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How Does the Romanian Ministry of Education Distribute Doctoral Grants Towards Public Universities?

A statistical exploration of an institutional *black-box**

Adrian Hatos

Universitatea din Oradea

Abstract: This study attempts to clarify the logic behind the allocation of doctoral grants between 2012 and 2016 in Romania, based on statistical data regarding the cohorts of doctoral students and of doctoral supervisors available in official reports and in the Ministry's statistical data. After analysing the correlations of the doctoral grant distributions for first year admissions from the autumn of 2014, the study concludes that neither the offer nor the demand of doctoral students justify the decisions of the responsible Minister to the extent in which this is justified by the distribution following the 2011 classification of universities and the subsequent correction of 2012, following the change of the majority in power. To this, individual variations are added, whose logic is not explained by any of the variables included in this analysis, namely the position held in the university classification, the number of doctoral supervisors and the number of doctoral students.

Keywords: doctoral grants, doctoral grants distribution, Ministry of Education, Romania

* The study was carried out at the suggestion of Prof. Vesselenyi Tibor, the director of the Council for Doctoral Studies of the University of Oradea, who helped with valuable suggestions. The following contributed to data collection: Adrian Pop (PhD student in sociology), Gabriela Jitaru, and Marlena Rotaru (both very kind colleagues from [UEFISCDI](http://uefiscdi.ro)).

Introduction

During the last two decades of the previous century, pushes toward a more responsible allocation of financial resources for public universities have been made in the advanced democracies on both sides of the Atlantic. Explained to a large degree by phenomena like the post-WWII massification of higher education and its subsequent credential inflation, on the one hand, and by the neo-liberal revolution and the pressures toward more effective use of public resources of the New Public Management, on the other, this push towards budgetary accountability has usually entailed the introduction of some sort of so-called performance-based funding of public universities (Herbst, 2007). Such a change is expected to increase financial accountability of the university, as well as the quality of its deliverables and processes - be them teaching or research related (Geuna & Martin, 2003; Herbst, 2007; Orosz, 2012).

Funding of Romanian public universities followed closely this path. In 2003, the first performance-based funding mechanism was put in practice, which covered all the three cycles of tertiary education, including the doctoral studies¹ (Vîiu, 2015). Around 20 to 30% of the funds were yearly allotted based on performance indicators, which included both input and output variables. This is a ratio similar to other European countries (Orosz, 2012).

Considered on a cycle basis, with a focus on doctoral studies, performance-based funding is actually less correlated with the performance indicators: until 2012, universities had the freedom of distributing the performance-based funding across levels. Since 2012, doctoral grants under a Funding Methodology², grants which correspond to PhD scholarship openings, have been distributed directly by the Ministry of Education. It is clear that the main policy instrument concerning doctoral studies and research is the distribution of doctoral grants. The number of doctoral grants awarded to a university, which

¹ All the documentation of funding methodologies of public Romanian higher education institutions for the 1999-2011 can be accessed at: http://vechi.cnfis.ro/fd/f_baza.html.

² Which can be read at: <http://www.cnfis.ro/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/042512-MetodologieCNFIS2012-ordin.pdf>

continues the number of subsidized openings prior to 2012, is set at least partially on a basis of input indicators which, through the mechanisms of official claims on behalf of the university from the Ministry, produces the so-called “history based” (Miroiu & Vlăsceanu, 2012) criteria which is the local name for path-dependency in resource allocation.

Despite the complicated methodology included in the Ministerial Orders regarding funding allocations towards universities, the manner in which doctoral grants are distributed is the result of an institutional *black-box* which. In turn, this often gives rise to questions not only regarding the transparency of the methodology, but also concerning the policy objectives of particular public funding allocation for the organisation of doctoral studies as well as the consequences of such apparently arbitrary decisions on the quality of doctoral studies in our country.

In the following pages we will try to clarify as much as possible the logic behind the allocation of doctoral grants³ on the basis of statistical data available concerning doctoral students cohorts – according to calendar years, to years of study and to type of funding – and also on the basis of the data regarding doctoral supervisors available in the databases of the Ministry of Education.⁴ My focus will be primarily towards understanding year-on-year changes in number of doctoral grants allocated. we expect that, besides the public opacity of the allocation and re-allocation algorithms for doctoral grants, the evolution of the number of grants reflects not just the inertia of the system (expressed through the auto-correlation from one year to the next) but also the changes in the input indicators which, as such, can also justify the requests for grants submitted by the universities.

We will start by describing at first the national evolutions of PhD student numbers and then we will explore the logic of the distribution of doctoral grants for the first year to universities for the 2014 admission, linking this variable to the input indicators available in the

³ According to official documents, a doctoral grant is equivalent to a scholarship-holding doctoral place and corresponds to a certain budget allocation covering all the expenses per academic year that are incurred for the coordination and training of a doctoral student. See, for example, [OMECS nr. 3888/26.05.2015](#).

⁴ Due to the various changes in the title of the responsible Ministry, we prefer the simple title of Ministry of Education in this document.

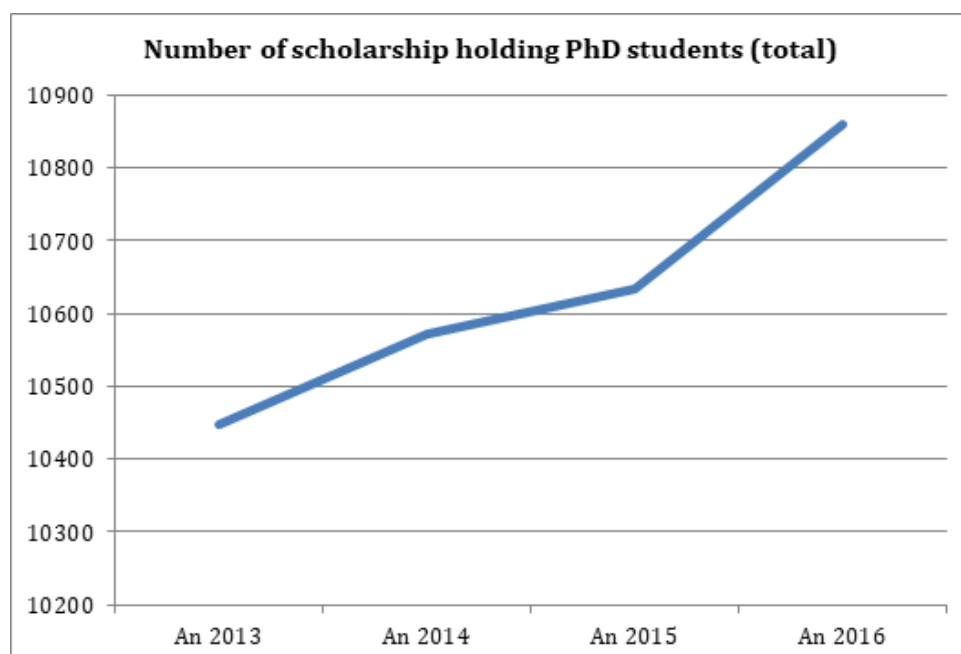
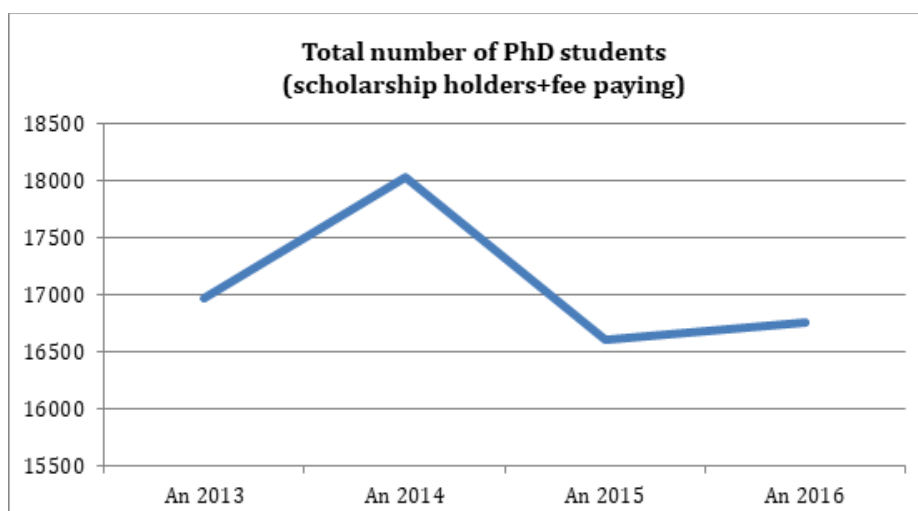
statistical reports, namely the number of PhD coordinators, global doctoral students and the number of doctoral grants in 2012. At the end of the study we will draw some conclusions and also put forward some policy recommendations for a transparent, fair and efficient practice of distributing public resources for doctoral training.

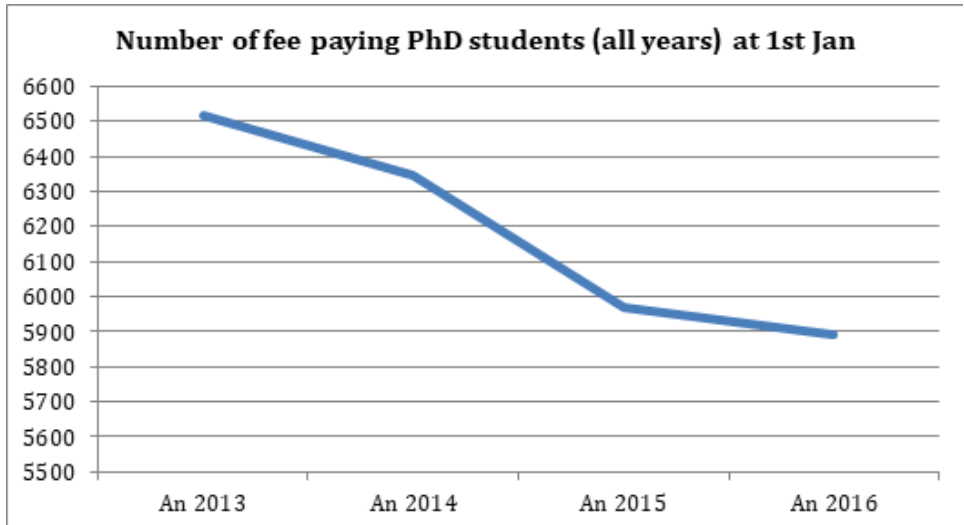
National Evolution of PhD Students

Developments between 2012 and 2016 of doctoral candidates registered at the Ministry of Education indicate sudden variations in the total number of doctoral candidates between 2013 and 2015 (a sharp increase followed by a steep decline) as well as a steady increase in the number of scholarship-holding PhD students, alongside an uninterrupted decrease of the number of fee-paying doctoral students.

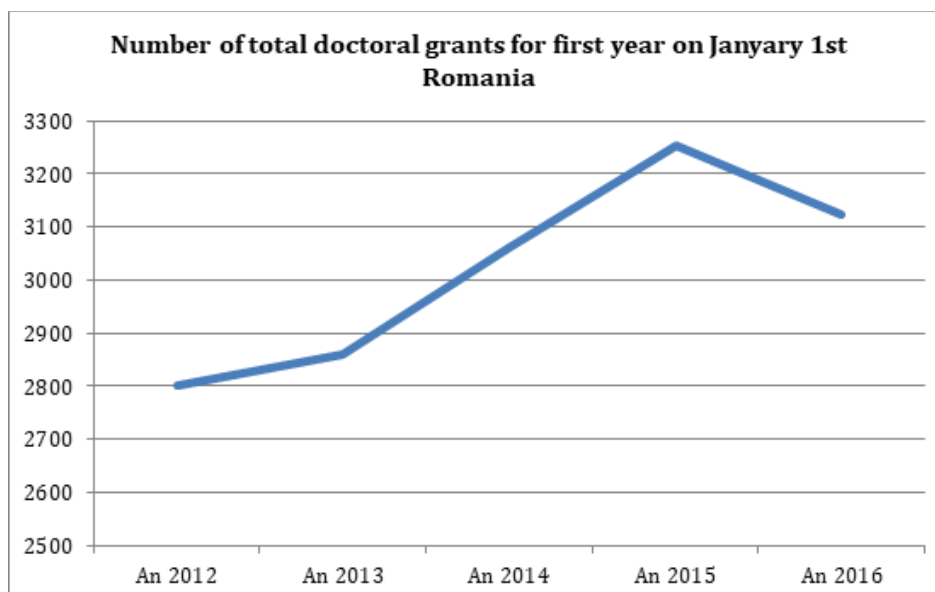
The seemingly disorderly evolution of the total number of doctoral students may be probably partly attributed to the impact of doctoral scholarships allocated through the [SOP HRD](#) program - these have motivated extrinsically many young people to enroll in a doctoral programme, subsequently determining by force of their own regulations, massive exits from the doctoral programme by the time of finalizing the projects. The impact of doctoral scholarship programs funded through the European Social Fund on the quality of doctoral programmes in the country remains to be assessed.

The general tendency is, however, to decrease the share of the number of fee-paying PhD students and to increase the share of scholarship-holding PhD students in the total PhD population.





Increasing the number of doctoral grants is probably the result of a governmental policy meant to support universities facing declining number of students, including PhD students. Thus, for the admissions between 2012 and 2014, the number of grants allocated for the first year of doctoral studies increased from 2800 to 3254 (a 16% increase). This policy has undergone a fall back for the 2015 admission, when for the first time the number of grants for the first year declined by 131 countrywide.



