meet in the street a person wearing medical mask was a strange fact until the beginning of March 2020 it is quite sure that from now, it will be a common occurrence for the months or years to come. Regardless of the subsequent evolution of the COVID-19 issue the memories related to the life into isolation will fade and mostly only the positive ones will remain, associated obviously with a negative moment in our personal life. Despite all new challenges, difficulties and innovations related to the new daily routine, it is quite clear that a hyper-interconnected world has this weakness point: the very quick contagion.

## References

- Cacioppo John and Cacioppo Stephanie (2014) *Social relationships and health: the toxic effect of the perceived social isolation*. Social and Personality Psychology Compass 8(2)  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12087>.
- Clark David, Wells Adrian (1995) *A cognitive model of social phobia* in *Social Phobia*, New York: The Guilford Press.
- Codoban, A. (2001) *Semn și interpreta*, Cluj-Napoca: Atheneum.
- Coyle Caitlin, Dugan Elizabeth (2012), "Social Isolation, Loneliness and Health among Older Adults" *Journal of Aging and Health*, 24 (8),  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0898264312460275>.
- De Jong Gierveld, J., & Havens, B. (2004). *Cross-national Comparisons of Social Isolation and Loneliness: Introduction and Overview*. Canadian Journal on Aging/La Revue Canadienne Du Vieillessement, 23(2), 109-113. doi:10.1353/cja.2004.0021.
- Festinger, Leon (1957) *A theory of cognitive dissonance*, Stanford: University Press.
- Gadamer H.G., 2006. *Truth and Method*, London: Continuum.
- Hall-Lande J.A., Eisenberg M., Christenson S., Neumarkt-Sztainer D. (2007) *Social isolation, psychological health, and protective factors in adolescence* in *Adolescence* 42(166).
- Ilut, Petru (1997) *Abordarea calitativă a socioumanului*, Iași: Polirom.
- Nadolu Delia (2020) *And so pandemic was lived [Si asa a fost traita pandemia]* in *Student during the crisis time*, Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană.
- Nicholson Nicholas (2012) "A Review of Social Isolation: An important but under-assessed condition in older adults" *J Primary Prevent* 33, 137–152. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10935-012-0271-2>.
- Stephoe Andrew, Shankar Aparna, Demakakos Panayotes, and Wardle Jane (2013), "Social isolation, loneliness, and all-cause mortality in older men and women", in *PNAS* 9/2013  
<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1219686110>.
- Weiss, R.S. (1973) *Loneliness: the Experience of Emotional and Social Isolation*, The MIT Press.
- \*\*\*Romanian Government– Press statements, available at  
<https://gov.ro/ro/informatii-de-presa>.

# ***The Influence of the COVID-19 Epidemic on Teaching Methods in Higher Education Institutions in Israel***

**Shirly COHEN & Ziva SABAG,**

*Talpiot, Academic College Education, Holon*

*Faculty of Sociology, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania*

*e-mail: zivasab@gmail.com*

**Abstract:** This paper aims to review the transition to online teaching (that took place on 12<sup>th</sup> March 2020) carried out by the top 10 academic higher education institutions in Israel as a response to the COVID-19 crisis in Israel, and to present details on several aspects, such as: how did each university make the transition, what were the learning and teaching channels that were adopted, how did they organize to support students and academic staff, what was the official policy of the institution, etc. The paper shows the sharp systemic changes that took place at the universities in order to continue the learning process that began before the epidemic broke out. In addition, we present trends that, although initially considered as potential future processes, expected to take place in the next 10-20 years, become at once the immediate reality, and ushered the Israeli education system towards the next step in the evolution of future teaching methods in general, and transition to distance learning in particular.

**Keywords:** COVID-19 epidemic, Distance learning, Digital learning, Online teaching, Synchronous teaching, Asynchronous teaching, Higher education .

## ***Introduction***

Framework: This review was conducted at the beginning of April 2020, approximately 20 days after the announcement of the new guideline by the Israeli Ministry of Health to close all academic institutions and subsequently to transition to distance learning.

The information available was gathered in the period of closure and of "social distancing" restrictions, while access to information sources was limited and thus is based on data published on the official website of the universities.

Discussions regarding the ways to promote digital learning as a tool to improve teaching, learning experience and pedagogical skills of teaching staff has taken the forefront place in recent years at various academic institutions around the world. Many articles, projects, courses and programs have been developed, aimed to upgrade existing teaching methods and combining them with innovative learning skills that are a prerequisite for the learner during the process of acquiring the skills and abilities required for integration in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

During the last decade, there has been a rapid worldwide growth of new initiatives in creating massive online courses (MOOCs) across the academy: many large-scale entrepreneurship courses have been set up, offering mass, high-quality education at a low price that does not demand any special pre-requisites, and for a moment it seemed that an innovative revolution would soon take place amongst higher education institutions - a revolution that would change the way people study around the world. However, in spite of the great expectation and many efforts on the subject, the revolution did not occur: many teaching failures due to learners' abilities, high dropout rates and lack of pedagogical supervision (in other countries) led to the conclusion that online teaching is not adequate to the higher education system in Israel, and moreover, it also claimed that it will bring damage and negative influence to the whole learning process (Kirsch, 2015).

Subsequently, in Israel, this conclusion led to the formulation of a national digital program under government's decision, which started its implementing steps during 2015, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Equality. The aim of this program was to develop

innovation in education and improve the professional training system to the level of developed countries (Israeli Ministry of Social Equality, 2017). Hecht (2018) published data indicated that despite the program and efforts invested, no significant change had yet occurred. He noted that there was some very slight and slow progress in the administrative infrastructure but no practical change in the nature of learning and teaching methods (Hecht, 2018).

11<sup>th</sup> March 2020 was a turning point for the Israeli academic institutions – in which "civil emergency situation" was declared by the Israeli authorities, due to the COVID-19 epidemic. The entire education system including higher education transformed immediately to distance learning procedure. Ten days later, all higher education institutions in Israel replaced their traditional teaching methods, implementing distance learning using various tools, i.e. programs and processes that were designed for the next decades (2020-2030) became at once a contemporary reality (Shahar, 2020).

Given the context above, in this article we address the following questions:

- How did higher education institutions implement the rapid transition from traditional to online learning during the COVID-19 epidemic?
- How will transition to online educational activities affect higher education institutions in Israel?

First, we will describe the components of the programme that was built prior the epidemic outbreak, as well as the drastic changes that have been taken by the higher education institutions (HEIs) as response to the epidemic restrictions. Then, we will review the advantages and disadvantages of this process, and conclude that these changes are an essential opportunity to progress towards adjustment of future academy to the 21<sup>st</sup> century requirements.

## ***Overview of Digital Learning in Israel's Higher Education System***

"Digital learning is one of the updated 21<sup>st</sup> century pedagogical means, which incorporates learning-teaching methods with information

technology and communication in an online learning environment, and the implementation of appropriate behaviours in the online educational space. This learning type is based on accessibility and use of digital teaching-learning materials, alongside online information sources" (Rotem, 2013).

The major themes connected to digital learning incorporating personalization and flexibility to learners, teaching management led by teachers, combine receiving meaningful personal educational support, collaborative and socialization founded on a common educational vision, digital materials driven by updated information which is aligned with learners' needs and transparency related to cross-disciplinary learning topics (Rotem, 2013). The focus on digital learning in the last two decades has become a key component due to the accelerated advancement of technology. The analysis of contemporary research literature shows that despite the great potential inherent in this system, there is internal resistance to such organizational and pedagogical change. The Knesset<sup>1</sup> Research and Information Centre (Goldschmidt, 2013) examined in 2013 the issue of online learning at the academic level. As part of this discussion, various challenges presented by MOOCs (Massive Open Online Course) were discussed, including:

1. The fear of reducing the "market value" of academic degrees, which are a means of differentiation - the online courses may bring the higher education system to an "inflationary" state of academic degrees due to an increase in supply of academic studies and a decline in the value of academic degrees.
2. The fear of deteriorating the quality of an online curriculum - a free model that stands alongside the development of a large supply of courses can lead to deterioration in the level of courses and the development of a "Wild West", where certificates are attained by not entirely clear origin and value.
3. The fear of reduction in personal dialogue between the student and the lecturer of the course, which may cause absence of a learning experience on the part of the learner and increase dropout.

---

<sup>1</sup>The Knesset is the unicameral national legislature of Israel. As the legislative branch of the Israeli government, the Knesset passes all laws, elects the President and Prime Minister, approves the cabinet, and supervises the work of the government

4. Limitations on the ability to assess students' achievements due to the inclusion of unreliable digital models used as an alternative to the accepted academic exams methods.
5. Damage to the population of lecturers and researchers due to academic market take-over by large companies.

These challenges reflected the lack of readiness of the higher education system in Israel for online learning, which subsequently became a major impediment to the implementation of digital learning.

A survey conducted by the Higher Education Council in 2018 (Arbiv 2019; HEC, 2018), examined the attitudes towards digital learning of approximately 2472 academic staff and lecturers and found that only 15% of respondents experienced teaching of a digital course. Only 37 made use of an existing digital course and 133 declared that they developed a digital course on their own through a university site; furthermore, 116 of the respondents reported that they did not use the services of a consulting company during the development and production process. Still, 90 reported being satisfied with the level of student participation in frontal courses, 92 claimed that they would recommend others to teach in this way, and 84 would like to teach more digital courses.

Despite the positive approach to digital teaching found by most lecturers who were exposed to digital courses, about 78% of survey respondents reported that the university did not offer them to develop such a course.

The conclusion that emerges from the findings reflects the uncertainty of the higher education system in Israel regarding online learning and that this ambiguity is a major inhibiting factor in promoting digital learning.

The Ministry of Social Equality claimed that while in many other OECD countries a follow-up plan was established for the Digital National Program, in Israel (2013), only the first national strategy was defined. On this program, a national policy, the use of information technologies regulations, communications and their applications were formulated. Development and promotion of higher education system relies on the argument that the skills will be acquired by academic qualifications of future employees, while they are still students, and this enlistment will serve them throughout all their future career and



improve their professional capabilities. Improving training system in the digital domain will ensure employment flexibility, a relative stability that will resist turbulences in the labour market and in the professional level of the Israeli labour force, which will be in line with other developed nations (Ministry of Social Equality, 2017).

In conclusion, although in the last decade we have witnessed a growing worldwide trend in the field of digital learning as well as expansion in online academic courses and digital learning in general, institutions of higher education in Israel (prior to the COVID-19 period) have underestimated the importance of developing an on-line curriculum and until the COVID-19 crisis, there was no significant change related to online learning methods in HEIs. In a review published by Jacob Hecht (2018), he notes that the education system preferred to invest in programs such as "meaningful learning" which were considered as an effective solution that would solve all learning problems (RAMA, March 2016).

Concerns about the "disruptive innovation" characteristics (Kirsch, 2015), the disappointment of integrating technology into higher education, partially due to experiences with MOOC platforms such as Coursera and edX that led to a high dropout rate with a particularly low graduation rate of 12.6% (McAvinia, 2017) and the shattering of the illusion that every learner can learn at their own pace without guidance and without peers (Ben David, 2019), have led the academic institutions in Israel to invest very low efforts in developing online learning materials and tools.

## ***The Effect of the COVID-19 Epidemic on the Transition to Distance Learning in Israel***

### **Global Context**

The COVID-19 epidemic which broke into the world in November 2019 (Ma, 2020) in the city of Wuhan in China expanded at a staggering rate to 199 countries/territories (as of 7<sup>th</sup> April 2020), thus becoming the world's largest epidemic in the last century (since the Spanish influenza epidemic (Nature, 2005). The World Health Organization announced the outbreak as a global epidemic on March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2020 (WHO, 2020). In an attempt to overcome the rate of the epidemic, a

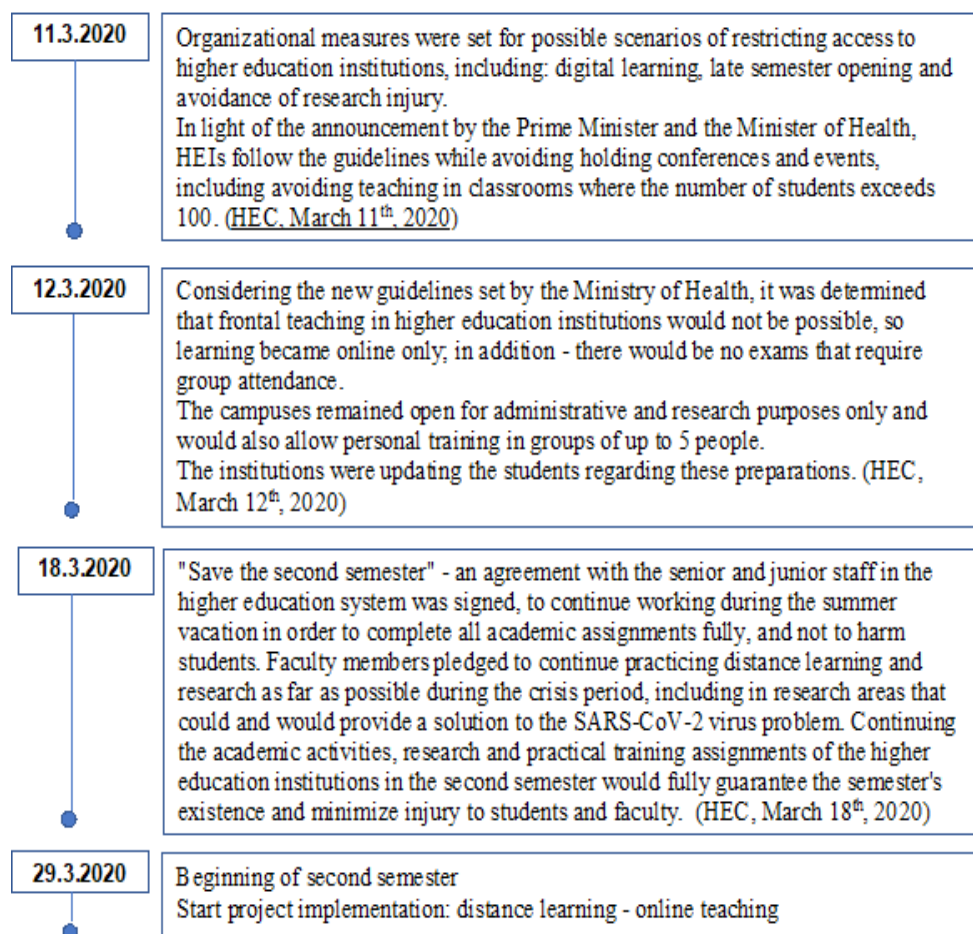
policy of isolating populations worldwide was adopted - from preventing foreign entry and closing borders, through isolating returning residents from countries exposed to the virus, to various levels of closure of areas and cities along with a ban on gatherings determined according to the rate of expansion. As a result, educational systems that include kindergartens, schools, universities and educational institutions were closed until the danger of infection would decline. (UNESCO, March 2020).

### ***Local Context***

*The decisions of the Israeli Higher Education Council (HEC) following the spread of COVID-19 epidemic in Israel*

In Israel, higher education institutions encountered the epidemic spread during the first semester vacation. Initially, guidelines were issued aligned with the instructions of the Ministry of Health regarding bans on gathering. Later, after the decision to ban traffic and crowds, a decision was made to continue teaching by using distance learning methods.

Chronology of preparations for distance learning during Corona crisis – HEC Policies



## ***The Transition to Online Learning of Israeli Academic Institutions***

In this part of the paper, we aim to describe how 10 top academic institutions (out of a total of 62 in Israel) implemented the transition to distance learning. The selected institutions represent 50% of all students studying in the State of Israel - during the COVID-19 epidemic, approximately 306,000 students studied in Israeli higher education institutions (Online Report, 2019), including at seven state-funded public universities and 3 non-state-funded private colleges (see Table

1). It is important to note that the information was gathered at the beginning of April 2020, just two weeks after closure of the universities due to "social distancing", and thus most data was collected from the formal information published by the institutions on their websites.

*Table 1: Number of students enrolled in the top 10 Israeli HEIs*

Type	University	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree	Doctorate	Diploma	Total Students
State-funded university	Tel Aviv University	14,810	9,132	2,169	250	26,361
State-funded university	Hebrew University	11,278	6,085	2,312	162	19,837
State-funded university	Ben Gurion University	11,828	4,068	1,681	122	17,699
State-funded university	Haifa University	8,033	7,843	1,513	181	17,570
State-funded university	Bar Ilan University	8,352	6,450	2,192	237	17,231
State-funded university	Technion	9,365	3,082	1,155	9	13,611
State-funded university	Ariel University	10,610	1,056	-	75	11,741
Non-state-funded college	Uno Academic studies	9,055	3,596	-	-	12,651
Non-state-funded college	College of Management	6,238	1,383	-	-	7,621
Non-state-funded college	Interdisciplinary centre	6,066	1,366	-	-	7,432

*Source: statistical data HEC - (HEC Report, 2019)*

## **Data Analysis**

### *Early Preparation to Distance Learning by the HEIs in I*

Some institutions (Technion, UNO College, Interdisciplinary Center and Bar-Ilan University) were organized with recorded and filmed lectures, presentations and digital materials while other institutions bridged this gap during the COVID-19 epidemic. The University of Haifa,

for example, was previously prepared (at the beginning of the study year) for use of online courses and defined procedures for recording lessons and online exams. Bar Ilan University has been developing online teaching methods since 2000.

Of all institutions, the authors would like to note the Technion which produced 500 courses that incorporate innovative pedagogy even before the crisis and disseminated information to faculty staff and students regarding digital learning. In addition, the Technion has two advanced editing and filming studios, and was engaged in production of multi-participant online courses (MOOCs).

*Academic Staff Preparation* – Most universities recommended that lecturers provide live lessons or record lessons in advance (such as at Tel Aviv University and Ben Gurion University). In most institutions, the academic staff has been trained to use online systems (Bar Ilan University, Uno College and Interdisciplinary Center).

- *Online Courses* – In most universities, the stock of online courses before the COVID-19 epidemic was exceptionally low. During the crisis, there was a significant change while most institutions moved to an online format and managed to bridge the gap by developing hundreds of online courses in a short period. The University of Haifa for instance, made possible the distance learning for all its courses through a dedicated learning system (Moodle).
- *Student Support* – In addition to distance support and information on the institutions' websites, some universities have opened dedicated Facebook pages (such as the Open University and the Interdisciplinary Centre), or published useful recommendations on their sites (Hebrew University, Tel Aviv University, Ben Gurion University, University of Haifa).
- *Academic Staff Support* – Most universities provide academic staff training on how to use digital platforms through the institution's website or by direct instructions (Tel Aviv University). The Hebrew University has also established a dedicated website to support academic staff and encourages lecturers to experiment vast variety of online teaching methods.
- *Corporate Responsibility* – In most institutions, the responsibility for transitioning to digital learning was directly under the

faculties, or assigned to the digital unit or to online learning centres that existed prior to the COVID-19 crisis (Tel Aviv University, The Hebrew University, Bar Ilan and IDC).

- *Student Associations* – In most universities, Student Associations provided a host of tips and recommendations for learning from home through the universities' websites (Tel Aviv University, Interdisciplinary Centre, Tel Aviv University, University of Haifa). Ben Gurion University, for example, also provided information about free online courses in Hebrew and Arabic.

Of all the universities, it should be noted that the Interdisciplinary Centre, Tel Aviv University, the Hebrew University and the Technion implemented the transition to online teaching in a very short time (within only two weeks) and provided intensive support to students and staff while upgrading in real-time their teaching, learning and assessment systems.

The wide range of technologies and applications available for distance learning has enabled the institutions to adapt to synchronous and asynchronous learning.

Most institutions have established a virtual space for learning using live broadcasts, recorded lectures, past filmed courses, MOOCs, using a variety of existing platforms, direct YouTube lectures, publishing presentations, presenting lecture notes and reading materials on courses sites and more. Some have set up dedicated web and Facebook pages. Interpersonal communication between the student and the teacher was replaced by communication through Zoom, Skype, WhatsApp and more. All institutions had to adapt the new reality and provide remote technical support to both students and academic staff, to ensure that courses are optimally delivered.