This adjustment was not applied homogeneously to all universities. Three universities benefited from increases in the number of grants by at least ten units, namely: the Technical University "Gheorghe Asachi" from Iași (19 grants), the Polytechnic University of Bucharest (12 grants) and USAMV from Bucharest (10 grants). Several other universities benefited in turn from increases in the number of doctoral grants even if less important in absolute figures.

However, 27 universities lost a total of 182 doctoral grants in comparison to the previous year. 16 universities lost during the adjustment at least 10% of the number of doctoral grants they had received the previous year.

	first year grants in minus (2016 vs 2015)	grants in minus as percentage of the grants of the previous year (2016 vs 2015)
Universitatea Maritimă din Constanța	-5	-0.50
Universitatea „Dunărea de Jos” din Galați	-21	-0.32
Universitatea „Alexandru Ioan Cuza” din Iași	-49	-0.22
Universitatea din Petroșani	-3	-0.21
Universitatea de Medicină și Farmacie din Craiova	-6	-0.21
Universitatea de Arte din Târgu Mureș	-1	-0.20
Universitatea din Pitești	-3	-0.18
Universitatea „Ovidius” din Constanța	-5	-0.16
Universitatea „Valahia” din Târgoviște	-3	-0.15
Universitatea „Transilvania” din Brașov	-10	-0.15
Universitatea din Oradea	-4	-0.13
Universitatea de Științe Agricole și Medicină Veterinară a Banatului Timișoara	-5	-0.13
Universitatea de Medicină și Farmacie „Iuliu Hațieganu” Cluj-Napoca	-11	-0.13
Academia de Muzică „Gheorghe Dima” Cluj-Napoca	-2	-0.12
Universitatea Națională de Arte din București	-2	-0.12
Universitatea „Lucian Blaga” din Sibiu	-5	-0.11

Table 1. Doctoral grants gained and lost in 2016 as compared to 2015

These variations and inconsistencies in the evolution of the distribution of the number of doctoral grants raise questions about the motivations behind the allocation schemes. During the 2011 admission, the distribution of the doctoral- places was based on the results of the 2011 classification. Subsequently, the classification was no longer issued, being even challenged in court, so the subsequent allocations of the scholarship-funded doctoral places are probably mostly correlated with the 2011 distribution, which was based on the classification and on the result of the next year's correction. Reallocations such as the one noted in the previous paragraph certainly have a justification other than the pursuit of scientific performance or educational efficiency indicators.

How were the first-year doctoral grants been awarded between 2012 and 2016?

We explored the allocation of the number of doctoral grants according to several characteristics that could justify the administrative decisions for the distribution of resources for doctoral schools:

- 1) the results of the 2011 university classification;
- 2) the number of coordinators and the number of PhD students per coordinator;
- 3) the total number of doctoral students in the university (indicator of the local demand for doctorates);
- 4) the distribution of first-year doctoral grants after the 2012 autumn admission.

In other words, we tested the assumptions that the allocation is based on the doctorate offer (number of coordinators), the doctorate demand (number of fee-paying doctoral students) and by a "historical" criterion, i.e. by institutionalizing the path dependence.

Methodological aspects

The analyses in this study are based on statistical data regarding the number of doctoral candidates and doctoral coordinators drawn from two sources. Some of the information was extracted from the CNFIS Annual Public Reports of 2012, 2013 and 2014⁵. More recent data were obtained from ANS platform - "National Platform for Collection of Statistical Data for Higher Education", which can be accessed partially at: <https://date.invatamant-superior.ro/>⁶. Some methodological issues deserve to be highlighted here:

The data published by CNFIS or those extracted from the ANS do not contain information about several public education institutions that organise doctoral studies - the National Academy of Information, the Military Academy, etc. From this point of view, the analysis is, obviously, incomplete.

Data from the CNFIS reports or from the ANS databases used are those relating to the situation as of 1st January of the reporting year. Thus, the data on first year doctoral grants for 2013 are those corresponding to the September 2012 admission.

For 1st January 2016, i.e. the most recent data used in this study, some universities did not report complete data when the analyses were performed, so we worked in most cases with data valid on 1st January 2015, the dependant variable on the following pages being the number of doctoral grants on universities at the September 2014 admission.

We did not always have complete data from all universities so the number of cases may vary from one analysis to the other. Thus, although the database we worked with includes data on 48 public universities, some analyses were conducted on only 46 or 47 universities.

Because we cannot speak of statistical data at sample level but at population level, the analyses in the following pages do not include significance tests.

⁵ In the extraction of the data from the CNFIS reports I was helped by Adrian Pop (PhD student in sociology).

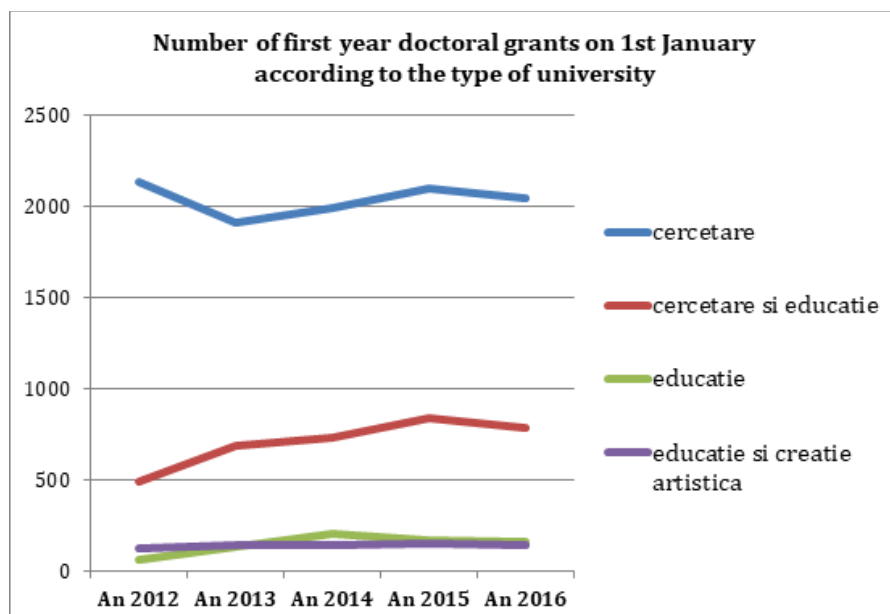
⁶ ANS database querying was conducted by Gabriela Jitaru and Marlena Rotar from UEFISCDI whom I thank for their support.

Evolutions considering the university classification

Developments in the number of first year grants broken down by type of university, according to the 2011 classification, show that an important correction was made at the September 2012 admission (January 2013 data). If on January 1st, 2012, over 75% of first-year doctoral grants were distributed towards advanced research universities, by reducing by 222 the grants allocated to universities in this category and by increasing by 199 the number of grants allocated to universities in the "research and education" category, the percentages changed significantly: 67% of the grants for advanced research universities and 24% for research and education universities. These percentages have remained relatively unchanged since then, even after the correction concerning the 2015 admission, when the number of doctoral grants decreased for the first time for all four categories of universities. In relative terms, however, the decrease was more important for research and education universities.

Classes of universities	Year 2012	Year 2013	Year 2014	Year 2015	Year 2016
Advanced research and education	76	67	65	64	65
Research and education	17	24	24	26	25
Education	2	5	7	5	5
Education and artistic creation	4	5	5	5	5

Table 2. Percentage of first-year grants at 1st January, on university types under Law no. 1/2011 (%)



Thus, seemingly, the analysis of the official types of universities suggests a period during which research and education universities benefited - or rather, a period when the advantage of the advanced research universities and education was gradually diminished, a phase followed by an end of this trend over the past two years of the period analysed. The temptation to associate these trends with changes in the political composition of governments is hard to resist.

Allocation according to the number of PhD coordinators

Another variable that could determine the number of grants awarded by the Government could be the number of doctoral coordinators. Theoretically, being a doctoral coordinator means a high level of research performance and the difference between university classes could be determined primarily by the number of doctoral schools and / or by the number of doctoral coordinators.

On 1st January 2016, the 47 public universities included in the report employed a total of 2124 PhD coordinators (associates and tenured). Of these, more than half were employed by advanced research

and education universities where both the total and the average number of coordinators are double in comparison to similar indicators in research and education universities.

Classes of universities	Average	Total number	N
Advanced research and education	110	1210	11
Research and education	46	692	15
Education	13	140	11
Education and artistic creation	8	82	10
Total	45	2124	47

Table 3. Average and total number of PhD coordinators according to university classes on January 1st, 2015

Given that the share of doctoral coordinators employed at advanced research and education universities is about 57% of the total, the fact that about 65% of first year doctoral grants are allocated to these universities indicates an administrative advantage of these universities, an advantage which is probably justified by the results of the 2011 evaluation and attests to the better scientific outputs of these universities.

This advantage is immediately made visible by calculating of the average number of first year grants per coordinator (see Table 4): the lowest number of grants per coordinator is recorded for universities of scientific research and education while the similar average for universities of advanced research is 29.5% higher. Surprisingly, the state is the most generous with universities of scientific education and artistic creation.

Classes of universities	Average number of first year doctoral grants (1st Jan 2016) / coordinators (1st Jan 2015) ⁷
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⁷The calculation of the average by reporting the number of grants on 1st January 2016 to the number of coordinators on 1st January 2015 is primarily justified by the availability of data – 1 October 2016 when we conducted the analysis, some universities had not yet reported all the data pertaining to 1st January 2016. On the

Advanced research and education	1.67
Research and education	1.29
Education	1.37
Education and artistic creation	2.22
Total	1.52

Table 4. Average number of first year doctoral grants (1st Jan 2016) / coordinators (1st Jan 2015)

The regression lines of the number of first year doctoral grants, depending on the number of coordinators on university classes, clarify the relationship between the two variables better. This relation is best determined for advanced research universities ($R^2 = 0.618$) and the least determined for universities of education and artistic creation ($R^2 = 0.346$). Table 5 shows that, on average, for each PhD coordinator, advanced research and education universities receive more than two grants, while each coordinator brings less than one grant to research and education universities.

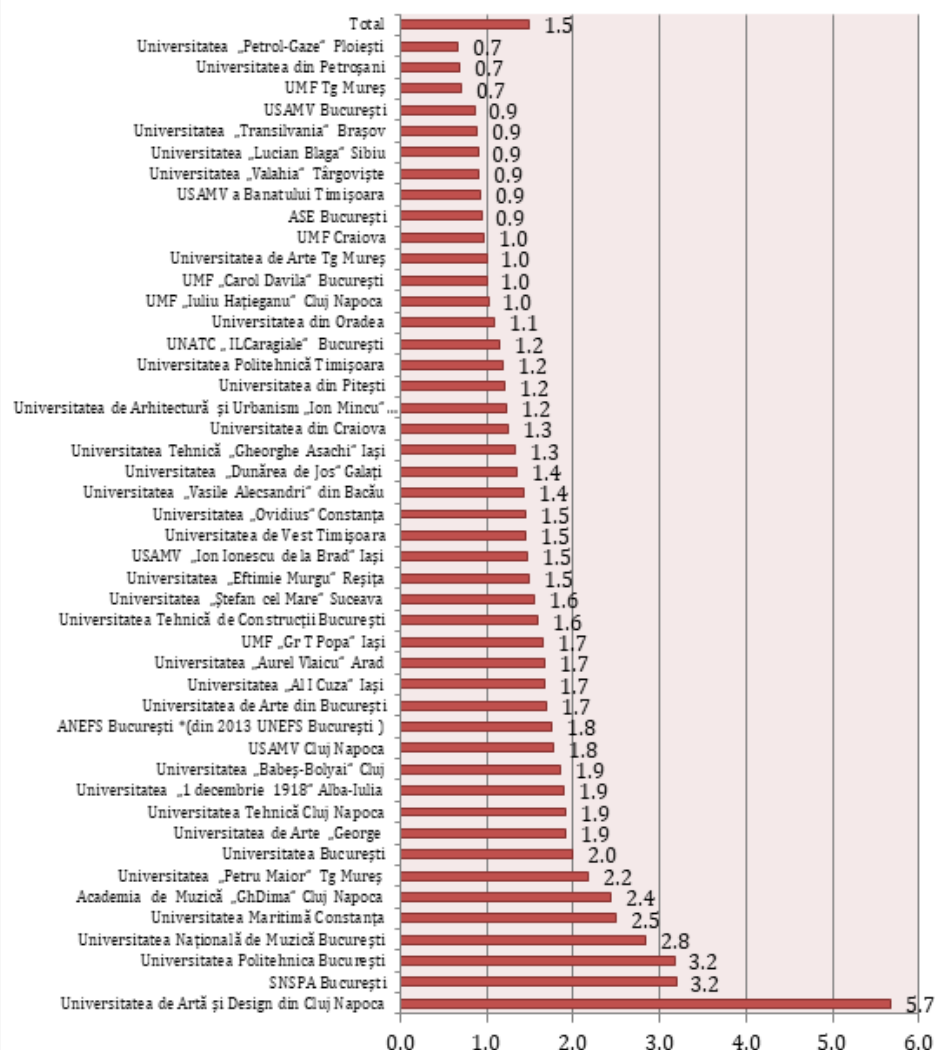
Classes of universities	Constant	Coefficient – number of coordinators
Advanced research and education	-45.8	2.1
Research and education	14.6	0.7
Education	1.7	0.9
Education and artistic creation	7	0.9

Table 5. Coefficients of the regression of the number of first year grants on 1st January 2016 according to the number of coordinators on 1st January 2015

other hand, the methodological decision may also have a logical justification - we assume that the allocation decision depends on the number of coordinators of the previous year.

The ratio between the number of doctoral grants and the number of PhD coordinators has a great heterogeneity among universities. At an average of 1.52 grants / coordinator, it ranges from a minimum of 0.7 to a spectacular maximum of 5.7 at the University of Art and Design from Cluj. After this university with an extreme number, the top three is completed by the Politehnica University from Bucharest and by SNSPA, also in Bucharest.

Number of first-year grants / coordinator (2015)
average value = 1.52



Relation with the number of doctoral students

Another plausible hypothesis regarding the judgments on which universities are awarded doctoral grants would be that the Ministry of Education makes this distribution according to the doctoral demand, as evidenced by the number of doctoral candidates. The total number of doctorates, including the number of fee-paying doctoral students, is an indicator of the demand for doctoral studies.

The regression of the number of doctoral grants allocated to each university for the first-year admission in 2015 (figures valid on 1st January 2016) according to the total number of PhD students on the same date, by university class, shows a heterogeneous relationship between the two variables depending on the type of university. Thus, the studied relationship is the strongest in the case of the advanced research and education universities, on the one hand, and in the case of the universities of education and artistic creation, on the other. In these cases, universities receive a scholarship-funded place for each 5th and 10th PhD student, respectively. The relationship is far weaker for the other two classes of universities. On average, research and education universities receive a scholarship-funded place for more than 100 PhD students!

Classes of universities	Constant	Coefficient – Total number of PhD students	R2
Advanced research and education	1.8	0.21	0.695
Research and education	18.9	0.09	0.468
Education	8.3	0.05	0.546
Education and artistic creation	5.1	0.11	0.777

Table 6. Coefficients of the regression of the number of first year doctoral grants according to the total number of doctoral students on 1st January 2016 by type of universities

The simple explanation of this apparent lack of coherence between the allocation of doctoral grants and the total number of PhD students is that the number of grants is not correlated with the number of PhD students and, in other words, is not determined by the local doctoral demand.

A simple interpretation of the number of doctoral students in relation to the number of fee-paying doctoral students on official university classes reveals one of the main differences between the four classes of higher education institutions. Thus, in the case of advanced research and education universities, this ratio is 2.6 whereas for research and education and education universities it is around 1. In other words, while advanced research universities can afford to recruit for the fee-paying places less than a third of PhD students, research and education universities have almost half of the doctoral students paying for their studies. For all public universities included in the Ministry's statistics, this ratio is 1.8 scholarship holding PhD students for one fee-paying PhD student.

Classes of universities	Scholarship holding / Fee paying PhD Students on 1st Jan 2015	N
Advanced research and education	2.6	11
Research and education	1.1	15
Education	0.8	11
Education and artistic creation	1.7	10
Total	1.8	47

Table 7. Number of scholarship-holding PhD students according to the number of fee-paying doctoral students by type of universities on 1st January 2015

The impact of this distribution by form of funding should not be underestimated and requires further analysis. It is known that the fees paid by doctoral students are lower than the amount of the doctoral grant so that a preponderant funding from grants automatically means access to more financial resources than in the case of funding from fees. Moreover, the motivational aspect should not be neglected neither- fee

paying students, who in other words are self-financing, may have other expectations and aspirations concerning their doctoral degrees than those who receive public doctoral grants. In addition, self-financing doctoral candidates are often matriculated in the form of "reduced frequency" and, because they are often employed, it is difficult to include them in the research activities of their doctoral coordinators or of their colleagues from the faculty.

In relation to the objective of financing scientific performance through doctoral grants, the current allocation mechanism is one that works to a degree that is difficult to establish, in a logic of the vicious circle. Universities benefiting from a large average number of grants in relation to the number of coordinators have better funding and doctoral candidates better motivated for scientific activity, unlike universities that have less access to public funding. It is quite clear that, if the current situation remains unchanged, in the medium and long term the scientific productivity gap between the two categories of universities will increase, which creates the prerequisites for increasing differentiation in access to doctoral grants and so on.

Still, the fact that research and education universities are able to recruit an important number of fee-paying PhD students shows that there is an important demand for doctoral studies in their areas and fields. This demand, which is often local and can not be transferred to other universities, should also be considered for the doctoral funding policies, at least in terms of optimizing the use of research resources, including through more nuanced mechanisms for stimulating performance in doctoral research.

Final analysis: what determines, after all, the doctoral grant allocation?

The analyses so far have indicated that the number of doctoral grants allocated for the admission sessions varied strongly among the classes of universities established as a result of Law 1/2011 and that this indicator is poorly dependent on the number of doctoral coordinators or number of total PhD students in a university. Obviously, the most plausible predictor for awarding grants for the September 2015

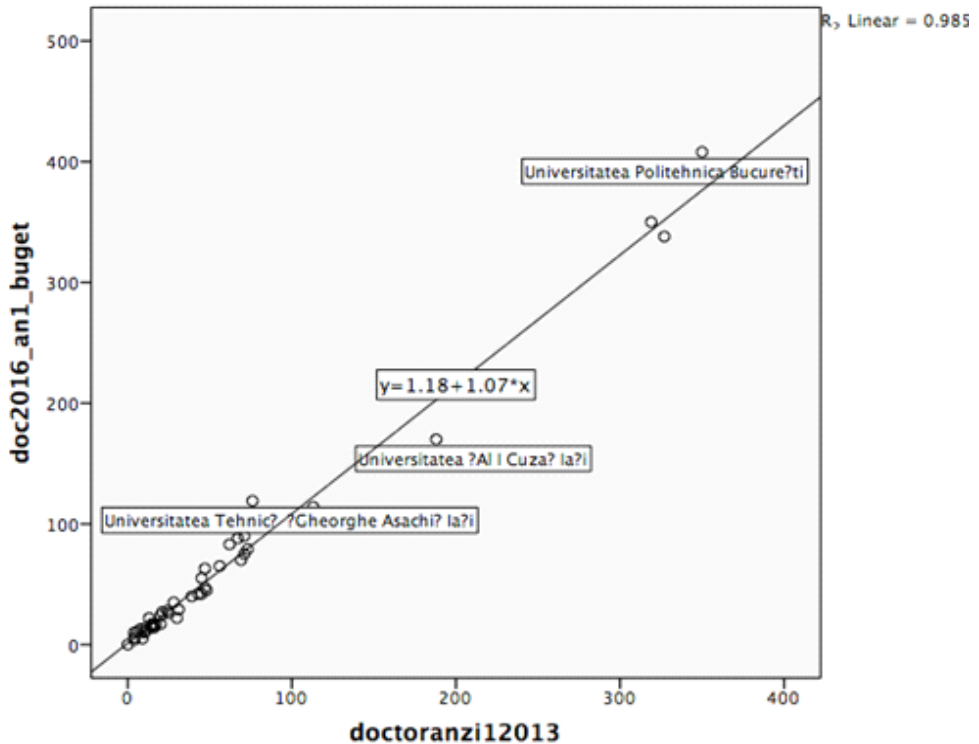
admission is the similar number corresponding to the September 2012 admission.

We tested this hypothesis by elaborating the simple regression model of the number of grants received in September 2015 based on the number of grants received in September 2012 and the number of coordinators on January 1st, 2015. The resulting model explains 98.4% of the variance in the number of grants received in September 2015 but, as shown in the table below, this explanatory capacity is almost entirely due to the variable number of grants received in September 2012.⁸

	B	Beta
Constant	1.835	
First year scholarship holding PhD students on 1st January, 2013	1.091	1.011
Total number of coordinators on 1st January 2015	-0.04	-0.02

Obviously, there are positive or negative deviations from university to university since 2013. The scattering cloud of the two variables shows that, as of January 1st, 2013, the Polytechnic Universities of Iași and Bucharest have had the most to gain, while "A.I. Cuza" University of Iași lost the most significant number of doctoral grants. However, these losses and gains can not be explained by the evolution of the number of coordinators or of the number of fee-paying PhD students.

⁸ Because estimation is made on the population and not on the sample, neither the standard errors nor the multicollinearity measures will not be made public in this article. On the other hand, as someone may ask the September 2011 data is not used, we warn that the correction of the doctoral grant allocation in September 2012 compared to September 2011 was important enough so that the regression similar to the 2011 data would have a R^2 of "only" 0.84.



Conclusions and recommendations

The present study aimed at clarifying one of the problems that has been troubling university managers in Romania: how the Ministry of Education allocated the doctoral grants between 2012 and 2015. Perhaps a direct question sent to the decision-makers in the ministry would have clarified the situation, but since the investigated administrative-distributive phenomenon is rather opaque, we felt it might be helpful to look for answers in statistics. Following the analysis of the statistical data on doctoral students and doctoral coordinators from the majority of public universities in Romania during 2011-2015, we came to the following conclusions:

The allocation of doctoral grants is based on the "historical" criterion, having as reference the allocation related to the September 2011 admission, following the classification of the universities and the

ranking of study programmes carried out under Law 1/2011 and GD 789/2011 and especially, as shown by the analyses in this study, based on the distribution resulting from the September 2012 admission.

Despite this path dependence, from one year to the next and from one university to another, variations were difficult to understand. Such an interesting variation was the correction of the 2012 doctoral grants in favor of research and education universities. Another seemingly arbitrary correction is the reduction in the number of doctoral grants in 2015 that affected various Romanian universities to different extents. The explanation by changes in the political structure of governments can not be ignored.

The allocation of doctoral grants is not correlated with the number of PhD coordinators in universities, nor with the total number of doctoral students - in other words neither with the offer nor with the demand for doctoral studies.

The current allocation, largely based on performance indicators collected in the 2011 ranking exercise and on subsequent corrections, privileges advanced research universities and, unexpectedly, universities of education and artistic creation.

Despite the budgetary constraints determined by the grant allocation system described above, research and education universities enroll a large number of fee-paying PhD students. This is due, on the one hand, to the existence of a relatively large number of doctoral coordinators and a small number of doctoral grants (*supply side*) but also to an obvious demand for doctorates. Budgetary constraints as well as the specificity of fee-paying doctoral students' activity create the premises of creating or perpetuating a situation of lack of scientific performance that future evaluations of universities or of doctoral schools will have to face and ironically will turn it into the basis for future schemes of doctoral grants allocation.

The above results allow us to make some short policy recommendations regarding the allocation of doctoral grants:

Apart from the scientific performance indicators of universities (which often have nothing in common with the activity of doctoral schools) or of doctoral schools, on the one hand, or the strategic priorities on the other, the allocation of doctoral grants must also be correlated with the number of doctoral coordinators and the doctorate demand indicated by the number of fee-paying doctoral students. The allocation scheme

should reward scientific added value relative to specific conditions, to prevent the decline in the quality of performant doctoral schools (or potentially performant precisely because of underfunding) and prevent inflationary trends in cases where important budgetary constraints are introduced.

It is necessary to introduce transparency mechanisms for the logic of distribution of doctorate grants to universities.

The transparency recommendation should be extended to the publication and collection of doctorate data in the fields that are not even included in the Ministry's statistical data: military sciences, information and public order – as it is hard to accept that scientific scholarships funded from public resources are exempt from to public accountability.

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Online Teacher Evaluation by Students - Upgrading or Downgrading of the Process? Case study: West University of Timișoara

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Abstract: In this article we analyse the main consequences of replacing the pen-and-paper questionnaires used for teacher evaluation by students with an online version, at West University of Timișoara. The students' feedback is a legislative requirement, is carried out every semester starting from 2007 and, as of 2016, in our university, was transferred to an online platform. We are going to make a sociological analysis of this transformation, following two variables: the number of evaluator students and the level of the marks. Even though the online evaluation is more accessible for students, the general trend is a decrease in their involvement, with direct consequences on the validity of the feedback. Is it only a lack of interest of the digital-born students? Are other socio-cultural dimensions of the academic culture involved? What can be done to exceed the critical level of 30% participation? These are just a few questions that we will try to answer in our paper, with a rather more descriptive approach than a theoretical or conceptual one.

Keywords: students' feedback, online, evaluation

Introduction

Nowadays, quality assurance in higher education is not just optional anymore, but certainly a very consistent field, assumed by each institution that intends to meet European criteria and standards. On the basis of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (ESG2015) adopted by the ministers for Higher Education, across the EU a common framework for the implementation of quality assurance in higher education institutions was defined. The feedback generated by the students' evaluations of the teaching process is one of the most relevant components of quality assurance, due to its main function of adjustment and control.

West University of Timișoara (WUT) is one of the top ten Romanian universities with 13,800 students in the academic years 2017-2018. Starting from 2007, in WUT, the semesterly teacher evaluation by students with pen-and-paper anonymous questionnaires was implemented. Starting with 2016, the process was updated to an online dedicated platform, accessible via Internet from any device, based on the university student ID. Even though personal data is not recorded on the platform, the fear of losing anonymity can be a main factor of decreasing participation to half, from around 5,000 students respondents to the offline questionnaire to around 2,500 respondents to the online version. In this paper, we will try to make a comparison between the last two semesters when the teacher evaluation were carried out on paper (2015-2016) and the first two semester of online evaluation (2016-2017).

From a theoretical point of view, we understand quality as a complex multidimensional concept that involves the following meanings (Schindler et. al, 2015): purposeful, exceptional, transformative and accountable. Quality in higher education activities is first a purpose in itself, as all involved processes are structurally oriented to achieve a high level of performance for upgrading the professional status of the students with very accountable competences. This approach is directly correlated with the purposes of higher education established by the Council of Europe in 2007: active

citizenship, employability, personal development and research and innovation (2016-2017).¹ To reach these goals, first it is necessary to develop a culture of quality in each higher education institution and thus to transform that which is compulsory into a real need. In other words, it is very important to follow the qualitative standards and criteria not because of a formal request but for specific institutional and personal purposes.