At this stage the data analysis is not complete yet, since during the research it was found that further in-depth data collection was required in order to formulate conclusions.

It is also necessary to add information regarding the practical use of online teaching methods during the COVID-19 crisis.

Another issue that requires data collection relates to the transition process itself: if at the beginning of the crisis most institutions were not adequately prepared, then in recent months, most institutions have made a huge effort to bridge this gap. Institutions have developed, in a short time, tools, resources, educational materials and online courses -

which were not reflected in this study (since the study was conducted at the beginning of the crisis). It is possible that today, a few months after the outbreak of this epidemic, institutions are better prepared. We believe that it is necessary to collect and present this information in order to obtain a clearer and more comprehensive understanding regarding the experience of the academic institutions.

Further information will be gathered in the second stage of this research through personal interviews with academic staff, students and online study programs developers in order to achieve a better understanding of the transition to distance learning.

### ***Conclusions - The COVID-19 Epidemic Accelerates Change Processes in HEIs in Israel***

The COVID-19 epidemic presented educational and economic constraints, which served as a catalyst for implementing a change in teaching and learning methods.

The arguments against distance learning cited by institutions that prevented the development and implementation of distance learning technologies in the past (Goldschmidt, 2013) were dissolved at once, in light of the COVID-19 reality that dictated a new agenda.

Within a few weeks, the virus changed the way students learn throughout the world (Tam G. El-Azar, 2020). A UNESCO report shows that the percentage of learners affected by the COVID-19 epidemic currently stands at 91.3% of all learners in the world, (UNESCO, 2020) and according to the following details:

*Table 2: The impact of COVID-19 on learners and educational systems*

Date in the epidemic	Number of affected learners	Percentage of all registered learners	Countries that shut down education systems
16.2.2020	1,026,210	0.1%	1
3.4.2020	1,576,021,818	91.3%	188

*Experts team report - COVID-19 Crisis and HEIs*

A report related to the COVID-19 crisis and the higher education system was written on April 2020 by a team of experts headed by Prof. Yossi Dahan and Dr. Sarab Abu Rabia, together with 9 other researchers, aimed to provide an adequate explanation to the crisis in higher education during the COVID-19 period, and to offer solutions to this short and long-term crisis (Dahan et al., 2020). These experts reported that on April 12<sup>th</sup>, the Higher Education Council announced that studies on all institutions would continue to study using distance learning methods until the end of the second semester. This decision was made aggressively by the Treasury Department, without any consultation or reference from the academic staff. The Ministry of Finance, which does not have the authority or expertise to make such decisions, completely ignored the many difficulties encountered by the students and academic staff concerning the distance learning process, thus preventing proper and professional research management. Moreover, the team noted that online teaching was not a substitute for campus life and that there were serious implications on pedagogical and social processes, and thus distance learning enhances existing inequalities among students and academic staff (temporary and junior).

"Beyond the claim that online teaching can be used as a substitute to frontal teaching, it does not necessarily rely on researches done on the subject, it is important to note that this teaching method has negative consequences, mainly on disadvantaged students which may cause dropout of studies" (Dahan et al., 2020).

It appears that technology accessibility does not exist equally among students (not all students have a quiet working area, access to a private computer, Internet and availability to participate in online learning). Moreover, the gender gap has also intensified, because schools remain closed, parents have to fully bear the responsibility of their children and usually this responsibility rests on the shoulders of mothers and thus prevents them from having the free time and attention required by the distance learning process. In addition, most students from low socio-economic backgrounds need more assistance from faculty members, while independent learning reduces student-teacher interaction and puts these students on risk.



The team of experts in education published a number of recommendations aimed to reduce the digital gap between students, including:

- Providing additional personal computers, tablets and technological means to all students who do not have a personal computer, or at least providing the option to purchase devices through the university /college at a discounted price.
- During the quarantine (social distancing) - allowing universities to open computer rooms so that students can work while adhering to COVID-19 guidelines as defined by the Ministry of Health.
- Implementing mentoring programs for low socio-economic backgrounds students aimed to bridge the gap created by the crisis.
- Regarding prevention of gender gaps, the team recommended to extend the length of studies as well as scholarships with regard to students who are parents. (Dahan et al., 2020).

Every crisis also creates opportunities, and taking advantage of such opportunities might mean moving to a more successful future for most higher education institutions. In what follows, we are going to discuss the advantages that adopting distance and/or online education on a large scale might have for Israeli HEIs.

### ***Advantages of Transitioning to Distance/Online Learning***

The changes occurred during the process of adopting the distance learning methods enforced by the COVID-19 epidemic constrains in Israel present the following advantages:

- The immediate impetus for change created an opportunity for innovation
- Learning anywhere and anytime
- Learning at a personal and individual pace – 21<sup>st</sup> century skills
- Professionalization through the world's largest "distance learning" experiment
- New learning environments and distance learning technologies
- Using open learning materials
- Government policy supports digital learning

- Strengthening the value of distance learning
- Expanding new collaborations between institutions and the labor market

### *1. Innovation*

The immediate impetus to change creates an opportunity for innovation. Academic institutions around the world characterized by complex mechanisms, slow change pace, centuries-old teaching traditions based on the rationale of frontal lectures (Tam and El-Azar, 2020), pushed necessity level through the new COVID-19 reality to create solutions for optimal application of e-learning technologies. This impetus evolves an opportunity for institutions to improve and develop means and methods for distance learning, as well as for a new organizational structure adapted to the new needs. The main objectives will be to train staff and students to use the existing platforms, to develop new procedures in terms of organizational and distance teaching pedagogical standardization. Another mission is to re-organize and enable a variety of digital courses and curricula of distance learning, develop teams that would engage in combining curriculum content with new professional multimedia departments, expand students and staff support departments, and develop new methods of assessment and accreditation.

These activities would establish distance learning even after the COVID-19 period and would provide an opportunity to expand the adoption of new teaching methods.

### *2. Learning anywhere and anytime*

Using G5 technology learners and digital solutions providers can, more than ever, practice the concept of 'learning anywhere and anytime' through digital education. Traditional classroom learning will be accompanied by new learning tools - from live broadcasts, through 'educational influencers' to virtual reality experiences (Tam and El-Azar, 2020). Learning may become a habit that is integrated into daily routine and thus, may help to strengthen the trend of "Lifelong learning" (Holford, Griffin and Jarvis, 2020) designed to acquire skills that would enable the learner to be effectively integrated and to compete in the global economy and on the labour market.

In this context, the COVID-19 crisis creates an opportunity to change the way higher education institutions perceive the path to impart knowledge and life skills, and subsequently, address new avenues that establish abilities to acquire skills and knowledge from anywhere and at any time.

### *3. Individual learning – 21<sup>st</sup> century skills*

Ran Amalia (2020) notes that learning in the online space helps develop skills such as: autonomy thinking, responsibility in learning process, enhancing intrinsic motivation, flexibility and involvement in the process. In addition, in terms of learners, digital learning is seen as personalized, effective and empowering.

The use of digital means and remote teaching methods effectively establishes the opportunity to acquire the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills required such as: autonomy and self-directive learning, problem solving, critical thinking and creativity (Fadel, 2008).

### *4. Professionalize through the world's largest "remote learning" experiment*

The current crisis illustrated in practice how to utilize smart devices that are available to everyone for the sake of creating an open learning space online. The COVID-19 epidemic has actually created the world's largest distance learning experiment. An example of a process that is taking place all over the world today can be seen at Zhejiang University (ZJU) - a research university considered to be one of the oldest and most prestigious of China's higher education institutions, where they launched distance learning with more than 5,000 courses and developed a streaming App. in collaboration with Alibaba<sup>2</sup> Moreover, they bridged digital gaps through agreements with Internet service providers, established 200 smart classrooms with advanced technology, and even allowed graduates to defend their thesis in an online procedure.

The current experiment, even if accompanied with difficulties for both students and academic staff, will advance HEIs toward improving

---

<sup>2</sup>Alibaba - is a Chinese multinational technology company specializing in e-commerce, retail, Internet, and technology.

and streamlining distance learning processes and creating additional means and collaborations.

*5. New learning environments, a variety of technologies for distance education*

Learning in an open online space creates an opportunity to develop and create new learning environments, accompanied by the use of open learning materials and digital content. Already today, there is a growing use of cloud-based books and technology to teach sciences, filmed lectures, interactive practices and online texts.

The "Flipped classroom"<sup>3</sup> approach can deepen and expand. This hybrid learning approach combines distance learning and online meetings. The lecture is delivered via online videos (asynchronous teaching), but not at the same time, while exercises and problem-solving take place online, accompanied sometimes by the teacher in real time. The advantage is that the teacher's work focuses on working directly with students rather than lecturing them. Another benefit is the promotion of a research-based learning environment, student collaboration, critical thinking development and personalized learning. (Slant, 2020).

UNESCO has published dozens of online teaching tools that include platforms and educational resources that provide distance learning solutions in a wide range of fields: digital learning management systems, mobile phone-based learning systems, offline learning systems, MOOC platforms, self-learning systems, reading Apps, live-video communication platforms, teachers' tools for digital content creation and a variety of other distance learning solutions. (UNESCO, 2020).

The COVID-19 epidemic will serve as an engine that will motivate the development of e-learning tools while connecting knowledge to the technological means that already exist today, as well as new ones, that

---

<sup>3</sup>A "Flipped classroom" is a type of blended learning where students are introduced to content at home and practice working through it at school. This is the reverse of the more common practice of introducing new content at school, then assigning homework and projects to be completed by the students independently at home. In this blended learning approach, face-to-face interaction is mixed with independent study—usually via technology (Teach Thought, 2020).

are going to be created in the near future, responding to the demands of the academic staff, students and the process of education.

#### 6. *Open study materials*

UNESCO published "A Basic guide to open educational resources" (UNESCO, 2015) to describe the use of available information and technologies for non-commercial purposes, including studying and teaching. A good example of this is MIT University that was the first to grant a free license for the use of materials published in connection to the university courses without violating copyrights. In this context, teachers are seen as partners in the process of creating materials and knowledge while sharing and learning constantly (Ran, 2020).

The COVID-19 crisis has created an opportunity for academic institutions to develop practical programs to encourage teachers and lecturers to create, adopt, and produce new study materials, as well as to develop rewarding systems for lecturers and teachers by recognizing their development efforts as part of their role in the organization.

Moreover, the role of the traditional teacher will be reshaped after the COVID-19 crisis - the education system and teachers themselves will be required to redefine their role in the educational space.

#### 7. *Government policy supports digital learning*

HEC, the Planning and Budgeting Committee, the headquarters of the National "Digital Israel" Project<sup>4</sup>, and the Ministry of Social Equality work together to promote digital learning as a tool to improve the quality of teaching and learning, to broaden higher education for all sections of the population in Israel, and to strengthen the status of the Israeli academy in the world.

In 2018, HEC published definitions and regulations of digital learning (HEC Decision, 2018), to regulate the promotion and expansion of deploying digital academic courses through a series of declarations inviting higher education institutions to join the project (Digital Learning, HEC, 2020).

---

<sup>4</sup> Digital Israel" Project - promoting innovation in areas such as education, health, welfare and the Digital Economy and in a range of core issues. In addition, the headquarters is engaged in advancing technological and regulatory infrastructure and in developing human capital that will enable government work to adapt the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. (Digital Israel, 2018).

As part of this project, HEC offered financial support for the production and conversion of digital academic courses and presenting them in either two main platforms:

- The international platform "edX.org" - under the brand "IsraelX".
- The national open source platform "Campus" - (Based on edX technology).

In January 2017, HEC approved a plan to expand the range of online courses on the expense of frontal studies in academic institutions with investment of 26 million NIS (Kropsky, 2017). This investment is part of a digital learning program that began in 2016 and was expanded in 2017 when each academic institution was invited to submit courses.

The Digital Learning Project is part of the five-year program of HEC, approved in September 2016 with a total budget of approximately 7 billion NIS. Within this program, HEC (HEC, 2020) has called on all higher education institutions in Israel to submit online courses, until the last call which was distributed in January 2020 and invited them to join the international and national platforms.

In this context, regulators are expected to influence institutions of higher education in Israel, and be much determined, in order to implement distance learning methods as well as to set definite goals and timetable to ensure that the process is actually performed.

### *8. Strengthening the value of distance learning*

Alongside the notable benefits of distance learning such as: increasing the accessibility of knowledge and learning; reducing costs of academic studies; strengthening competitiveness and developing academic teaching; improving measurement of learning processes and course management; strengthening the connection and alignment between academic studies and the labour market (Silver, 2020), academic institutions will need to formulate in the near future tools to address the concerns that accompany the process of distance learning, including the fear of reducing the "market value" of a college degree; the fear of deteriorating the quality of online studies; the absence of dialogue with lecturers; the nature of the "academic experience" and the student support system; the limits to assess the academic level of students; a relatively low percentage (approximately 12%) of on-line courses completion (Goldschmidt, 2013).

An example of reinforced "market value" can be achieved through defining higher requirements in distance learning courses. The online "quality of education" problem can be addressed through the development of a sophisticated measurement system that ranks the quality of study materials, the quality of knowledge transferred, the quality of the lecturer, the checklist of basic skills, the student assignments, etc.

The topic of "the absence of dialogue with the lecturer" can be addressed by encouraging a variety of virtual communication tools (accessible already today to every student in Israel), and by considering meetings in the virtual space as valid as meetings inside the classroom.

The problem of "academic experience" - required a reformulation to "learning spaces" and the recognition of the legitimacy of the "virtual learning spaces" far beyond learning in some geographical location dictated by the physical buildings of the university. The COVID-19 crisis is an opportunity to expand the "academic experience" into the digital space and to bring new meaning and content to the active "student experience" that is taking place in those spaces.

The Chairman of the Planning and Budgeting Committee of HEC suggested the "establishment of start-ups boosters" (Shacher, 2020) instead of the empty classrooms that would be available as a result of the transition to distance learning. She assumed that online learning would also open the door to collaboration between academic institutions and between institutions to private entrepreneurs and the labour market in the effort to create together the future of education.

During the COVID-19 crisis, we highlight the coming together of associations and diverse stakeholders, including: governments, publishers, educators, technology providers, and telecom operators – they all gather together to use digital platforms as a temporary solution to the crisis.

In China, for example, the Ministry of Education has assembled a group of institutions from different fields to develop a new online, cloud-based learning and broadcasting platform, as well as to upgrade the educational infrastructure (Tam and El-Azar, 2020).

Another example is [readtogether.hk](https://readtogether.hk), a Hong Kong platform that is incorporating over 60 educational organizations, advertisers, media professionals and the entertainment industry. The platform provides

more than 900 educational assets, including videos, books, assessment tools, and free consulting services (Tam and El-Azar, 2020).

This trend of gathering associations and industry around a common educational goal will expand in the future and will provide innovative education solutions.

## ***A Vision for the Future***

The COVID-19 epidemic serves as a catalyst factor in the process of transition to distance learning and provides challenging opportunities for development and innovation in higher education.

In the journey of navigating towards the "Next Normal", we predict a dramatic reorganization of the economic and social order. Once the traditional order has turned out to be irrelevant to contemporary reality, higher education systems will move on to discussing what might be the "next normal."



An article published on McKinsey's website ([Sneider & Singhal, 2020](#)), presents a five stage model for coping with the "next normal" and includes the following steps which we translated here to the field of higher education;

(1) *Resolve* - This phase is characterized by the change that is currently being implemented in the transition to distance learning aimed mainly at continuing regular routine (as much as possible) and avoiding cessation in terms of studies and staff dismissal.

(2) *Resilience* - Assuming decline in economic activity expected worldwide, organizations will need to establish a competitive advantage and balance economic sustainability with social demands. The meaning is that institutions will have to adapt to the "next normal" stage by redefining their functioning and roles, changing organizational structure and traditional teaching methods. Thus, on the one hand, to



become economically viable, and on the other, to establish new relation with the labour market.

(3) *Return* - This is the stage at which institutions will resume activity at an effective rate (including considering that the next outbreak is likely to occur soon, if no vaccine is found).

(4) *Re-imagination* - The magnitude shock of the COVID-19 epidemic will change the expectations and preferences of citizens, employees and consumers. These changes will affect the way we live, work and use technologies. These changes will become apparent in the coming months. Institutions that reinvent themselves with an understanding of future reality will succeed. Thus, this crisis is not only revealing weaknesses, but also poses opportunities to improve performances that will contribute to better survival of educational institutions in the future.

(5) *Reform* - We will witness changes in economic policies regarding health systems but also global cooperation between states. Similarly, educational institutions will need to implement cutting-edge technologies, change policies, and collaborate with local and global partners. The vast social experiment in both distance learning and "working from home" will help to understand what innovations will be adopted and to what extent. In the midst of the restructuring of the global economic order, we are also facing a reorganization of higher education institutions that are currently transitioning towards the "next normal" future of major reforms in curriculum and redefinition of goals, objectives, vision and organizational structure that are aligned with the new reality and better adequate to future education.

## References

### Sources in Hebrew

- "Digital Israel": The headquarters of the national venture in the Ministry of Social Equality, the establishment of new implementation teams - Government Decision 151, June 18, 2015, promoting the strategic issue "Digital Israel" as derived from the assessment of socio-economic strategic situation, retrieved from <https://www.gov.il/he/departments/policies/151>*
- Arbiv. A. (2019). *Digital learning – the most comprehensive market research performed in Israel. Digital learning conference 2030.* Mofet institute, Tel Aviv.
- Avidav-Unger, A. & Eshet-Alcalay Y. (2012). *[The "innovation islands" model - effective implementation of technological innovation in educational systems: analysis of the major reasons for model failure. Teaching and Learning in the Internet Age](#)*, booklet number: 14, Achva - College of Education.
- Ben David. Y. (2019, February, 14). *[The problem with the university. Ha'Aretz.](#)*
- [Coping with the COVID-19 Virus Crisis](#)*, The Higher Education Council website, accessed on: 12<sup>th</sup> March 2020.
- Dahan. Y., Queider. S., Yona. Y., Biton. A., Hasan. S., Levi. G. et.al. (2020). *[The COVID-19 crisis and its influence on the Israeli education system.](#)*
- Detel, L. (2020). *[The COVID-19 crisis: the universities are closing the campuses. The Marker website](#)*, accessed on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020.
- [Digital Israel: government decision - formulating national policy for the use of information and communication technologies as part of a social economic strategy](#)* - December 15, 2013 decision 1406, national enterprise - Digital Israel.
- [Digital Learning, Higher Education Council](#)* (2020), accessed 9<sup>th</sup> January 2020.
- [Digital Learning: Definition and Regulation](#)* (2018) - 15 November 2018 Resolution, Higher Education Council.
- DTL L. (2020) - *[COVID-19 crisis: Universities preparing for campus closure, De- Marker](#)*, accessed 11<sup>th</sup> March, 2020.

[Fifth Call for institutions](#), *Digital Learning*, Higher Education Council, 9.1.2020.

[Following the COVID-19: Ariel University postpones opening of the semester. The tests will be in order, editorial article. Blue and White Study Website](#), (2020), accessed 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

Goldsmith, R. (2013) - [Online academic learning and its recognition, Kneset, research and information center](#).

Government Computing Authority (2014), [Government decision 2097, expanding government computing activities, encouraging innovation in the public sector, and promoting the national "Digital Israel" project](#).

Ministry of Social Equality, Headquarters of the National Enterprise, (2018) [Israel Digital](#).

HEC (2018). *Digital learning – lecturers' survey. The Higher Education Council – innovation in teaching.*

Hecht, Y. (11.6.2018). [The effectiveness of online pedagogy, in: The Israeli Internet Association](#).

Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (2019) [Higher Education in Israel - Selected Data for the School Year 2018/2019](#).