Concerning the teacher evaluation by students, this is a very important part of the quality assurance in higher education system that has been included (detailed to a bigger or smaller degree) into the formal legislation all over Europe. There are various ways to implement this request, from evaluations carried out every semester to evaluations once per study cycle (once every three years for bachelor degrees or once every two years for master programmes). In many countries (the Netherlands, Portugal, Slovenia and others) the participation of the students in this process is compulsory and represents a condition for accessing an exam session. In the West University of Timișoara, in 2016 an internal procedure was adopted by the University Senate, that makes this evaluation a compulsory one for students in order to gain access to the exams. They have at least to login into the platform and to mark the option “I don’t want to fill in the evaluation for this semester”, but due to a very low rate of participation, this rule is not yet fully operational. We now have the experience of four semesters of online evaluations and we can already draw some conclusions about the upgrading of the process.

In this paper, we will focus on the last two semesters of offline evaluation (pen-and-paper) and the first two semesters of online evaluation, namely the academic years 2015-2016 and 2016-2017. The offline evaluation usually was organised in the penultimate week of each semester with teachers and students from different departments. They were going to classes and applying the questionnaires but not in the presence of the teacher who taught that specific course or seminar. The questionnaire was filled-in anonymously, and it was filled only by the students who attended that class of the course/seminar, without the

¹https://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/PublicResponsibility/Explanatory%20Memorandum%20public%20responsibility_EN.asp

possibility of including other answers at a later date. Moreover, the students had to give 10 different marks for each course and seminar and thus, for an average programme with seven subjects, that meant 14 educational units to be evaluated and 140 marks to be given in a very short time (around 15 minutes). Of course, in all these questionnaires, there were very few variations among the marks for a course/seminar. The implementation of the online evaluation has come with a slightly different approach; first, the students have to choose whether they want to carry out or not the evaluation. If they choose to do it, then they are taken to a second window with a list of their subjects and teachers and they have to give a general mark. Also, they can write a message/comment for the teachers for each subject and, furthermore, they can go to an in-depth evaluation if they want to. Thus, the marks on the nine distinct criteria (similar with the content of the offline questionnaire) are optional and we assume (as a sociological presumption) that they are filled-in only when the students really want to give a feedback on a basis of relevant participation. The online platform can be accessed from anywhere via an Internet connection and it is optimised for any kind of devices and OS.

Methodology

For this primary descriptive analysis, we have taken the average marks for each teacher for the period 2015-2017 (four semesters) and several personal variables: faculty, academic position, age and gender. All the data will be presented in an aggregate manner, without any possibility of identifying a personal evolution. Our research question tries to identify whether there are patterns in the evaluation concerning the consistency and the level of marks on the basis of the type of study, gender and age of teachers. The main hypothesis is that there are significant differences in the level of marks between the offline and online evaluations. We will investigate also the differences between fields, and in the age and gender of the teachers for the two types of

evaluations. For this, we used a simple database that included the faculty affiliation, the gender, age and the four marks for each teacher.

Results

The descriptive statistics for the investigated case study are presented in the following table (data for the academic year 2016-2017):

	Teachers	%	Students	%	Students / Teachers	Field
Department for Training of Teaching Staff	23	3.5	-	-		SS & H ²
Faculty of Art and Design	55	8.5	691	5.1	12.6	Arts
Faculty of Chemistry, Biology and Geography	48	7.4	730	5.4	15.2	Science
Faculty of Economics and Business Administration	134	20.6	3692	27.2	27.6	SS & H
Faculty of Law	40	6.2	1455	10.7	36.4	SS & H
Faculty of Letters, History and Theology	102	15.7	1511	11.1	14.8	SS & H
Faculty of Mathematic and Informatics	49	7.5	1299	9.6	26.5	Science
Faculty of Music and Theatre	38	5.8	333	2.5	8.8	Arts
Faculty of Physics	26	4	207	1.5	8.0	Science
Faculty of Political Science, Philosophy and Communication Science	38	5.8	1042	7.7	27.4	SS & H
Faculty of Sociology and Psychology	68	10.5	1838	13.6	27.0	SS & H
Faculty of Sport	29	4.5	761	5.6	26.2	SS & H

² Social Sciences & Humanities.

Gender	%	Age (2016)	%	Academic title	%	Profile (teachers)	%
female	52.5	< 35	16.5	Assistant Lecturer	9.1	SS&H	66.8
male	47.5	36-45	42.0	Lecturer	41,5	Arts	14.3
		46-55	25.8	Associate Professor	34	Science	18.9
		56<	15.7	Professor	15.4		

As a descriptive comparison, the total numbers for each analysed semester were as follows:

	1st Sem 2015-2016 (offline) S1	2nd Sem 2015-2016 (offline) S2	1st Sem 2016-2017 (online) S3	2nd Sem 2016-2017 (online) S4
No. of evaluator students	4.850	4.650	3.124	1.860
No. of marks	611.874	585.928	30.284	18.687
No. of free messages	12	10	492	468

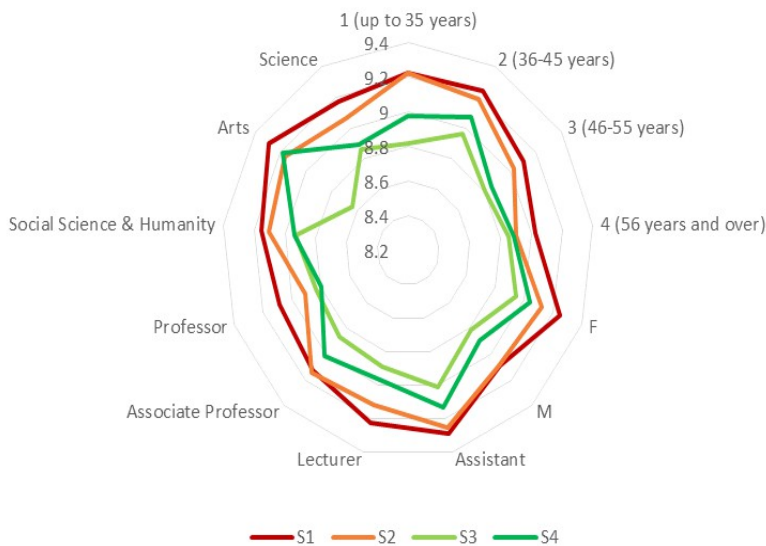
It can be observed a quite significant decrease in the number of evaluators once the questionnaire was upgraded to its online version, but, at the same time, the volume of free-text messages has massively increased. The main reason for this improvement was that the students have the possibility to send any type of message, not only concerning ethical aspects.

The comparative analysis among the average marks from the four semesters is presented into the following tables:

		S1	S2	S3	S4
Age	1 (up to 35 years)	9.2233	9.2245	8.8187	8.9747
	2 (36-45 years)	9.2436	9.1840	8.9601	9.0718
	3 (46-55 years)	9.1055	9.0300	8.7992	8.8508
	4 (56 years and over)	9.0290	8.9023	8.8498	8.8881
Gender	F	9.2479	9.1231	8.9439	9.0400
	M	9.0912	9.0844	8.8126	8.8942
Academic title	Assistant lecturer	9.2902	9.2505	9.0104	9.1352
	Lecturer	9.2223	9.1184	8.8922	8.9678
	Associate Professor	9.1247	9.1431	8.8655	9.0145
	Professor	9.0851	8.9108	8.8344	8.7963
Field	Social Science & Humanity	9.1514	9.1058	8.9276	8.9394
	Arts	9.2917	9.1614	8.6403	9.1862
	Science	9.1727	9.0643	8.8584	8.8874
Faculty	Department for Training of Teaching Staff	9.1920	8.9135	9.0735	9.2853
	Faculty of Art and Design	9.0633	9.1232	8.2497	9.1546
	Faculty of Chemistry, Biology and Geography	9.2753	9.2323	8.8532	8.9454
	Faculty of Law	9.4767	9.2442	9.1197	8.9779
	Faculty of Economics and Business Administration	9.1446	9.0348	8.7047	8.6547
	Faculty of Sport	9.4700	9.4377	9.3057	9.2645
	Faculty of Physics	9.6242	9.6005	9.2433	9.3538
	Faculty of Letters, History and Theology	9.0871	9.1106	9.3760	9.2634
	Faculty of Mathematic and Informatics	8.8338	8.6202	8.6433	8.5782
	Faculty of Music and Theatre	9.6480	9.2069	9.0066	9.2361
	Faculty of Sociology and Psychology	9.2345	9.2354	8.6855	8.8715
	Faculty of Political Science, Philosophy and Communication Science	8.6786	8.8450	8.4962	8.7094
Total		9.1720	9.1049	8.8793	8.9696

It can be directly observed the decrease in the average mark of offline evaluations (S1 and S2) compared to the online evaluation (S3 and S4). Moreover, a similar decrease can be observed according to the age variable; in this case, a significant statistical negative correlation was identified (the younger teachers received higher marks). This distribution is also supported by the negative significant correlation between the age and the marks for S1 (-0.89, sig<0.037), S2 (-0.158, sig<0.001) and S4 (-0.121, sig<0.006).

The same situation is valid for academic titles that are directly connected to age (the assistant lecturers have a better evaluation than the professors do). Last but not least the female teachers received better marks than male teachers. The difference between offline and online average marks (S1&S2 offline mean 8.6280, SD 2.22383 and S3&S4 online mean 8.0616, SD 2.72889) is statistical significant ($t=4.617$, Sig <.001). Thus, the moving to online evaluation has generated a decrease in the level of marks, as it is shown in the next graphic:



Discussion

Even though the multiple regression model was not relevant for explaining the teachers' socio-demographic impact on the level of the marks, there are several trends that were identified: the moving of the questionnaire online meant a downgrade for the level of marks, especially for young male teacher (younger than 35), especially the lecturers, from the field of arts. This situation can also be understood as an improvement of the validity of the evaluation due to a decrease in the level of social desirability generated by a pen-and-paper questionnaire.

Additionally, moving the evaluation online has decreased the volume of marks required from students, from nine marks for each course and seminar to at least one. Thus, the effort of the students was significantly reduced and, more importantly, the tendency to assign the same marks without discrimination among criteria and educational units was eliminated.

In conclusion, the online evaluation carried out under the protection of full anonymity has a higher relevance, especially if the number of students reaches a minimum level of 30% participation. Thus, their feedback can become more accurate for each course and seminar and can have a strong impact towards improving the quality of academic activities.

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The Curricula – A Major Key Issue for Student Satisfaction

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Abstract. Student satisfaction, the students' choice of a higher education institution as well as the link between these aspects and the efforts of universities to ensure high retention rates have been an important topic of research in the last ten years. The quality of instruction and its effectiveness are issues prior to student satisfaction; however, their expectations are more wider-ranging. This paper aims to present the results of an analysis regarding the satisfaction levels of students enrolled in bachelor and master degrees at Babeș-Bolyai University from Cluj-Napoca, Romania. The article focuses on the issues that the students find to be the least satisfactory and which, as a result, could be important aspects for their satisfaction. The results show that, besides the academics' teaching performance, the curriculum, the possibility of choosing the study subjects and the practical skills acquired are major key issues.

Keywords: student satisfaction, quality of instruction, teaching effectiveness, practical skills, curriculum

Introduction

The contemporary academic environment forces universities to cope with major challenges, one of which being the selective attitude of students regarding their preference for a particular higher education institution. A study conducted about ten years ago (Schreiner, 2009) shows that while 75% of the variation in the probability of students choosing to continue studying in a certain institution is due to scientifically unidentified factors, 17% is due to their level of satisfaction. Students who are satisfied are more likely to continue their education (2018 National Freshman Motivation to Complete College Report). Moreover, a connection between institutions with higher student satisfaction and higher alumni response rates has been identified.

The standard number 1.7 of *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)*¹ provides that „Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.”

The quality of instruction and its effectiveness – the knowledge and expertise of teachers, their rectitude regarding the treatment of individual students, timely and useful feedback concerning the students’ progress, the content of the courses, the curricula and its flexibility, the variety of the courses, the overall opportunity of intellectual growing – are prior issues for student satisfaction. In the last ten years though, many other aspects became important as well, such as academic and career advising, financial policies, the campus climate or various administrative support (2017 National Students Satisfaction and Priorities Report).

¹Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area,
https://revisionesg.files.wordpress.com/2015/05/revised_esg_2015_adopted.pdf.

Quality assurance is a very important issue for Babeş-Bolyai University (hereinafter BBU). With a strong and embedded tradition of multiculturalism, BBU is the biggest higher education institution of Romania, having an extensive academic organisation. In its 21 faculties, BBU offers full-time, part-time and distance-education programmes in hard and soft sciences, for over 40.000 students - undergraduates, graduates, PhDs and trainees – in Romanian, Hungarian, German and English. The Centre for University Strategy and Quality Management is developing a twice-yearly survey on students' satisfaction concerning the teaching effectiveness, and every two years an analysis of student satisfaction regarding all the services provided by BBU– teaching and learning processes, material resources and facilities.

This paper aims to present the results of an analysis regarding the satisfaction of BBU students enrolled at bachelor and master levels, especially concerning those issues that they consider as the least satisfactory and which, as a result, could be important key issues for their satisfaction.