Hoffman, T. (2020), [The educational opportunity in the shadow of the COVID-19, the Israeli democracy institute](#), accessed 26<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

<https://www.calcalist.co.il/local/articles/0,7340,L-3705667,00.html> (Hebrew).

Higher Education Council, Israel 2010-2019 report (2019). [A Decade of Academic Excellence](#).

Kirsch, A. (2015). [An online Mass Teaching – "Disruptive innovation" in universities? A snapshot and a future view](#) published by Samuel Neaman Institute for National Political Research, Technion, April 2015, pp 48-50.

Kropsky, S. (2017). *The higher education council will invest 26 million NIS in online courses, Calcalist – 12.1.17.*

Ministry of Social Equality (2017), National Government Digital Program, [National "Digital Israel" Initiative](#) June 2017.

The Higher Education Council (2020), [Preparing higher education in light of the Ministry of Health guidelines on the COVID-19 virus](#), accessed 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

- RAMA (2016). *Evaluation of system program "significant learning": perceptions of students, teachers and principals in the years 2013-2015*.
- Ran, A. (2020), [Remote learning in COVID-19 days: opportunity for systemic change - Calcalist](#), accessed 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2020.
- Rotem, A. (2013) [Digital learning - rationale and recommendations for implementation](#).
- The Higher Education Council website (2020), [Save the second semester](#), accessed on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020.
- Shahar, I. (2020). [Campus Out, Zoom In: The COVID-19 at the Academy make a lasting revolution, Calcalist](#), accessed 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020.
- Silver, Y. (2020). [Distance Learning in Israel's Higher Education System - The Challenge, Calcalist](#), accessed 6<sup>th</sup> April 2020.
- Slant, A. (2020). [Online learning in Cholera \(COVID-19\): teacher online support is more important than knowledge transfer](#).
- Higher Education Council, *Statistics on Higher Education in Israel*, [Table 8 - Students in Higher Education Institutions by Degree, Type of Institution and Institution 1990](#).

### Sources in English

- Butcher, N. (2015). [A Basic guide to open educational resources UNESCO website](#), 2015.
- UNESCO (2020) [COVID-19 Impact on Education](#).
- UNESCO (2020) [Distance learning solutions](#).
- Fadel, C. (2008). *How can you prepare students for the new Global Economy?*.
- Holford, J. Griffin, C. & Jarvis, P. (2020). [International perspectives on lifelong learning: from recurrent education to the knowledge society](#), accessed April, 2020.
- i24NEWS (2020) [How COVID-19virus is forcing change within the education system](#), accessed 24<sup>th</sup> March 2020.
- Ma, J. (2020). [COVID-19virus: China first confirmed Covid-19 case traced back to November 17](#), South China Morning Post, accessed 13<sup>th</sup> March 2020.
- McAvinia. C. (2017) [Why hasn't Online Learning Transformed Higher Education?](#) Retrieved on January 25<sup>th</sup>.

- Sneader, K. & Singhal, S. (2020). [Beyond COVID-19virus: The path to the next normal](#), in: McKinsey & Company, 3.2020.
- Tam, G. & El-Azar, D. (2020). [3 ways the COVID-19virus pandemic could reshape education](#), World Economic Forum, retrieved March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020
- \*\*\*, (2005), [The 1918 flu virus is resurrected](#), *Nature*, volume 437, pages 794–795, <https://doi.org/10.1038/437794a>
- Teach Thought (2020), [The Definition of "Flipped Classroom"](#), retrieved January 6<sup>th</sup>
- WHO (2020), [WHO Director - General's opening remarks at the media briefing on COVID-19](#), World Health Organization, March 11, 2020

### **Web site links - university information (in Hebrew)**

[Tel Aviv University website](#)

[Digital pedagogy](#)

[Digital Pedagogy Explanation Booklet](#)

[Tips for transferring a live lesson from home \(synchronously\)](#)

[Distance learning - answers to questions from lecturers and other tips](#)

[Synchronous and asynchronous - what are the differences, when is it appropriate](#)

[Cooperative Learning in Online Academic Courses](#)

[Digital tools for smart home teaching](#)

[Campus IL - Tel Aviv University page](#)

[edX- Tel Aviv University page](#)

[Student Union recommendations](#)

[Practical Tips \(March 12, 2020\) - Video format - Student Association](#)

[The Hebrew University: Postponed opening of second semester + beyond online instruction.](#)

[Panopto- Quick Start Guide](#)

[Zoom and Panopto video tutorial](#) (March 24, 2020)

[Teaching in COVID-19 Days](#)

[Pedagogical guidance for online teaching](#), The Hebrew University website.

[Student Guidance - Effective Learning Recommendations](#), The Hebrew University website.

[Ben Gurion University: Teaching and learning in days of COVID-19](#), *Ben Gurion University website.*

[Synchronous instructions](#), Ben Gurion University website.  
[Asynchronous instructions](#), Ben Gurion University website.  
[Instructions for using Zoom](#), Ben Gurion University website.  
[Guidelines BigBlueButton Technology](#), Ben Gurion University website.  
[Answer questions](#), Ben Gurion University website .  
[Tips for lecturers](#), Ben Gurion University website.  
[Free online courses in Hebrew and Arabic](#), Ben Gurion University website.

[Haifa University: Preparation of the University for the Prevention of COVID-19 Expansion](#) (March, 2020), University of Haifa website.  
[Guidelines for starting a course on Moodle platform](#), University of Haifa website.

[Online Courses](#), University of Haifa website.  
[Synchronous lessons](#), University of Haifa website.  
[Lesson recording procedure](#), University of Haifa website.  
[Online Exam Procedure](#), University of Haifa website.  
[Bar-Ilan University: Letter from the President of the University](#) (March 16, 2020), Bar-Ilan University website .

[Online Learning](#) (n.d). Bar-Ilan University website.  
[Online Learning Center](#) (2015), Bar-Ilan University website.  
[Technion: Booklet "Digital Learning at the Technion"](#), Technion website  
[Zoom with a direct link](#), Technion website.  
[Panopto](#), Technion website.  
[MOODLE System](#), Technion website.  
[Video Portal](#), Technion website.

[Student Union Updates](#), Technion students' union website.  
[Learning Promotion Center](#), Technion website.  
[COVID-19 Updates](#), Technion website.  
[Facebook Technion](#), Facebook.  
[Ariel University: Student and faculty information](#) (2020), Ariel University website.

[Presentation of Zoom](#), Ariel University website.  
[Guide to synchronous lessons BBB](#), Ariel University website.  
[Mathlab - Software guide](#), Ariel University website.  
[Lecturer's Guide to ZOOM](#), Ariel University website.  
[Guide to synchronous lessons](#), Ariel University website.

[ONO Academic College: Changing the method of study in light of the Ministry of Health guidelines \(2020\)](#), *Ono Academic College website.*

[Working with a Remote Learning System – Zoom](#), *Ono Academic College website.*

[Distance Learning Guidelines - Synchronous and Asynchronous Learning – Recommendations](#), *Ono Academic College website.*

[Staff Information Station](#), *Ono Academic College website.*

[Using ZOOM](#), *Ono Academic College website.*

[College of Management: College of Management - Student Announcement \(March, 2020\)](#), *College of Management website.*

[The college's preparations in the shadow of COVID-19 virus](#), *College of Management website.*

[Interdisciplinary Center: Herzliya Interdisciplinary - COVID-19 Preparations \(March 13, 2020\)](#), *IDC Herzliya website.*

[Technical system for students and staff](#), *IDC Herzliya website.*

[COVID-19 Interdisciplinary Preparations - All Updates](#), *IDC Herzliya website.*

[Online Exam Procedure](#), *IDC Herzliya website.*

[Career Center \(2020\)](#) Facebook.

[Writing Center](#), *IDC Herzliya website.*

[Writing Center](#) (2020) Facebook.

[Mindfulness Science Institute](#), *IDC Herzliya website.*

[The Accessibility and Learning Skills Center \(2020\)](#).

[Digital Platforms: International Platform - "edX.org"](#) - Under the brand "[IsraelX](#)".

The "Campus" National Platform - [campus.gov.il](#).

# ***Student Life in Medieval Times in France and Marius Mircu's Student Experience in Romania***

**Carmen Țăgșorean\***

*Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania*

*Email: carmen.tagsorean@ubbcluj.ro*

**Abstract:** The progress of a society is partially conditioned by education, a condition valid both in the past and in the present, the education systems having particularities specific to times and people. Marius Mircu, the Romanian journalist of Jewish origin, born at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in Bacău, grew up and was educated in the middle of one of the communities that paid special attention to the learning process. Our paper will explore some of his works concerning higher education institutions. The love for the study was passed on through his press articles and volumes dedicated to this topic. For the purpose of this paper we want to bring up to date Mircu's works concerning two moments in the history of European higher education, namely the Middle Ages in France (with a focus on Paris) and the University of Bucharest – Faculty of Law (mid-20<sup>th</sup> century).

**Keywords:** education, Marius Mircu, media, universities, Romania, France

---

**\*Acknowledgements:** This work was possible with the financial support of the Operational Programme Human Capital 2014-2020, under the project number POCU 123793 with the title "Researcher, future entrepreneur - New Generation."