Methodology

The survey regarding the satisfaction of BBU students with the services provided by the institution was conducted online between May-June 2015 and 2017, based on a questionnaire and it targeted all students of the institution – enrolled at bachelor, master and doctorate level - including foreign nationals. The access to the questionnaire was allowed based on an individual password, students being invited by email to fill it in. The questionnaire had 42 items, 28 of them being grouped under three dimensions - 1) teaching-learning, 2) material resources and 3) facilities and services. The evaluation for these items was conducted on a 5-step Lickert scale (1 - very dissatisfied, 5 - very satisfied) and the scores were averaged for each item, for each dimension and also a total average was calculated.

The general level of student satisfaction was assessed by their willingness to recommend to others to study at the university, faculty, or study programme in which they were enrolled. The percentages of positive, respectively negative responses were calculated.

At the end of the questionnaire, three open questions were included, addressing the main positive and negative aspects of their experience as a BBU student, as well as suggestions for improvement. For the analysis, I codified these responses and I calculated the proportion of each code in relation to the total of the answers received.

Due to the fact that in 2017 the results were very similar to those in 2015, I chose to present the 2017 outcomes. The total number of filled-in questionnaires was 2699 – 2149 from bachelor students, meaning a response rate of 7.8%, and 550 from master, meaning a 7.5% response rate. This rate allowed the use the quotes sampling method, depending on the following variables: gender differentiation, level, form, and language of study, financing and field of study - hard sciences, respectively soft sciences.

The inquiry has been approached in the Grounded Theory manner (Strauss and Corbin 1998), a step-by-step investigation being developed. The conducted case study on BBU was an instrumental one (Stake, 1994), with exploratory meanings (Yin, 2005).

Results

The first analysis shows an overall mean of 3.5 (3.5 for the teaching-learning process, 3.7 for the material resources and 3.4 for services and facilities). It also revealed that over 80% of students responded affirmatively regarding their willingness to recommend to others to study at BBU (96%), in the faculty or study program for which they opted (88%, respectively 84%), with very small differences between bachelor and master levels (*Figure 1.*)

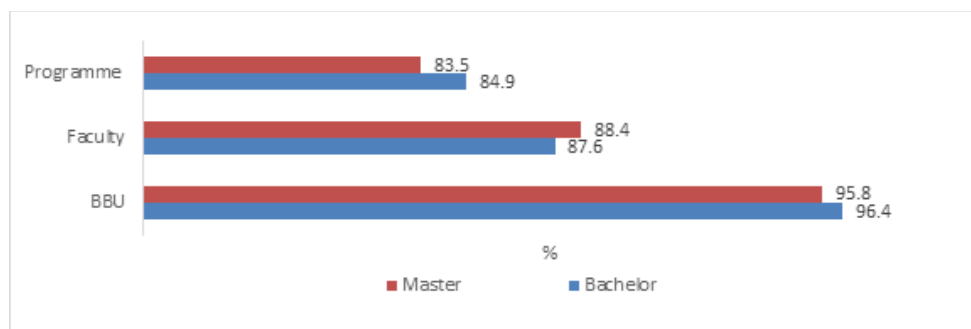


Figure 1. The percentage of affirmative responses regarding the students' willingness to recommend the university, faculty, or study programme

Based on these results, for a more in-depth analysis, I decided to split the subjects in two groups, depending on the responses regarding their willingness to recommend the study programme, which recorded the highest percentage of negative answers. Data shows a difference of 0.8 point between the average calculated from the 84.6% subjects answering YES (3.6) and those 15.4% answering NO (2.8); concerning the teaching-learning process, this difference is 1.0 point (Figure 2).

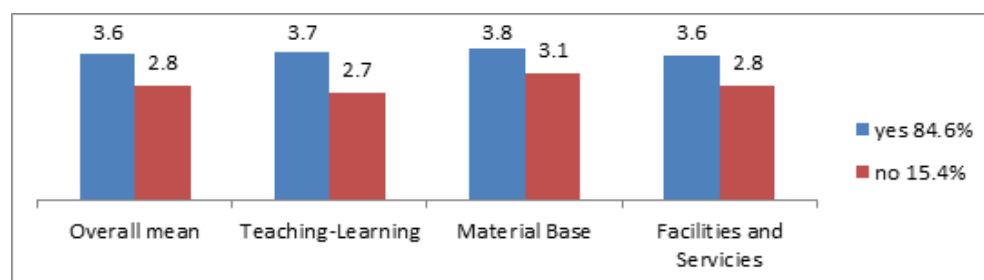


Figure 2. The average scores and percentage of negative / positive answers regarding the students' willingness to recommend the study programme

It is interesting that the subject populations for which high ratio of negative responses were recorded, did not give the lowest scores. For example, 90.5% of part-time and distance students answered YES (the highest ratio of positive responses) and their scores average is the biggest (3.9), while only the 9.5% of part-time and distance students

that answered NO (the smallest percentage of negative answers), recorded the lowest scores average (2.2). Moreover, 16.2% of the full-time students answered NO, their scores average being 2.9 though. Furthermore, 13.7% of the fee payers gave negative answer, their scores average being 2.6, while the 16.0% of no fee payers that gave a negative answer recorded an average of 2.9. The ratio of negative answers given by the students studying in Romanian is 14.3% and by those studying in German is 26.0% (the highest percentage of negative response), both average scores being 2.8 though. This data shows different levels of expectations (Usher, 2009), which is not a topic addressed by this paper. (*Table 1*).

	Overall average	Bachelor	Master	No fee payers	Fee payers	Full-time	Part-time and distance	Romanian	Hungarian	German	English /French	Female	Male	Hard sciences	Soft sciences
% of negative answers	15.4	15.1	16.5	16.0	13.7	16.2	9.5	14.3	17.5	26.0	19.6	14.5	17.3	15.8	15.3
Overall average	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.6	2.9	2.2	2.8	3.0	2.8	2.7	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.8
% of positive answers	84.6	84.9	83.5	84.0	86.3	83.8	90.5	85.7	82.5	74.0	80.4	85.5	82.7	84.2	84.7
Overall average	3.6	3.6	3.7	3.6	3.7	3.6	3.9	3.7	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.7

Table 1. The percentage of negative / positive answers and the scores average

Both the subject populations which answered *YES* and those answering *NO* regarding their willingness to recommend the study programme, have given the lowest scores for practical acquired skills (Teaching and Learning dimension), equipment for teaching and learning (Material Resources dimension) and carrier advising (Facilities and Services dimension) (*Table 2*).

Also, the possibility of choosing the study subjects, the acquired team-work abilities (Teaching and Learning dimension), the access to accommodation and the conditions in the student halls, and the support offered by the faculty for accessing international exchange programmes (Services and Facilities dimension) were aspects assessed with a low score. The most exigent subject populations - which afforded a negative answer and granted under 2.0 scores - were the students enrolled in part-time and distance education programmes, in master programmes and those studying in English or French.

Willingness to recommend the study programme		Overall average	Bachelor	Master	No fee	Fee	Full-time	Part-time and distance	Romanian	Hungarian	German	English/French	Female	Male	Hard sciences	Soft sciences
Practical skills (Teaching and Learning)	No	2.1	2.2	1.9	2.1	2.1	2.2	1.6	2.1	2.3	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.2	2.4	2.0
	Yes	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.6	3.4	3.5	3.3	3.4	3.4	3.4	3.5	3.4
Equipment for teaching and learning (Material resources)	No	3.0	3.0	3.0	3.0	2.7	3.0	2.8	2.9	3.1	3.7	2.9	3.0	2.9	2.7	3.1
	Yes	3.7	3.6	3.8	3.6	3.8	3.6	4.0	3.7	3.5	3.8	3.7	3.7	3.6	3.4	3.7
Carrier advising (Facilities and services)	No	2.1	2.1	1.9	2.1	2.1	2.1	1.7	2.1	2.2	2.3	1.7	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.1
	Yes	3.2	3.2	3.2	3.1	3.5	3.2	3.7	3.3	3.1	3.2	2.9	3.2	3.2	3.0	3.3

Table 2. The lowest assessed issues

Based on this data, the analysis of the open responses was carried out, according to the following issues

- the academics' teaching performances and their attitude;
- the curriculum and the possibilities of choosing the study subjects;
- practical skills;
- team work abilities;
- material resources for teaching and learning process;
- support for studying outside the country;
- financial and accommodation facilities.

Consequently, I explored the ratio of the satisfactory, respectively unsatisfactory aspects that were mentioned by both the groups answering YES and NO regarding their willingness to recommend the study programme. The investigation shows that the most frequently mentioned unsatisfactory aspect is the curriculum and the possibilities of choosing the study subjects (satisfactory – 45.3%, unsatisfactory – 37.1%) especially at master level, hard sciences and fee payers students which gave negative answer. About half of the subjects that mentioned the curriculum as an unsatisfactory aspect pointed out the lack of enough practical activities. The material resources for teaching and learning process are more frequently mentioned as an unsatisfactory aspect rather than satisfactory, even by the students which gave positive answer - mainly by master students – as well as the practical acquired skills through practical activities as part of the classes as well as through internships. Financial and accommodation facilities represent an aspect which, on the one hand, was often pointed out as satisfactory by both categories of subjects (those answering YES as well as those answering NO), when they referred to scholarships. On the other hand, access to accommodation and the lodging conditions, mainly the speed of the internet, were declared as unsatisfactory, especially by the full-time and master students.

Academics' teaching performances represents a satisfactory issue for 57.7% of subjects and an unsatisfactory one for 34.8% of them, with a significant difference for those answering YES (satisfactory – 32.5%, unsatisfactory – 9.6%) and perfectly equal for those answering NO (satisfactory – 25.2%, unsatisfactory – 25.2%) (Table 3).

The willingness to recommend the study programme	NO		YES	
Issues	Satisfactory %	Unsatisfactory %	Satisfactory %	Unsatisfactory %
Academics' teaching performances	25.2	25.2	32.5	9.6
Academics' attitude	7.0	10.9	11.8	5.0
The curriculum and the possibilities of choosing the study subjects, practical activities	17.7	26.2	27.6	10.9
Practical skills	5.7	13.5	6.4	7.5
Team work abilities	7.0	0.3	6.3	0.3
Material resources for teaching and learning process	4.4	13.0	5.5	18.8
Support for studying outside the country	4.2	2.1	1.4	0.7
Financial and accommodation facilities	6.0	8.1	5.2	7.7

Table 3. The problematic issues

Based on this results, I decided to analyse the results of the last six inquiries (three academic years) regarding student satisfaction concerning the teaching effectiveness, especially regarding the academics' teaching performances and their attitude. Without an exhaustive presentation of the results, the investigation revealed high median scores. The averages registered for the full-time students were between 4.0 and 4.9 (on a 5-step Lickert scale, 1 - very dissatisfied and 5 - very satisfied) concerning both

teaching performances - slightly higher for seminars and practical work (bachelor 4.3 – 4.8, master 4.4 – 4.6) than for theoretical courses (bachelor 4.2 – 4.3, master 4.3 – 4.6) - and academics' attitude. The distance and part-time students assessed both the direct teaching activities and the virtual space activities with scores between 3.8 and 4.8. These marks are showing that most of BBU students are satisfied or very satisfied with the academics' teaching performances and their attitude.

Conclusions and Discussion

The quality of instruction and its effectiveness – academics' teaching performance, their attitude toward students, the content of the courses, the curricula and its flexibility, and the variety of study subjects are prior issues for students' satisfaction. In the last ten years though, many other aspects became important as well, like academic and carrier advising, the financial policies, the campus climate or various administrative support (2017 National Students Satisfaction and Priorities Report).

On the one hand, the results of the 2017 analysis on student satisfaction regarding all the services provided by BBU presented above show an average of 3.5 (on a 5-step Lickert scale, 1 - very dissatisfied and 5 - very satisfied) - 3.5 for the teaching-learning process, 3.7 for the material resources and 3.4 for services and facilities -, and 84% of the subjects stated their willingness to recommend to others the study program for which they opted. The lowest percentage of negative responses (9.5%) came from the students in part-time and distance education programmes, they also being the subjects that gave the smallest scores (average of 2.2), while the other 90.5% rated them the highest (average 3.9).

The open responses outcomes revealed that the academics' teaching performances represents a satisfactory issue for 57.7% of all subjects and an unsatisfactory one for 34.8% of them. There were significant difference for those answering YES (satisfactory – 32.5%,

unsatisfactory – 9.6%) and perfectly equal for those answering NO (satisfactory – 25.2%, unsatisfactory – 25.2%) regarding their disposition to recommend the study programme.

On the other hand, the results of the last six inquires (three academic years) concerning both teaching performances and their attitude revealed that the averages scores (on a 5-step Lickert scale, 1 - very dissatisfied and 5 - very satisfied) are between 3.8 and 4.9. These marks are showing that most of the BBU students are satisfied or very satisfied with the academics' teaching performances and their attitude.

The investigation of the open responses shows that the most frequently mentioned unsatisfactory aspect is the curriculum and the possibilities of electing one's study subjects, about half of the respondents mentioning a lack of enough practical activities. Also, the material resources for teaching and learning process are more frequently mentioned as an unsatisfactory aspect rather than satisfactory, even by the students that gave positive answer - mainly by master students – as well as the practical acquired skills.

All these data put together lead to the conclusion that, at this time, besides the academics' teaching performance and their attitude, the curriculum, the possibility of choosing the study subjects and the practical acquired skills - through practical activities as part of the taught classes as well as through internships - are major key issues, even more important for the BBU students than the teachers' professional achievements.

These conclusions determined the university's leadership to lay greater emphasis on practical activities as part of the teaching process. Moreover, in order to update the curriculum and to provide better practical training for students, third-stream strategies were enhanced and the efforts to improve the relationship with the socio-economic environment were increased.

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ISI Fever vs ISI Catatonia in Romania. Global visibility of Romanian academic publishing: policies and practices

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Abstract:

This paper aims at answering the following question: “What has been the impact of the global ISI trend on the Romanian higher education, and how have Romanian universities understood and implemented it?” Furthermore, we analyse whether the ISI fever has led to an increase in the global visibility of published Romanian research. To this aim, we address both the system as a whole (at national level) and one individual university (Babeş-Bolyai University, BBU, selected because it is one of the biggest universities in the country as well as one of the top performing ones and also because of the availability of data). We will use a mixed-method approach based on a dialectic stance, as this framework will allow us to tackle our research question from three distinct perspectives (global, national and institutional).

Keywords: academic publishing, higher education policy, Romania, Babeş-Bolyai University

Introduction

The “publish or perish” mantra has been widely present in Romania, like elsewhere, especially in the last decade, and has always been accompanied by *key words* such as ISI journals, impact factor and so on. All these words could be included under the wider term “ISI trend”. Given the prominence of ISI speak at the global level, it was just a matter of time before national and institutional publication policies in the field of higher education in Romania would come to include provisions referring to ISI, or an ISI-related term, at least.

Romania’s relationship with ISI articles and journals could be labelled as “complicated”. In 2006, two separate state officials expressed publicly their view that Romania’s higher education system was mediocre at best (Frangopol, 2006; 2007). Moreover, at that time there were only 16 journals in Romania indexed in the ISI Web of Science. However, the state of the system slowly began to change, despite the small amount of funding meant to support research.

Romania’s universities fare poorly in internationally prestigious rankings, such as the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU – Shanghai), Times Higher Education Ranking or QS World University Ranking, with no universities being ranked in the top 500, considering that the national higher education system includes over 100 higher education institutions (of which slightly more than half are public universities¹).

Nevertheless, data for the decade 2001–2011 published by the National Science Foundation (2014) show Romania performing quite well in fields such as math, chemistry, physics, informatics and engineering, where the number of articles published in the SCI per capita is above the global average (and in math it is even double the

¹Functional analysis of the Higher Education Sector in Romania, available at: <http://www.invatamant-superior.ro/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/Analiza-Functionala-a-Sectorului-Invatamant-Superior-in-Romania.pdf>, page 56.

global average) and underperforming in fields such as medicine, biology or social sciences, where this indicator is five times smaller in Romania than the global average (according to the calculations made by Corlan, 2015). “The number of articles of any kind has increased in Romania on average by 5.8% per year, from 927 in 2001 to 1626 in 2011, in comparison to a global average of 2.8% per year” (Corlan, 2015:116). In 2012 Romania ranked 41st among 238 countries according to the number of citable documents in SCImago Journal & Country Rank (Sandu, 2013).

Unfortunately, public funding allocation for research has been rather unpredictable, with numerous changes being brought to the legal framework (in a speech made by President of Romania Klaus Johannis in Parliament on 16th September 2015, he mentioned that the Law of Education passed in 2011 had been amended 26 times up to that point).

One could wonder why, despite the obvious lack of predictable funding, publication visibility has increased in such manner as described above over the course of the last decade. These results can be connected with reforms being implemented at several levels and reflected in changes in institutional or national policy that were aimed at mirroring global trends. Many times, however, these changes have proven to be too sudden at both national and institutional levels, causing academics to either adapt quickly to them or to lapse into a state of apathy or catatonia and ignore them altogether.

In this paper we start from the more general context in which publishing policies became relevant in Romanian higher education system, then we analyse their rise in importance and the formal requirements they were accompanied by, and finally we explore the manner in which academics relate to them.

Publishing Policies Context in the Romanian Higher Education System

Publishing Before 1989

Before 1989, the Romanian system of higher education was organised according to the guidelines of the communist regime that was in power. In the extremely centralised system, everything had to be “within the guidelines”, including writing and research. Communist restrictions went as far as to stipulate how many hours an academic had to spend on research weekly (12 of the total 40) (Sadlak, 1990: 58).

In the early 1970s, the regime introduced the doctrine of the integration of education, research and production (Sadlak, 1990:58), which viewed all three as a unitary process, and “academic research was required to serve as a source of directly applicable practical solutions to the economy” (Sadlak, 1990: 59), which led to a sharp decrease in fundamental research activities. With programmes detailed per hour, academics were neither supported in nor encouraged to publish competitively. As a matter of fact, Sadlak (1990: 59) mentions that the communist regime required all typewriters to be registered with the local office of the militia.

Romanian higher education institutions were seen as a supplier of trained personnel, in correlation with the needs of the socialist planned economy. Furthermore, Romanian academics’ participation and membership in the international academic organisations was found to be the lowest even among the socialist countries of Eastern and Central Europe (Sadlak, 1990: 66).

The predictions made by key decision makers of that time (such as Ministers of Education), for example that Romania was going to catch up with other countries in a period of time ranging from “extremely short” to 20 years, point to the fact that there was awareness of the fact that the system lagged behind.

Publishing After 1989

After the fall of the communist regime in 1989, the Romanian higher education system started again on the path of “catching up” with the Western world. Among many other changes, the freshly conquered academic freedom meant that academics were now free to carry out research in any topic they were interested in, be it fundamental research or applied, or of any other kind. One of the rectors of Babeş-Bolyai University (BBU) stated that the manner in which research was carried out at BBU changed radically after 1989. “Experimental and fact-finding research and theoretical models expanded” (Marga, 2005: 288). Research was no longer directed by the state.

However, during this period, carrying out research did not automatically translate into publishing. Being a researcher could also mean that one would transfer the knowledge gained directly to students through teaching and/or publishing a handbook for the courses one taught, and maybe, by the end of one’s academic career, an *Opera Magna* book.

Research Question

This paper aims at answering the following question: “*What has been the impact of the global ISI trend on Romanian higher education, and how have Romanian universities understood and implemented it?*” To this aim, we address both the system as a whole (at national level) and one individual university, Babeş-Bolyai University, selected because it is one of the biggest universities in the country as well as one of the top performing ones and also because of the availability of data². We use a mixed-method approach (Greene & Caracelli (2003)³ and Teddlie &

²Recently Babeş-Bolyai University has been ranked as the most transparent university in Romania.

Tashakkori (2010)⁴) based on a dialectic stance, as this framework allows us to tackle our research question from several perspectives.

We explore the research question on three distinct levels, namely a global perspective, a national level and an institutional one, in sections organised around one important issue. The global level will serve as a point of reference while the institutional level will provide a case study of a university that has gone beyond the national requirements in its bid to achieve international prestige. The interplay between the three levels will allow us to highlight a number of key topics that are relevant at both national and institutional levels.

How Did Publishing Become Important?

At a global level, publishing metrics have gained importance (see Blommaert et al., 2005), as they are one of the easiest to quantify in terms of research output. They are also a fundamental component of what is defined as a “World Class University” (WCU). In 2014, Times Higher Education⁵ proposed a list of six characteristics making up the “formula” for a WCU: annual income, student-staff ratio, percentage of international staff, total research income, a high percentage (43%) of its research papers published with at least one international author, and percentage of international students.

“The concept of a world-class university reflects the norms and values of the world's dominant research-oriented academic institutions—especially those of the United States and the major western European countries” (Altbach, 2003), and the easiest-to-quantify indicators

³Greene, J. C., & Caracelli. (2003). Making paradigmatic sense of mixed methods practice. in Tashakkori, A., & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioral Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

⁴Tashakkori, A. and C. Teddlie (2010) *Sage Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social & Behavioral Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA, Sage Publications.

⁵<https://www.timeshighereducation.com/world-university-rankings/news/the-formula-for-a-world-class-university-revealed>.

related to research are the amount of funding associated with research and publication metrics. Research-oriented universities have two major missions: on the national level, they need to make a contribution to culture, technology and society and at the international level, to make the connection with the global, intellectual and scientific trends (Altbach 2011:65). Altbach (2003; 2011) speaks of a global trend where each country wants its own global university/-ies, even if this goal is next to impossible to achieve.

However, research *per se* is not enough to achieve global visibility or WCU status. “Although the research *quantity* of the top-ranking universities is important, the crucial factors that assure international prominence are the *quality* and the *significance* of this academic research.” (Tai, 2007: 41).

At national level, publication-related metrics were introduced only in the last few years. The reasons for this lagging behind could range from the fact that the majority of internationally published articles are in English (and senior academic are most often proficient in French or German rather than English) to the fact that Romanian research output, after a long period of artificial separation because of the communist regime, still needed some time to “catch up”.

There have been a number of attempts to evaluate research carried out within universities and to allocate funding according to their research performance. Starting with the year 2000, the universities in Cluj and Iași initiated a process of developing a set of criteria for ranking Romanian universities at national level. These were echoed by a Ministerial Order of 2008, which set up an “Institutional Development Fund”, awarded competitively, aimed specifically at the Romanian universities aiming for WCU status. However, due to lack of official support, this instrument has never been adequately implemented (Moraru et al., forthcoming).

In the case of BBU, the university focused on research and publication before any strategy in the field was implemented at national level, by developing an algorithm for a differentiated allocation of

financial resources (according to research performance indicators). At national level, the differentiation of higher education institutions based on performance relied mainly on the inclusion of quality indicators in the funding mechanisms.

At the institutional level, BBU's Strategic and Operational Plans⁶ reveal that publishing quantity and quality slowly became more important as the university attempted to increase its international reputation. Consequently, strategic developments regarding internationalisation, using English as a predominant language of research and publishing, attracting research funding and achieving visibility at global level have been key factors in BBU's attempt to become a contender for the title of WCU.

Formal Requirements

At international level, publication is a natural part of every academic's professional life. Every academic has the chance to showcase their proficiency and scholarship in the field by publishing. Lecturing may be a manner of passing onward information to a limited public (those who attend the lecture), but publishing theoretically has no limits as to how far or wide an audience can be reached.

At the national level, Romanian legislation in the field of education gradually incorporated publications as requirements for applying for an academic position.

The first law of education passed after 1989 was Law No. 84 of 1995; it was accompanied by the Statute of Teaching Personnel. The latter included the requirements for occupying an academic position in a higher education institution, namely a PhD title for the positions of Professor and Assistant or Associate Professor and/or be enrolled as a PhD student for the positions of Lecturer or Assistant Lecturer. Another mandatory requirement was "seniority"/experience in the field, usually

⁶Available in Romanian at: <http://www.ubbcluj.ro/en/despre/strategii/strategii>.

within the national system of education. Academic positions could be held only by Romanian citizens.

Two other important laws in the field were Law no. 288/2004 which implemented the three cycles of the Bologna process in Romania and Law no. 1/2011 (also known as the National Education Law). The latter stated explicitly that academic positions included teaching hours and research hours, as well as the minimum requirements for holding any academic positions. These made reference to a minimum number of publications (and a number of minimum criteria for these publications, such as being published in a journal indexed in an international database) for each position and stated explicitly that any person, regardless of citizenship, can be hired by the university if adequately qualified. Furthermore, it gave the universities the freedom to set up their own criteria on top of the minimum requirements set at national level.

The National Council for the Certification of Higher Education Titles, Diplomas and Certificates (Consiliul Național de Atestare a Titlurilor, Diplomelor și Certificatelor Universitare – CNATDCU), tasked with setting the minimal criteria at national level, only set such requirements for the higher academic positions (Professor and Assistant/Associate Professor)⁷. These criteria are calculated according to an algorithm specific for each major field of study. In comparison, BBU set its own requirements⁸ for the position of Lecturer, for example. Any applicant for such a position has to have published at least eight papers in journals indexed in international databases, alongside having obtained the PhD title (the latter being the requirement of Law No. 1/2011). It might be worth mentioning that, at the time when the current Law of Education was under development, a number of alternatives were being developed for the algorithms used to calculate the minimum criteria by two strategic projects implemented by the

⁷http://www.cnatdcu.ro/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/OMECTS_3697.pdf

⁸http://www.ubbcluj.ro/ro/despre/info/files/legislatie/Metodologie_ocupare_posturi_2015_2016.pdf

Executive Unit for the Funding of Higher Education, Research, Development and Innovation (Unitatea Executivă pentru Finanțarea Invățământului Superior, a Cercetării Dezvoltării și Inovării – UEFISCDI)⁹.

Publications gradually became an important element to be taken into consideration when trying to develop a national ranking. The first system of university ranking in Romania was drafted in 1999 (Nica, 2000) and included seven indicators, but none of them assessed research individually (neither the quality nor the quantity of it). These seven indicators were: academic prestige, selectivity of students and university attractiveness, human resource management, scientific research and advanced studies (MA and PhD), undergraduate and graduate performance, financial resources and facilities for carrying out didactic processes and university strategic management, with weights between 10% and 20% each. However, some of these ranking indicators were subsequently used by the National Higher Education Funding Council (CNFIS) to build four groups of indicators that were to differentiate funding between institutions, based on quality. One group (among the four suggested, alongside teaching staff, infrastructure and university management) assessed the *impact of scientific research on the didactic process*, i.e. the level of performance achieved in scientific research and the means of disseminating the research results. Nevertheless, this was rather linked to teaching and did not assess the impact of research in terms of its visibility in the field of study.

A later proposal for a national ranking of universities (put forward in 2006-2007) included an entire class of indicators related to research (Agachi, 2007: 231). “*Results of scientific research*” (alongside quality of teaching staff, quality of education size of the institution and academic reputation of the institution) weighed 30% in the overall importance of the five classes and included the following three indicators: articles published in *Nature* or *Science*, publications in SCI and SSCI, arts and humanities (articles, proceedings, books, ISI patents) and results of the

⁹<http://www.edu2025.ro/> and <http://www.ecs-univ.ro/>.