<https://doi.org/10.24193/JRHE.2020.1.5>



## Introduction

The year 1909, the beginning of a new century, received with hope by the inhabitants of Bacău, marks also the beginning of the life of one of the most famous keepers of the memory of the Jewish community in Romania, who constantly valued education throughout life. We are referring to Marius Mircu, born Israel Marcus, symbolically called “the dean of Romanian writers from Israel”, who was included in the elite gallery of the Romanian reportage together with Geo Bogza and F. Brunea-Fox. He diligently followed the school curriculum, becoming a passionate book lover after reading *Five Weeks in a Balloon* by Jules Verne (Mircu, 1981: 37-41). He attended the primary school and the high school in his hometown (Boys' Primary School No. 2, Primary School No. 3 and “Ferdinand I” High School), being, when time allowed him, also an apprentice in his father's tailoring workshop. Some of his high school teachers were Grigore Tabacaru, Ion Alecu, Gheorghe Ionescu and, for a short time, George Bacovia (Budău, 2004, 251). He did not share the call of his parents; education and reading determined him to dream for more: these broadened his horizons, making him believe that he could attend college in France. He chose medicine and, without telling his parents, he went to Rouen, where he followed the preparatory year of medicine, after which he moved to Paris where he attended the courses of the first year of college. He soon realizes that it is difficult to support himself and to rise to the standards required by the French higher education system. During his studies, he secured the necessary money on his own, writing articles for the *Ziarul științelor și al călătoriilor* – *The Travel and Science Journal* –, working in the harbor (it was also an experience of gaining knowledge), practicing tailoring (sawing small bushels for his fellow students). Even if he had to return to Romania, the desire to build a successful career remained just as strong, which is why he became interested in another field, which would have ensured a comfortable social and financial position, namely the field of law. He enrolled in the College of Law at the University of Bucharest, where he completed three years of study. At the end, he decided not to defend his thesis. These were already the years of anti-Jewish persecution during the interwar period, when Mircu launched

his career as a journalist, collaborated in a series of periodicals, including those dedicated to children (*Universul copiilor* – *Children's Universe*, *Dimineața copiilor* – *Children's Morning*, *Copilul evreu* – *The Jewish Child*, etc.). He published his articles both in the Romanian newspapers and in those published by the Jewish community.

He practiced journalism and learned the art of writing by reading a lot, interacting with personalities of the Romanian and Jewish cultural life. His first job, in the true sense of the word, was at the Ancora Publishing House, of S. Benvenisti, where he learned the profession of editor. It was a beautiful period in the journalist's life, as he had his first contacts with well-known writers, such as Liviu Rebreanu, Hortensia Papadat-Bengescu and Victor Eftimiu, just to mention a few names. A special place in his memory is related to the moments shared with Eugen Lovinescu, due to which he would become more attentive to the quality of expression, to the content of the articles. Moreover, an important role during his development as a journalist and writer was played by his friend, Ury Benador, who taught him what it meant to write a book, Marius Mircu considering it “an event in my life, from him I learned that the first writing of a page is not the last. I learned the craft of writing from him, although... I've been writing for a long time. And I learned that a writer is not a reporter, that a page of literature is not the result of an observation made on a certain day and time, in a certain place, but is the experience of a lifetime.” (Mircu, 1981: 361).

Marius Mircu was one of those enlightened spirits who understood, valued and promoted the importance of education throughout his life. Among the many initiatives he had throughout his life, we will introduce some of those related to the theme of our study. He set up two libraries: his private book collection (as a child and then as an adult) and one for the children, within the Jewish Community in Bucharest (during the years of the Second War World). A means of information, sometimes having an educational component, was represented by the media, Marius Mircu setting up his own newspaper during the school, symbolically called Glob. It was a handwritten newspaper, in a single copy, which the owner used to lend to his colleagues in exchange for books that he would read. Here is how the journalist characterizes this experience: “It was the first journalism school I attended, in fact, I was self-taught. The idea remained, and in about two decades I will publish a real newspaper, it had the same

format and four pages (*Jurnalul copiilor - Children's Journal*).” (Mircu, 1981: 53). He liked the idea so much that when he matured he published some of his volumes at the Glob Publishing House. In his youth he shared his beliefs through the press articles, and later he relied on his talent as a writer (developed also through the experience accumulated working in the media), and in his later years he held, in front of the Jewish communities in the Capital and in Bacău (his birth city), many scientific conferences.

His over eight decades of professional activity materialized in thousands of articles, texts, reports published in approximately 100 periodicals, in Romania and abroad (Canada, Germany, Israel). A selection of them reveals the diversity of topics addressed: *Adevărul literar și artistic - The Literary and Artistic Truth*, *Bacăul, Bună dimineața, Israel! - Good morning Israel!*, *Calendarul - The Calendar*, *Curentul pentru copii și tineret - The Children and Youth Stream*, *Dimineața - The Morning*, *Filatelica - Philately*, *Gazeta - The Gazette*, *Jurnalul copiilor - The Children's Journal*, *Jurnalul literar - The Literary Journal*, *Minimum, Ordinea - The Order*, *Pionierul - The Pioneer*, *Răspântia - The Crossroads*, *Realitatea evreiască - The Jewish Reality*, *Reporter - The Reporter*, *Tempo, Timpul familiei - Family's Time*, *Tribuna poporului - The People's Tribune*, *Unirea - The Union*, *Viața evreiască - The Jewish Life*, etc. Most of the articles on educational topics were published in the interwar period, both in the children's press and in daily newspapers.

His literary work includes 60 titles, half of the books being published in Romania, and the other half in Israel, addressing various genres and topics: *Dosar Ana Pauker - Ana Pauker's File*, *Un cimitir plin de viață - Filantropia - Filantropia, a Merry Cemetery*, *Oameni de omenie în vremuri de neomenie - Men of Honour in Times of Unkindness*, *Ce s-a întâmplat cu evreii în și din România (vol. I și III) - What Happened with the Jews in and from Romania*, *Povestea minunată a lui Shirley Temple - Shirley Temple's Wonderful Story*, *N-am descoperit America! - I Didn't Discover America!*, *Pogromul de la Iași - Yassy Holocaust*, *Extraordinara odisee a reporterilor - The Extraordinary Journey of the Reporters*, *Croitorul din Back - The Taylor from Back*, *Peste cincizeci de ani - 50 Years Later*, etc.

For his contribution to preserving the memory of the Jewish community in Romania, but also for his cultural dissemination efforts,

Marius Mircu was awarded several prizes: *Second Prize of the Youth Publishing House* (1951), *The Cultural Fund Haim Ianculovici Prize* (1970 and 1990), the *The Organization of Origin of Dorohoi Prize* (1987), the *Arcadia Prize* (1992), the *The Most Controversial Man of the Year Award*, the *Nicu Palty Prize* (1996), the *Clara and Gaston Cornescu Prize* (1997), *50<sup>th</sup> Jubilee Award* (1998), *Zion Award* (2001) and *Jacob Groper Award* (2002) (Prelipcean, 2003:18-19).

The educational component of Marius Mircu's writings includes texts published in the written press, most of them in the interwar period, which includes disparate elements of general culture, but also articles aimed at familiarizing readers with higher education in Middle Ages France or Romania.

### ***Student Life in Middle Age France***

The articles related to the way the educational process was conducted in France were part of a series published in *Calendarul – The Calendar*. Courage, unconsciousness or just the desire to write, to stay in contact with the world, we will never know. Perhaps the ambition of the journalist to prove that a Jewish reporter could publish even in a legionary periodical. According to his memoirs book *M-am născut reporter! – I was born a reporter!* the publication of the first article in *Calendarul* was a surprise, set up by one of the colleagues from *Ziarul științelor și al călătoriilor – The Newspaper of Sciences and Travels*, Tomescu (Muche) – “He said he wanted to surprise me and he indeed surprised me!” –, Tomescu handing over to the editor one of Marius Mircu's materials, not knowing that he was a Jew: “I still didn't know that my friend Tomescu (Muche) was theirs, but he didn't know that I was ours either!” (Mircu, 1998: 443-444). Given the journalist's close collaboration with the editorial staff of the *Ziarul științelor și al călătoriilor* and his thirst to be constantly informed, it seems unlikely that he did not know that Tomescu was a legionnaire. What is certain is that Marius Mircu collaborated, for a short period, with the legionary newspaper *Calendarul*, an independent newspaper with the latest news from the country and abroad, as we can read on the first page of the periodical.

Thus a series of interesting articles were published, which were unique we could say, related to the beginnings of student life in France. A theme, which unfortunately was not reissued or continued by the journalist in any of his future projects. The collaboration with the *Calendarul* was short-lived, between February and March 1932, with the reporter realizing the danger he was exposed due to his ethnic origins: "If I didn't renounce, they would have discovered the truth and it would have been worse. [...] I did not give Tomescu the following notebooks, because I was afraid that the editorial staff could find out who the author really was." (Mircu, 1998: 444) The works he did for *Calendarul* was limited to the appearance of a series of five articles, signed with the pseudonym A. S. Mircu. We consider important to mention that the newspaper *Calendarul* had a special column dedicated to students, which appeared in its Thursday edition. The articles were written based on the documentary materials collected and studied by Marius Mircu during his student years in France. An incursion into the beginnings of the Parisian university world reveals unique details related to the interests and behavior of students, but also to the relationship between the university and students, respectively between Parisian society and students. The attention given to art and culture, the emancipation that education brought to French society, naturally materialized, during Charlemagne, in an institution of higher education separate from the church, transforming France into the university center of Europe:

"All corners of Europe were sending students to Paris. France has always been the most welcoming country and had the most «student» community."

Due to this infusion of youth, Paris had become too small, as the students outnumbered the inhabitants of certain suburbs. Another feature of France, which attracted a large number of students, was the equality promoted between its own citizens and foreigners. But such a large number of students also posed certain challenges that the authorities had not anticipated:

"Students had many special privileges. The King of France himself had granted those privileges. Sometimes consciously abusing these freedoms, the Parisian students did the most fanciful and delicious things. An aristocrat unanimously, the student body began by mocking, perhaps out of mere amusement, the bourgeoisie."

Those rebellious students to whom the king had granted privileges were not simple people, but aristocrats, accustomed to a certain lifestyle. If they hadn't been able to keep their habits and lifestyle, they certainly wouldn't have stayed in Paris. Neither the journalist nor the editorial staff noticed the inclusion in the text of the pleonasm "special privileges". As now, the students wanted to take advantage of life's opportunities, being more interested in them than in studying:

"At that time, students were no different from today. There were some who clung to the book, there were others who clung to anything but the book."

If this heterogeneity of students did not bring an element of novelty, instead the relationship between university and students was a special one:

"At that time students were children of the university, and the university was the spiritual parent of all students. Teachers and students were almost the same, in every way." (*Calendarul - The Calendar*, 1932, no. 21: 3).