National Council for Scientific Research in Higher Education (CNCSIS) evaluation. Within the class, the last indicator weighed 50%, and the other two weighed 25% each.

A widespread perception among Romanian academics is that at national level there is a high requirement for formal documents, of meeting formal indicators, etc., but there is not an equal importance given to the quality of the items being assessed. People often recognise that, in fact, it is easier to count items than to assess their quality. In other words, it is easier to count how many apples one has than to try and assess how juicy they each are.

At the institutional level, BBU, as part of its attempt to reach international status, started to support and encourage research and publication, taking this encouragement to a possible “extreme”. In 2006, the university’s leadership decided to start the implementation of a programme called UBB500 (BBU500), which had as its final aim reaching a visible position in the most famous world rankings (starting with ARWU, as a reference point, but not limiting their aim to only this).

Thus, a decision made in March 2006 (Breckner, 2007: 78-79) stipulated, in a 10-point list, that the university should set specific aims where scientific research is concerned (which in practice translated into publications output). Point 1 on the list included the aims to be reached in order to become competitive internationally with other well-ranked universities, aims that were meant to be synchronising BBU’s performance with the well-performing universities in the fields of teaching, learning, scientific research, graduates, services towards the community, etc., while Point 7 made reference to the encouraging of international-performant researchers through an award system and a new funding system. A more detailed description of the programme by the university’s Academic Council¹⁰ reveals that an increase in the number of ISI publications is the most important factor for increasing BBU’s visibility in the rankings.

¹⁰ http://centre.ubbcluj.ro/cdu/sinteze/studiu_4_2008.pdf

Research results visible at an international level were recognised through awards at institutional level and through other support measures. Unfortunately, the financial crisis of 2009 *de facto* ended the programme before it could achieve any noticeable results. However, BBU's requirements regarding publications have not decreased – on the contrary; now, according to a decision of the Board of Administration (consisting of the Rector, Vice-Rectors and Deans of the faculties), each academic has the obligation to publish at least one academic paper per year, with some faculties of the university using additional criteria (such as one ISI article, not just any article). Those that do not meet this criterion have the obligation to publish more in the following year and they also have to teach additional hours.

Nevertheless, one notices that the emphasis is still on quantity rather than the quality of publications, and quality what makes the difference when it comes to international rankings.

The Academics' Perspective

In order to assess the academics' perspective, we organised a focus group with nine participants affiliated with six different faculties of the university. We prepared a list of ten open questions and we did not limit the answers given in any way. The participants were two assistant lecturers, six lecturers and one assistant professor, and were coming mainly from the field of social sciences and humanities, with one participant from the field hard sciences.

The first aspect we noticed was that the academics' perspective focused mainly on their own institution, and they were not too aware of requirements applicable at national or international levels. The answers we received when we asked about other Romanian higher education institutions were rather short and sometimes consisted of just one word. This can be perhaps explained by the fact that they are focused on

complying with their employer's requirements and they are not considering changing employers in the near future.

The next topic that came up several times during the discussion was the fact that everyone perceived clear cleavages in the field: between hard sciences and soft sciences and between being a teacher and being a researcher. Hard sciences were perceived to be more performant, and publishing in journals with higher impact factors was perceived to be an easier process. We are aware that this is the case in many other countries as well.

The cleavage between being a researcher and being a teacher was discussed, with some participants (from the field of humanities) expressing the view that there could be a clearer separation between the roles of teacher and researcher, with the number of teaching hours varying depending on their preference. For example, if a person is a great teacher, they should have the option to teach more and research less, and vice versa. Naturally, being a teacher or a researcher would have parity of esteem, with neither role being seen as "lower than" or "superior to" the other.

The participants holding the lower academic positions complained about the high institutional standards, arguing that they did not match the funding available. It was pointed out that there is a risk of demotivating staff and sending them into a catatonic state if an institution raises publishing standards without supporting research with adequate funding. As a matter of fact, participants agreed that at national level there is no predictability in funding calls, and thus it is very hard to establish a stable connection between publishing requirements and research funding. One participant made the comparison with the building of a house which starts with the roof (the results, i.e. papers published) and not with the foundation (the policy regarding research funding). Funding predictability both at national and institutional level was found to be a concern for all participants.

The consequences of the mismatches mentioned above are more severe for the newer academics – those that have richer experience in

the field (the Assistant/Associate professor) advocated for effort and perseverance as a solution to the lack of support.

Some of the participants also stated that they could have used more support from their institution concerning specific aspects of publishing, starting from academic writing courses to specific funds being allocated for conference participation, training on working with journal-related resources and networking in their respective fields.

Finally we asked them how they see publications, on a spectrum ranging from a purely formal requirement to a natural consequence of their research or the need to communicate with their peers and their students. Opinions ranged across the spectrum, with the majority seeing it as a mix of several factors. Two opinions are probably worth mentioning here. The first one refers to the institutional level and comes from a lecturer in the field of social sciences: “They ask for everything, but they offer nothing” (referring to the perceived lack of institutional support concerning publishing). The second one comes from another lecturer in the field of social sciences, commenting on the link between the predictability of research funding and their own attitude to publishing: “Passion dies with the lack of funding”.

Conclusion

At national level, it is obvious that the global ISI trend has taken hold, with publication output being considered as an increasingly important element. However, publication metrics could be put to better use when it comes to funding allocation or to building a national ranking of universities. At institutional level, research output in the form of publications varies greatly across institutions, but it is of utmost importance to a university aiming for WCU status, even if the academics working for the institution perceive such requirements as being too high and not adequately supported.

Formal requirements both at national and institutional level lack adequate funding support. If publications are the natural consequence of a research process, not supporting such process and nevertheless requiring publications has impacts both on the quality of publications and on the staff motivation for writing them.

Academic staff who are less experienced perceive acutely the lack of predictability of funding as well as the lack of support offered by the institution; however, the more experienced ones seem to fare better and have less anxiety regarding funding predictability.

There are a number of global trends that are not yet reflected at national or institutional level. For instance, the debate is still open regarding what is considered to be a “publication”. Should monographs be included here? How about medals in sport competitions or performances in theatre plays? When calculating the impact of individual researchers, easier-to-quantify indicators are used (the Hirsch index or the *i10*), and harder-to-quantify items (such as interviews in the media, blog posts, tweets, etc.) are not yet considered.

One can see clearly the difference between the policies applied at national and institutional level, especially when the institution concerned is aiming to achieve international visibility. However, at the same time, it becomes clear that the system’s inclination is rather for form and not content, quality or efficiency (i.e. the system values the quantity and not the quality of the scientific output). The many changes brought to the legislation do not make the system any more agile; rather they make it more cumbersome and increasingly less predictable and less coherent. The same is valid for publication policies at national level. Thus the system has responded to the ISI trend by adapting to it only superficially and without changing essentially: as a manner of preservation against exterior influences that might lead to more openness and transparency. An individual institution’s efforts shed further light on the system’s inertia when it comes to responding in a timely manner to an international trend. The rush of the Romanian national system to adopt (or rather adapt) an international trend has

led to the risk of institutions being confronted with their staff's catatonia as far as publication requirements are concerned.

Perspectives for the Future

In an ideal world, publications should serve primarily a communication role. An academic may communicate through their papers at the same time with students, with their peers and with the wider community (be it outside one's own university or outside the academic field altogether), showcasing their mastery and proficiency in the field, and doing this all out of passion, not because of a formal, externally-imposed requirement. Unfortunately, such an ideal world is possible only in philosophical discussions or in utopic societies (such as those suggested by Italo Calvino in *Invisible Cities*).

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***The University of Iași Between 1916 and 1917. Contributions to the War Effort*¹**

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Abstract:

The University of Iași participated to the World War I effort, providing to the army its own human resources and its learning spaces for the central state institutions, given that the royal family, the Parliament and the Government sought refuge in Iași. Not lastly, the University became involved – through conferences hosted in the Hall – in the effort to maintain the trust in the final victory and in the achievement of the 1918 unions. The campaign of 1916-1918 mobilized important teachers of the University, personalities of the national scientific and cultural life or young academics. The students were among the direct combatants and they took part actively in the ample health operations behind the frontline. The paper addresses a fragment of institutional history, by presenting the contribution to the war effort of the teachers and the students, by identifying, listing and systematizing the information regarding the university staff and the educational spaces involved in the war, among the battle lines or behind the frontline, in the period 1916-1918.

Keywords: University of Iași, war, teachers, students, teaching spaces

¹ The extended version of the text in Romanian was included in *Orașul Iași. "Capitala rezistenței până la capăt" (1916-1917)*, Ion Agrigoroaiei (ed.), Junimea Publishing House, Iași, 2016. The topic also made the object of an exhibition inaugurated in 2016 at the University Museum of Iași.

The 100th anniversary of the World War I and of the Great Union of Romania represents for historians an occasion to reflect on the implication of the various state institutions in the events occurring between 1916 and 1918. At least from this perspective, i.e. of the institutional history, the re-evaluation and reinterpretation are justified and necessary, but most of the times the microanalyses, local history papers, particular or even punctual studies actually become essential in order to restore a bigger picture and in order to disseminate new information and sources. The analysis of the itinerary of the Iași-based University in the period 1916-1918 makes no exception.

The books and papers published by Ion Agrigoroaiei, Gheorghe Iacob or Cătălin Botoșineanu provide a complex image of the dynamics of academia and of the relation between the academic and the political environment on the one hand and the context of the war on the other. The topic is wide-ranging, mostly given that two of the best-known and most vocal opponents of Romania's alliance with the Entente were teachers in Iași: Constantin Stere – “The Dreyfuss Case of Romania” and V. Arion. There are, of course, enough sources to explore concerning academia's involvement in the war – taking into account that the university is a space of dialogue, exchange of ideas and pacifist intellectualism *par excellence* – and one study cannot cover all possible topics. Therefore, I propose a simple and almost technical approach, but a very useful one for future analytical constructs, namely listing and outlining the participation to the war effort of the University teachers, of certain students, who later became personalities of the national and international cultural and scientific life. Another idea is to elaborate a “map” of the university space offered to the central authorities, which were hosted in 1916 in Iași. This is a first level of investigation, answering the questions, *Who? Where? and How?*. The importance of the endeavour is intrinsic. A great deal of the basic information is not known; as it is not included in the dictionaries dedicated to the Romanian personalities or it is presented only partially. Some data was perpetuated from one author to another, without assessments and additions, mostly given that the local sources were little accessed by those who depicted portraits of the cultural and political cultures and, in general, the biographies/monographs are not exactly abundant in the

Romanian historiographic space. This research explores, first of all, archive documents. The funds of the City Hall and of the University within the County Service Iași of the National Archives, the fund “DCI Memoirs. Seniors”, within the Centre of Studies and Preservation of the Historical Military Archives Pitești and the Yearbook of the University in Iași represent the documentary infrastructure.

Therefore, I propose a fragment of institutional history, a goal attained by presenting the contribution to the war effort of the teachers and the students, by identifying, listing and systematizing the information of the university staff and the educational spaces involved in the war, among the battle lines or behind the front, in the period 1916-1918.

On 14th -15th August 1916, the Romanian army launched the offensive against Austria-Hungary, pursuant to its political and military commitments. This was the beginning of a brief but intense chapter in recent history, which made the Romanian society go from the satisfaction of the first victories, through the agony of territorial limitation and of the refuge, to the joy of the final victory and the achieving of successive unifications in 1918.

The University of Iași as both a witness and an actor involved in this tumult was included through its teachers and students in the debate related to the orientation of foreign policy and to the opportunity of engaging Romania alongside the Entente.² This institution then participated to the war effort, thus making available its own human resources to the army and its learning spaces to the central institutions, given that the royal family, the Parliament and the Government sought refuge in Iași. Not lastly, the University became involved – through conferences hosted in the Hall – in the effort to maintain the trust in the final victory and in the achievement of the 1918 unions.

Most teachers and students of the University argued in favour of Romania’s entry into war on the side of the Entente and they responded

²See the disputes of 1914-1915 between the pro-Entente students and teachers and the small group of the Central Powers supporters, represented by C. Stere, standing rector of the University, Ilie Bărbulescu and Virgil Arion, in (Agrigoroaiei, 2010, p. 269-273), (Botoșineanu, 2006, p. 273-289), (Botoșineanu, 2007, p. 139-145).

immediately to the mobilization operation launched on 15th August 1916. The first ones included teachers of the Faculty of Medicine who joined the health services on the front or behind the front: Constantin Bacaloglu – major and physician, Gheorghe Bogdan – lieutenant colonel, Gheorghe Demetriade – major and physician, Mihail Manicatide – major and physician, Constantin Thiron – lieutenant colonel and M. Ștefănescu – lieutenant colonel (ANR, file 255/1918, p. 324). All of them were mobilized in the 4th Army Corps, Division VII, 4th Health Company, from the first day of the military operations.