Those privileges, on which the reporter insists in his articles, combined with the social status of the students, led to the establishment of a quasi-anarchy. The aggressive acts of the students degenerated, and they even ended up organizing an armed break-in into the houses of the bourgeoisie and temporarily kidnapped the young women of the families. The dissatisfaction of the bourgeoisie, but also the loss of control of the masses of students led the authorities to apply measures to punish the guilty:

"The audacity and the hilarity of the students, who ultimately did nothing out of wickedness but were only eager for adventure, exasperate the authorities in the end when it comes to something."

Starting with 1218, students were barred from carrying weapons, foreign nationals caught with weapons were expelled, and the French citizens were arrested. However, it would prove to be a useless solution, the population of Paris and the bourgeoisie being outraged by the students' behaviour. The accumulated tension would break out in 1223, when an "unusual quarrel between students and bourgeoisie" resulted in the death of 302 students. The incident by itself is not shocking, but the reaction of the population is surprising, revealing the hatred they felt against the students. Demonstrating a total disrespect for the dead, their bodies were dumped in the Seine "in the mad shouting of the people." Not even the fear of God could quench the tensions that had

accumulated over time. Shocked by the reaction of the people, by that cruelty, “unmatched in history”, the professors put their hopes in the church, the institution that until the creation of the university had fulfilled its role. But the secular education would receive a new lesson, this time from the Pope, who ignored the cry for help from the professors. This decision triggered an avalanche of actions from the faculty members. Part of the academic core and some of the students left Paris in protest, but the rest of the students attacked the Cardinal's home, with the stated purpose of killing the Pope's representative. The salvation came from the King, but the Cardinal would excommunicate “the whole student body as a whole”, for which this gesture meant nothing:

“And on the matter of religion the students never made a bad heart!...”  
(*Calendarul - The Calendar*, 1932, no. 27: 3).

The relationship between students and teachers was a special one, as they supported each other. In 1229, the students and their professors left Paris again, taking refuge in cities such as Reims, Toulouse, Orleans, Montpellier and Angers where they asked the authorities to set up new universities. This is how the famous university centre of Montpellier was born, the city where most Parisian students found refuge. After two years, classes resumed in Paris, but the incidents were not long in coming, although all parties “had sworn to live in peace.” The incidents continued, the image of the students in the collective mind leading to new aggressions. Thus, in 1252 a group of four students was stopped in the street by the archers of the abbot, undressed, beaten and then imprisoned. The incident resulted in the death of one of the students, which triggered a wave of anger from the university “which suspended its courses” until the death sentence was obtained, by hanging, for two of the archers. Cardinal Jacques de Vitry “preached a serious crusade against students.” The situation staid the same for centuries, each side keeping its habits. The students' place of refuge was the famous Latin Quarter, where no one dared pursue students even when they were perpetrators.

The students were also attacked in 1404 by “the guards and servants of the Lord of Savoy.” Once again, the university took a stand to defend its students, the senior being forced to pay a fine. Moreover, the authorities ordered the demolition of his palace. The drastic measures

adopted by the authorities against the population determined the reporter to attribute to the university a privileged position:

“That was the authority of the University at that time and the relations between students and professors!”

What the journalist did not specify was the income that those students brought to Paris, the visibility and prestige that France enjoyed in the world. Information on student habits, supported and encouraged by the university itself, demonstrated the rivalry that existed between it and the church.

The students celebrated St. Nicholas on December 5<sup>th</sup>, “it was the so-called feast of the insane”, when they chose representatives who were dressed in priestly clothes, all presenting themselves to the Rector of the university. Two more holidays were organized, one in spring and one in winter,

“two days of tumultuous walks and naughty entertainment, an occasion for countless and huge scandals. [...] These were the holidays most respected by the University because in those days students paid their teachers.” (*Calendarul - The Calendar*, 1932, no. 34: 3).

The freedom they enjoyed, but also the emancipation led to the establishment of student organizations, the young people being aware that only by uniting their forces they could obtain certain privileges:

“The isolated student has neither the courage nor the ability to do what the community does. Does not matter!”

It is a simple mention, unaccompanied by details. The faithful reader will have the opportunity to discover them in future editions of the newspaper. Marius Mircu decided to present the student life of the Middle Ages because it has never “been so rich, picturesque and varied.” In the Middle Ages there were three university centers: Paris, Bologna and Prague. In Paris,

“the authorities, in agreement with the King, granted the students whatever they asked for, even if they asked for something impossible or unjust.”

It must be borne in mind that those who came to Paris to study “were not driven by need, they were all able-bodied, who came to know the pleasures of life.” Students devoted most of their time to extracurricular activities, “partying a lot.” Although the students' main goal was having fun, they were close to their professors. This is demonstrated by the students' reaction to the retirement of their most beloved professor, the theologian and philosopher Abailard, when the



students refused to attend classes. (*Calendarul - The Calendar*, 1932, no. 49: 3) The main preoccupation of the students from the Middle Ages was, according to the details offered by Marius Mircu, having fun, whose main ingredient was drinking:

“Lively people, wandering and having fun all night and all day. Students drank, revelled, destroyed, kidnapped and raped. And then they drank again. Then they started over. No containment.”

This way of life was well organized, with each student organization having its own preferences. And it was very easy to join such an association. In order to be admitted, you had to fulfil one condition: not to come alone, but accompanied by «a female companion, a friend», who in turn had to register. Those who did not have this opportunity received one *ex officio*, “from the rich stock of offers received by the association from the prettiest girls in all the districts of Paris.” Both young men and women appreciated this type of leisure, libertinism being accepted by both women and men. Moreover, the young ladies played an important role in the life of the associations, as they were the ones who voted for the president. Without students, the Latin Quarter would have remained anonymous, one of the many residential areas of Paris. The presence of the students, but especially their habits made it famous:

“With a few red cents in their pockets, the students set off in copious, cheerful and noisy crowds to the famous pubs there and had fun day and night in a row.”

Many times, when the students arrived, the employees and the clients left the place and left it to their discretion: “It is true that under such circumstances the students were grateful to them. And right thankfully they took care of the premises and the furniture.”

The article is full of irony, which comes to mitigate the impact of student behaviour (*Calendarul - The Calendar*, 1932, no. 56: 3).

The history of French university life ends abruptly. The unique details presented in the few articles may have aroused the readers' interest in discovering how university education evolved, the turmoil and reforms it had undergone to get where it was. The topic would not be addressed by Marius Mircu in any of the future collaborations. It is an unusual situation in the journalist's career because he used to capitalize on the materials on which he had previously focused his attention. If this was not possible at a periodical, in the following

collaborations the theme was resumed and detailed. Especially since, as we will see, the journalist published almost identical materials in various periodicals. We only regret that such an interesting topic, on which the reporter had gathered a rich documentary material, was not treated exhaustively:

“As a student, we gathered a rich documentary for a history of studentship. I had a thick notebook.” (Mircu, 1998: 443).

### ***Student Life in “Little Paris”***

Encouraged by the desire to share with his readers the personal experiences, maybe a little eager to leave a testimony over time on student life in the “Little Paris” in the interwar period, Marius Mircu helps us get acquainted also with the student life of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. And as each season had its favourite subjects, in the fall there was a tradition of presenting aspects related to education. It was the ideal time for the journalist to talk to us, in a series of nine articles, about the experience of the first year of college. The emotion and the impressions of participating in the first course (although it was not a new experience for the author) represent the “traps” that he prepares for *Gazeta – The Gazette’s* audience. Ordinary and standardized articles, which presented the festivities or the life of the students, were so common in the newspapers that after reading a few lines the readers lost their curiosity. Marius Mircu's creativity in combining the moments included in the articles helped him not to disappoint his readership this time either. Nothing is linear or ordinary, even if the subject is a seemingly trivial one. The heroine of the series of reports seems to take us by the hand and guide our steps in the classroom of the College of Law, to discover together with her the bustle of freshmen, without specifying that it was due to the impatience and, at the same time, the emotions of young students.

Mature enough (the journalist already had the experience of studying in France), with a few years of experience in the press, Marius Mircu successfully introduces us to the Romanian academic environment, as he experienced it. The first detail that catches our

attention is the massive presence of students in classes, which was not an isolated phenomenon as we might assume:

“The effort to sneak in to find a place and the unusual roar for me hurt me. I'm dizzy, my head is shaking, my heart is beating fast, fast.”

The atmosphere would become incendiary once the Roman law professor enters the classroom, who, to the student's surprise, “does not try to speak or calm the room”, seems absent in that tumult of student applause. The chaos caused by the students continued undisturbed until the arrival of two employees, the “true owners of the university”, who provided the students with all the necessary information. This was also the reason why the student states: “We respect no one in college more than servants.” (*Gazeta - The Gazette*, 1936, no. 804: 3).

The emotions inherent in the beginnings of the journey, combined with the more or less honest advice of older colleagues, raise a series of questions and worries in the soul of the student we met in the first article. The image of the student years, built during high school, did not coincide with reality and only now was he beginning to understand the difference between the two educational institutions:

“I am beginning to understand that the college is not the same as high school. And I'm afraid I won't find Ariadne's thread in this maze!”

Ambition was the best advisor, the student being determined to win, despite the fact that she came from a modest family who could not support her. The decision to include details concerning the financial situation of the students aimed to encourage parents to send their children to college, in areas that may seem inaccessible at first glance (*Gazeta - The Gazette*, 1936, no. 805: 3). It is one of the tips that the author gives to future students. Even if the advice of Marius Mircu is not explicitly mentioned, it can be easily decoded from the fragments that present the stages she goes through and the experience of the main protagonist. A famous figure in the halls of the faculty was Mussolini, one of those servants so respected by students, who “behaves in a friendly or severe manner, rules or threatens and, in the exercise of his supreme power, the executive power, expels.” Unlike Mussolini, who, despite his sternness, always helped polite students, the undersecretary's attitude revolted the entire student body. The miserable conditions in which they were forced to wait, but also the humble attitude they had to display before the undersecretary aroused

the anger and hatred of the students, who did not dare to show their true feelings towards the official.

If the soul of the university are the students, the brain are the professors, those who, through their erudition, help to create future professionals. The respect and popularity of students towards their teachers has depended, since the beginning of higher education, on a number of more or less objective factors, among which we mention the communication skills, personality and, last but not least, the subject they teach. Two of the professors of Law, of encyclopaedia and civil law, stood out because of their oratorical talent, but also because of the fact that they did not read from the lithographed courses:

“He gives totally original and never-presented-to-the-public lessons. They don't even have text books, that's why you have to take a lot of notes during the classes. I like that. I learn the course right during the lecture.”