Alongside them, the campaign of 1916-1918 mobilized important teachers of the University, personalities of the national scientific and cultural life or young assistant lecturers. In this respect, I mention:

- Neculai Balan (assistant lecturer at the Department of Pathological Anatomy), major and physician;
- Gheorghe Bontea (assistant lecturer at the Department of Agricultural Chemistry), fusilier in the 12th infantry Regiment;
- Ioan Borcea (director of the Descriptive Zoology Laboratory within the Faculty of Sciences), lieutenant – head of the mobilization office in the 13th Regiment “Stephen the Great” – characterized by the superiors as “hard-working, energetic and devoted” (ANR, file 255/1918, p. 344);
- Traian Bratu (the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters), lieutenant at the 14th Division, the General Staff Service, the 53rd Infantry Regiment³, who “fulfilled his duty aptly and skilfully as head of the Intelligence Bureau” (ANR, file 255/1918, p. 340);
- Neculai Costăchescu⁴ (the Faculty of Sciences), lieutenant (then captain), Company commander in the 13th Regiment “Stephen the Great”, characterized by the superiors as “very energetic and dutiful” (ANR, file 255/1918, p. 344);
- Mihai David (the Faculty of Sciences), sublieutenant (then lieutenant), platoon commander in the 13th Regiment “Stephen

³The 53rd Infantry Regiment left the city of Iași on the evening of 21 August 1916 – see (Agrigoroaiei, 2004, p. 35).

⁴Professor Neculai Costăchescu left us highly valuable pages of journal during his participation to the military operations – see (Costăchescu, 2007, p.194).

the Great”, “a devoted element, with a lot of energy” (ANR, file 255/1918, p. 344);

- Petru Dragomirescu (the Faculty of Law), lieutenant at the Martial Court of the second Cavalry Division and then immediately mobilized at the Faculty of Law, in January 1918;
- Constantin Fedeleş (substitute Associate Professor at the Conference of Psychology), captain;
- Vasile Gr. Iamandi (the Faculty of Law), lieutenant at the General Commandment of the Stages, then immediately mobilized at the Faculty of Law, in January 1918;
- Constantin Motaş (the Faculty of Sciences), sublieutenant, flight observer at the third Aviation Group (ANR, file 255/1918, p. 420);
- Alexandru Myller (the Faculty of Sciences), sublieutenant in the 13th Infantry Regiment;
- Ioan Nubert (assistant lecturer at the Department of Topographic Anatomy), physician – captain;
- Plăcinţeanu (assistant lecturer at the Department of Astronomy), lieutenant, employed at the Calculation Office of the Geodesics Section, of whom the superiors stated that “fulfilled his duty with all his capability and dutifully, thus having beautiful results” (ANR, file 255/1918, p. 304);
- Grigore T. Popa (assistant lecturer at the Department of Descriptive Anatomy), physician – lieutenant;
- Albert Taşcă Popovici (the Faculty of Law), lieutenant, attached to the French Mission, then immediately mobilized at the Faculty of Law, in January 1918;
- Constantin Popovici (the Faculty of Sciences), captain, mobilized at the Calculation Office of the Geodesics Section, within the Army Geographic Service, who “fulfilled his duty with all his capability and dutifully” (ANR, file 255/1918, p. 304);
- Ioan Tănăsescu (Department of Descriptive Anatomy), physician – colonel;
- Ernest Triandafil (the Faculty of Law), reserve lieutenant at the third Army Corps, immediately mobilized at the Faculty of Law, in January 1918;
- Victor Vâlcovici (the Faculty of Sciences);

- Gheorghe Vâlsan (the Faculty of Sciences), sublieutenant, mobilized at the Topographic Section within the Army Geographic Service, “he accomplished all the assigned tasks very dutifully and he had very good results” (ANR, file 255/1918, p. 304);
- Aurel P. Zăuleanu (the Faculty of Law), captain at the 1st Infantry Regiment, immediately mobilized at the Faculty of Law, in January 1918.

The students participated to the war effort alongside the teachers of the University. They were among the direct combatants and they took part actively in the ample health operations behind the front. The students of the Faculty of Medicine, concentrated even starting with October 1915⁵, provided medical assistance to the wounded and to typhus patients in hospitals of Iași and in campaign hospitals. The exact number of students who participated to the operations of 1916-1918 is harder to determine.

The situations drafted up in the fall of the year 1918 include in the category of the mobilized a number of approximately 600 students, some of whom had been mobilized twice (Agrigoroaiei, 2010, p. 278). Some of them became teachers of the same institution several years later. I mention here Petre Andrei, the future professor and political leader, who was exempted from military service because his father had died, but who enrolled voluntarily in March 1915. Upon graduating from the School of Officers in Târgoviște, he was sent, on 1st October 1916, to the 13th Infantry Regiment “Stephen the Great”. On the day of his departure, he wrote to his professor Ion Petrovici:

“Today I’m leaving to the front; I have been waiting for a long time for this joy and it finally came. I assure you that I will know my way with the weapon as I did with the philosophical terms and axioms. I will apply the philosophical view according to which life in itself is worth nothing, but its value comes from the ideal it serves. Our ideal is so great and so holy that you see, Sir, I am in no way disturbed by the thought of death” (Andrei, 1993, p. 8).

⁵The students of the Faculty of Medicine sent a petition to the rector, asking him to postpone the exams scheduled in November, because many of them were concentrated – see (ANR, file 3293/1915, p. 12).

Among the significant personalities of Romanian science and culture who participated in the campaign of 1916-1918 as students of the University in Iași, I also mention:

- Ștefan Bârsănescu (with a bachelor's degree in Law, in 1919), sergeant;
- Gheorghe I. Brătianu (with a bachelor's degree in Law, in 1919), who served in the army in 1916, as a volunteer at the School of reserve officers and wounded in August 1917;
- Traian Ionașcu (with a bachelor's degree in Law, in 1918), who served in the army in 1916 at the School of Artillery Officers, sublieutenant in the campaign of 1917-1918;
- Cicerone Iordăchescu (with a bachelor's degree in Letters and Philosophy, in 1915), military confessor at Division 15;
- Octav Mayer (with a bachelor's degree in Mathematical Sciences, in 1919), lieutenant;
- Gheorghe Zane (with a bachelor's degree in Law, in 1919), a volunteer in the campaign 1916-1918, lieutenant at Regiment 11.

While they studied in Iași, the future professors served in the Romanian army:

- Gheorghe Alexa (with a bachelor's degree in Technological Chemistry, in 1916), as soldier immediately mobilized at the Laboratory of Technological Chemistry;
- Dan Bădăreanu (with a bachelor's degree in Law, in 1917), aviator-captain;
- Leon Ballif (doctor in Medicine, in 1919), physician-captain;
- Gh. Ion Botez (with a bachelor's degree in Natural Sciences, in 1918), lieutenant at the 12th Infantry Regiment;
- Valeriu Bulgaru (with a bachelor's degree in Law, in 1918), who served in the army in 1916 at the School of Artillery Officers, captain in the campaign of 1916-1918;
- Gheorghe A. Cuza (with a bachelor's degree in Law, in 1918), enrolled as a volunteer and combatant in the 24th Infantry Regiment of Tecuci;

- Constantin V. Gheorghiu (with a bachelor's degree in Physical-Chemical Sciences, in 1920), captain at the 24th Infantry Regiment of Tecuci;
- Ion Gheorghiu (doctor in Medicine, in 1917), physician-captain; Ilie Popescu-Spineni (with a bachelor's degree in Law, in 1919), as soldier.

Through their contribution, the teachers and the students of the University in Iași represented an important chapter of the war effort, whether in the direct battles or behind the front. However, the involvement of the Iași-based institution was more comprehensive. The institution made sure to be available to the central bodies starting with November 1916, given that the administration withdrew to Iași. The teaching and research spaces became headquarters of the central leading body, but the city of Iași did not have an urban civil infrastructure to meet the specific demands. The memories of Queen Maria are suggestive for the general atmosphere in late fall 1916, as she herself had to find a place to stay.⁶ "I am pressured by all sorts of problems, from all parts; I am trying to help find solutions, but it is very hard; our means are weak because the government failed to actually plan for the future and they counted on a victory, not on a disaster." (Maria, 2014, p. 247). On another occasion, she summarised: "The city is overcrowded, with a population ten times more numerous than the usual one; epidemics burst from all corners; food is scarce, it is almost impossible to get supplies..." (Maria, 2014, p. 353).

The University Palace in Copou opened its gates, under these extreme circumstances, for the central authorities to function there. The University Hall hosted the proceedings of the Romanian Senate, in the period December 1916 – December 1917. The Senate, then presided by the liberal Emanoil Porumbaru, modified in that period the Constitution: they adopted the agricultural reform that made villagers landowners and they introduced the universal vote.

The Ministry of War with its various structures functioned in several rooms of the University. All the halls of the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy were given to this Ministry (ANR, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza"

⁶"What an odd situation – a queen looking for a roof over her head", Maria wrote in her diary, on 14/27 November 1916, in the wagon stationed for several days in the station of Grajduri – see (Maria, 2014, p. 237).

University Iași, file 87/1917, p. 22-23), along with the amphitheatres and laboratories of the Faculty of Sciences (ANR, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University Iași, file 87/1917, p. 25). The same Ministry used the lecture halls of the Faculty of Law, while the Faculty Secretariat was the headquarters of the Post Office and the Telegraph (ANR, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University Iași, file 877/1917, vol.1, p. 31).

The University also hosted structures belonging to the Ministry of Public Instructions and of the Cults. The University Palace offered a room of the Physiology Laboratory for the Red Cross, a room of the Laboratory of Zoology for Scouts, of the Laboratory of Medical Chemistry within the Faculty of Medicine was destined for Post Censorship (ANR, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University Iași, file 882/1918, p. 46), while in 1917, the Copou Palace harboured "The warehouse of clothes and books for disadvantaged youth", administered by the "Commandment of the scouts and the refugee students."

The exceptional state generated by the war, the insecurity and the unpredictability led – among others – to the solidarity of the university staff and to the outlining of alternatives for this institution to function under the circumstances of a possible military defeat in the winter of 1916-1917. Reunited within a Council meeting, on 30 December 1916, the teachers of the Faculty of Sciences adopted two decisions, which they subsequently sent to the Ministry of Instruction. They asked, in the context of the war, "upon discussing the situations of teachers at all levels", for solidarity among all the members of the teaching personnel "in terms of both duty and rights." They asked for the minister to have the same availability and for the "personnel assisting teachers in different laboratories, all the more as some personnel members are mobilized, while some others keep working in laboratories." (ANR, file 19/1917, p. 8) . In the same meeting, taking into account the possibility of evacuating the city of Iași, the Council decided that: "The Dean along with the minister of Instruction should decide on the measures of surveillance and preservation of the assets of various laboratories, by assigning this mission to certain teachers or to persons working in the laboratories." (ANR, file 19/1917, p. 8) .

The city of Iași was not evacuated, and the buildings of the University continued to host, until November 1918, a part of the central state institutions. The change of purpose for most teaching and research spaces, as well as the mobilization of the students and of a part of the

teachers led to interruptions and delays of the learning process. Whereas certain courses were still held (even in the houses of certain older teachers who were not mobilized, such as Alexandru Philippide, Garabet Ibrăileanu and Dimitrie Gusti) and some exams were organized, the interruption practically lasted for two years (Agrigoroaiei, 2010, p. 279). Furthermore, the lecture halls and the laboratories suffered important destructions, which made them inadequate for use. In 1918, the Rector Nicolae Leon addressed several letters to the Ministry of Instruction asking for funds for repairing the facilities of the University and for their reintroduction in the natural circuit (teaching and scientific).

On 6th March, the Rector wrote to the Ministry that for over 16 months, within the University Palace functioned numerous directorates of the Ministry of War, and the building, the furniture, the installations “were severely damaged” (ANR, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University Iași, file 80/1918, p. 25). He asked for the Ministry of War to intervene and to make all efforts “to give us back the University Palace as we gave it.” (ANR, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University Iași, file 80/1918, p. 31-32). In September 1918, the Ministry of Public Instructions and Cults allocated 130,000 lei for the University to repair the interiors and 30,000 lei for the exteriors, the roof and the installations (Agrigoroaiei, 2010, p. 283).

The campaign of the fall of 1916, the withdrawal to Iași, the relocation of the central institutions in the new political capital and the social crises in the winter of 1916-1917 had deep consequences for the activity of the Iași-based University, which was a volunteer in the war effort. As early as 15th August 1916, the teachers of the Faculty of Medicine were mobilized in the health units of the army, and on 21st August, the 53rd Infantry Regiment – comprising teachers and students of the University – went to the front. Young assistant lecturers or consecrated professors made their knowledge available to the Romanian army, being mobilized in services that used their expertise. Not lastly, the spaces of the University were transformed into headquarters of the central institutions; the Hall became both a political decision forum, by hosting the Senate of Romania, and a platform of memorable speeches in terms of contents and effect.

The analysis dedicated to the participation of the University in Iași to the First World War can go beyond the primary level of

reconstruction, which I chose for this paper. Subsequent investigations may demonstrate the implications of the evacuation of persons and assets, the way this process was organized at central and local level. It may also explain and exemplify the global dimension of the conflict, which included civilian actors and educational spaces. It may also clarify the role of university members within the conflict, through the knowledge used not only for research purposes, but also for military needs, such as the case of historians, geographers, medical doctors, etc.

Predestined to co-operation, to exchanges and communication, to the transfer of knowledge and values between cultural spaces and nations through its nature, the University through its nature is antinomic to any kind of violent action. Academic competition, no matter how harsh, is oriented towards the general progress and it excludes, in itself, all forms of physical aggressiveness. Despite this fact, mostly starting with the modern world, it became inevitable for universities to avoid the proximity of the war, the crises it entailed, the ravages of extreme violence and the military commitment. This conjunction occurred either by ensuring the intellectual and technological support, or by the participation of its members directly in battles, or by the direct or indirect effects that often drove the university to the limit of survival. Universities became involved one way or another in the destructing conflicts that marked mostly the past century. Furthermore, the war – with its political and ideological charge – unleashed older personal or opinion-based disputes within the academic space and it provided an occasion for radical “solutions” in “collegial” files, which troubled the university life.

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