The civil law faculty member was so loved by the students, that they attended his classes even if they were in another year of study: “He is the most adorable and nervous professor of all”, the only one the students listened to, who knew how to make jokes, but also to raise his voice when the situation called for it. An interesting element is related to the differentiated treatment applied to female students, which generated hostile behaviour on the part of colleagues.

Noticing this situation, our protagonist stated: “We want equality! We girls have the right to flunk exams too! Too few girls are failing now!” Pride or desire not to be viewed with hostility by colleagues? Most likely, the journalist became the voice the students' frustration and signalled an unprofessional practice in the faculty (*Gazeta - The Gazette*, 1936, no. 806: 3-5). Comparing the attitude towards their children of those who in the 1930s were parents with the current one, we notice a second difference, determined by the change of mentalities and living conditions. As everyone was allowed to listen to the classes, you had the opportunity to meet relatives of the students in the classroom, especially mothers, who came to supervise their children. Returning to the situation of the female students and their interest in studies, we discover, unsurprisingly, that there were two main categories – those interested in learning and those who did not do any work – each presenting its distinctive signs. The group of those who did not work could be studied for a short period of time, instead, the one belonging to

the first category offered the possibility to conduct an extensive study. We note that the article does not present the typology of students, which leads us to the conclusion that the author of the article was a man (*Gazeta - The Gazette*, 1936, no. 807: 3).

Day by day in the classrooms, the students made friends, socializing outside the school. An escapade in Cișmigiu Park was a reason for joy and merriment, especially since it took place during the week, during classes. The joy of the young people and their lust for life contrast sharply with the strictness of the guard from Cișmigiu who forbade them to listen to music or dance in the park, driving them out of the green paradise. In the apparent chaos of the classrooms, when everyone tried to find a place as comfortable as possible, politeness was never ignored, a place reserved not being disputed by anyone even if the rooms were overcrowded with students. Accepted as equal by the male students, the young lady students enjoyed appreciation and collegiality:

“The atmosphere is now more benevolent, more pleasant [...] the boys grew up side by side with the need to support us. [...] Our colleagues never made advances to us. We work together, seriously and fairly.”

Another indication that the student was in fact Marius Mircu is provided by the information regarding the identity of his classmates, among whom we also meet Dan T., who will later offer him the opportunity to collaborate in *Victoria* and to sign with his name during the anti-Jewish persecution (*Gazeta - The Gazette*, 1936, no. 808: 3). Led by Dan T., the classmates organized various escapades, one of which offered the reader the opportunity to draw a parallel between the lives of law students and those in liberal arts. Absent from one of the hours considered boring, the group of colleagues went to explore the Faculty of Letters, where the atmosphere contrasted with that of the halls of the Faculty of Law, which “vibrated with agitation, quarrels, laughter, full of colour and smiles.” However, the seriousness of law students can be noticed from the way they prepared for courses or seminars, but also from the fact that the library, as well as the classrooms, were not big enough (*Gazeta - The Gazette*, 1936, no. 809: 3). Returning to the classroom, we discover the opportunities that the faculty members create for their students. What the article emphasizes is the enthusiasm and involvement of students in the activities proposed by professors. Aware that the experience they had gained in those years would be

useful in their careers, students did not hesitate to volunteer whenever given the opportunity.

Among the experiences that the civil law professor proposed to the students was the possibility of giving a lecture. The happy, in fact unhappy in the first instance, winner of this right is our student herself. Overwhelmed by emotions, she manages to convince the teacher due to the speech “without fantasy, without digressions, without elegance, but confident on the argument, with solid documentation. A slender bill, with confidence in me.” (*Gazeta - The Gazette*, 1936, no. 810:3).

The beautiful period of courses and seminars passed quickly, followed by the exam session, when intelligence played the most important role because “in most subjects of law, the answers are questions of ingenuity.” In this way, the reader receives information about the qualities that a law student should have. Those who achieved this performance were usually students who did not attend the courses, who relied on adjacent means, on spontaneity, being taught enough to handle any situation. Those for whom college was not “a simple means” by which they could obtain gifts from their parents were concerned about how the exams would unfold. Tired and excited, even friends were about to quarrel. At this stage we were again part of the group of four friends. The tension temporarily subsides after Mussolini announces the students that the first exam is the one from the encyclopaedia: “I will always remember the noise from the day the program was announced. It was like the first fight, the first exam taken!...” (*Gazeta - The Gazette*, 1936, no. 811: 3). The friendship between the school colleagues helped them get through the tense moments during the session, at the end we all enjoyed the quiet vacation that followed: “All four of us took the exams!... [...] Have a great vacation my dear friends!...” (*Gazeta - The Gazette*, 1936, no. 812: 3).

The journalist's initial plan was to make a series of reports in each year of college, following the evolution of the characters we met before, but “the author had been bored in the meantime with both law and love, new topics were attacking him, they were stifling him.” There is also an explanation related to the pseudonym used to sign the articles in this series, Marius Mircu aiming to give a note of femininity to the memories, a sensitivity that gave a special charm to the turmoil of the soul, but also to the joys of the first year of college (Mircu, 1998: 404).

The articles were later reunited in the brochure *Amintirile unei studente* – *The Memories of a Female Student*.

## ***Conclusions***

The student experience in France and Romania was the basis for the creation of two series of unique articles in the Romanian interwar journalistic landscape: a presentation of the education system in France in the Middle Ages and a foray into university life in “Little Paris”, from the middle 20<sup>th</sup> century. The first series of articles details the special relationship that exists between professors and students, the subjects and some of the teaching techniques, the relationship with the state authorities, but also the patterns of student life. Going through a series of articles dedicated to university studies in Romania, we identify similar elements in terms of directions, the journalist facilitating the drawing of an image in terms of changes, progress, concerns of students from both times. The writing is full of verve, sometimes joking, but always well-structured and dense in information.

## References

### Books

- Budău, Eugen (2004). *Bacăul literar [The Literary Bacău]*, Iași: Universitas XXI Publishing House.
- Mircu, Marius (1981). *M-am născut reporter! [I was born a reporter!]*, Bucharest: Cartea Românească Publishing House.
- Mircu, Marius (1998). *M-am născut reporter! [I was born a reporter!]*. Second Edition. Volume I, Bat Yam: Glob Publishing House&Papyrus Publishing House.
- Prelipcean, Ion (editor) (2003). *Marius Mircu văzut de... [Marius Mircu seen by...]*, Bat Yam, Horodnic de Jos: Glob Publishing House&Ion Prelipcean Publishing House.

### Papers in periodical journals

- M., Carmella M., *O studentă vorbește. Ajutor, vin examenele! [A Student Is Talking. Help, the Exams Are Coming!]*, *Gazeta [The Gazette]*, III, November 20, 1936, no. 811, p. 3.
- M., Carmella M., *O studentă vorbește. Conferința mea la seminar. Un subiect piramidal [A Student Is Talking. My Lecture at the Seminar. A Pyramidal Topic]*, *Gazeta [The Gazette]*, III, November 19, 1936, no. 810, p. 3.
- M., Carmella M., *O studentă vorbește. În vârtoarea examenelor [A Student Is Talking. In the Whirlwind of the Exams]*, *Gazeta [The Gazette]*, III, November 21, 1936, no. 812, p. 3.
- Mircu, A. S. *Studentii în Evul mediu [Students in the Middle Ages]*, *Calendarul [The Calendar]*, I, February 14, 1932, no. 21, p. 3.
- Mircu, A. S. *Studentii în Evul mediu [Students in the Middle Ages]*, *Calendarul [The Calendar]*, I, February 20, 1932, no. 27, p. 3.
- Mircu, A. S. *Studentii în Evul mediu [Students in the Middle Ages]*, *Calendarul [The Calendar]*, I, February 27, 1932, no. 34, p. 3.
- Mircu, A. S. *Studentii în Evul mediu [Students in the Middle Ages]*, *Calendarul [The Calendar]*, I, March 13, 1932, no. 49, p. 3.
- Mircu, A. S. *Studentii în Evul mediu [Students in the Middle Ages]*, *Calendarul [The Calendar]*, I, March 20, 1932, no. 56, p. 3.
- Mircu, Carmella Marius, *O studentă vorbește. Aș vrea să mă văd avocată! Emoțiile primelor zile de curs [A Student Is Talking. I'd Like to Be a Lawyer! The Emotions of the First Days of College]*, *Gazeta [The Gazette]*, III, November 12, 1936, no. 805, p. 3.



- Mircu, Carmella Marius, *O studentă vorbește. Bucuriile și amărăciunile studentului la Drept* [*A Student Is Talking. The Joys and Sorrows of a Law Student*], *Gazeta* [*The Gazette*], III, November 13, 1936, no. 806, p. 3-5.
- Mircu, Carmella Marius, *O studentă vorbește. Dacă Cuvier ar fi clasificat și studentele! Câteva categorii de studente* [*A Student Is Talking. If Cuvier Had Classified The students! Several Categories of Female Students*], *Gazeta* [*The Gazette*], III, November 15, 1936, no. 807, p. 3.
- Mircu, Carmella Marius, *O studentă vorbește. Escapadă studențească. O idee și... un patefon* [*A student Is Talking. Student Getaway. An Idea and... a Gramophone*], *Gazeta* [*The Gazette*], III, November 17, 1936, no. 808, p. 3.
- Mircu, Carmella Marius, *O studentă vorbește. Noi de la Drept și cei de la alte Facultăți. O raită amuzantă* [*A Student Is Talking. We, the Law students and those from other colleges. A Funny Toddle*], *Gazeta* [*The Gazette*], III, November 18, 1936, no. 809, p. 3.
- Mircu, Carmella Marius, *Sunt studentă la Drept! Ca o școlăriță cuminte...* [*I'm a law student! Like a Good Schoolgirl...*], *Gazeta* [*The Gazette*], III, November 11, 1936, no. 804, p. 3.