

INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN ROMANIA: STAGES AND CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS

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Abstract: Globalization and multiculturalism have been manifesting since long time, but what differentiates them today from other stages of history is their accelerated occurrence as a consequence of the development of technology, becoming the realities and the challenges of 21st century. Both globalization and multiculturalism have affected also the higher education system over the course of time, having as result a set of activities which today is known as internationalization. The present article focuses on the internationalization of higher education in Romania. Its main aim is to identify the origins of this process, as well as its cultural implications on the Romanian society. Our starting point is an affirmation made in a public document named Analysis-Diagnosis (The Universities in the context of globalization and Europeanization) where the origins of the internationalization in Romania are identified during the communist regime. Considering this affirmation as inaccurate from many reasons, which will be presented within the article, our hypothesis is that the origins of internationalization of Romanian higher education can be identified at the end of 17th century, when the first Romanian institution of higher education has been founded. While trying to test our hypothesis, following the periodization realized by Jane Knight and Hans de Wit for the internationalization of higher education globally, we will try to realize a similar periodization for the internationalization of the Romanian higher education. In this regard, we will take into consideration the historical and political aspects, but also the cultural implications that this process have had on the Romanian society at each particular period of time.

Keywords: globalization, higher education, internationalization, multiculturalism, Romania

Introduction

The 21st century is characterized by globalization and multiculturalism. But are these brand new manifestations in the global society? The answer is: definitely no! Both globalization and multiculturalism have been manifesting since long time. However, what differentiate them today from other stages of history is their accelerated occurrence as a consequence of the development of technology and the very big impact they had on the society. Therefore, they became the realities and the challenges of this century.

Globalization and multiculturalism brought changes more or less significant also at the higher education level over the course of time. During the past two decades, the higher education system all over the world has been challenged by them. Its response to these manifestations was organized in a set of activities known today as internationalization.

The aim of this article is to explore the process of internationalization of higher education, very less approached by the Romanian academia. Its main purpose is to identify the origins of this process, as well as its cultural implication on the Romanian society.

We have as a starting point a statement made in a public document named *Analysis-Diagnosis (The Universities in the context of globalization and Europeanization)*¹ where the origins of the internationalization in Romania were identified during the communist regime. Considering this affirmation as inaccurate from many reasons, which will be presented within the article, our hypothesis is that the origins of internationalization of Romanian higher education can be identified at the end of 17th century, when the first Romanian institution of higher education has been founded.

While trying to test our hypothesis, following the periodization realized by Jane Knight and Hans de Wit (1995: 6-8) for the internationalization of higher education globally, we will try to realize a similar periodization for the internationalization of the Romanian higher education. In this regard, we will take into consideration the historical and political aspects, but also the cultural implications that this process have had on the Romanian society at each particular period of time.

Internationalization of higher education: theoretical approach

From its beginning, the higher education has favored the cultural exchanges, making easier the interaction between different nations. We have to admit that initially these exchanges were undersigned, and were encouraged by the increased desire to know other cultures and nations. Progressively, these exchanges have multiplied and diversified, losing their involuntary character. Their complexity captured the researchers' attention that started to meticulously analyze something that begun to manifest as a process per se.

As a result of their work, a new concept was defined and imposed in the academia at the beginning of the '90s, namely the *internationalization*. Once theorized, the internationalization lost its spontaneous character and became an institutionalized and standardized process based on policies and strategies.

From the beginning of the '90, there were many attempts to define the internationalization of higher education. Among the first path breakers we cite Arum and van der Water who emphasize the complexity of this process by defining it as "a set of activities, programs and services in the field of international education which are imposing exchanges and technical cooperation" (1992:193).

Few years later, Jane Knight, who will become one of the most important theoreticians of internationalization, is proposing a new definition: "a process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the goals, primary functions and delivery of higher education"(1995:6). In the coming years, Jane Knight revised the concept, seeing the need for a more broad definition "in order to be applied to many different countries, cultures and education systems, not including rationales, benefits outcomes, actors, activities, stakeholders, seeing that they vary across nations and institutions" (2004:11). Hence, a new definition was formulated, a definition that "focuses on internationalization as a mean to an end not an end in itself" (Knight

¹ Even if not part of the scientific literature (which is very less developed), this document, published in 2010 and coordinated by Remus Pricopie and Luminita Nicolaescu, is very important because of its informative character regarding a process that just started to be discussed and analyzed in Romania, both by the practitioners and theoreticians. Therefore, understanding wrong from the beginning this process may lead to a wrong approach of it in the future.

2012:22), namely “a process of integrating an international/intercultural and global dimension into the goals, primary functions and delivery of higher education at the institutional and national levels” (Ibid.).

We observe among this significant number of definitions a consensus in understanding internationalization as a process. Behind this process there is a range of motivations, such as economic, political, cultural and academic (Knight, de Wit, 1995:10-14). These motivations are dictating the way of approaching the internationalization process, which can prioritize the activities, the competencies, the ethos or the process itself (Qiang 2003: 250-251). Choosing one way of approaching this process will guide you through the selection of the models and strategies of internationalization. Warner (1992:21) is proposing three models: a competitive one, encouraging the competitiveness on global market, a liberal one, focusing on the personal development or a model based on social change. Hans de Wit and Jane Knight (1995:18-22) are promoting two models, one based on programs (research activities, academic activities, technical assistance and extracurricular activities), the other based on the organization profile (institutional management, policies and strategies, etc.).

Having this theoretical clarification in mind, we will go deeper in our analysis, trying first and foremost to prove why we can't identify the origins of internationalization during the Romanian communist regime.

The inconsistency of the Romanian communist regime with the internationalization

While researching about the internationalization of higher education during communist Romania, we have identified three main categories of aspects that made us contradict the assumption that the origins of internationalization in Romania can be found during the communist regime, and these aspects are theoretical, legal and pragmatic.

The first category of aspects is related to the theoretical inconsistency. If we take a look to the definition elaborated by Jane Knight, we will see that the internationalization has as purpose the integration of an international/intercultural and global dimension in the field of education. Even more, along with Hans de Wit, the author has identified a series of activities that suppose the participation of persons, but also of products and information of a very diverse and complex nature. Therefore, the free movement of these three elements is mandatory in order to run a successful internationalization. Going even deeper within the theory, we will recognize that this condition is consistent only with a liberal democracy (Bell, 2014), who values it as core principle for its existence. Between 1947 and 1989, Romania was far from being a liberal democracy, the country being ruled by the Marxist-Leninist ideology which has degenerated in a national-communist one, making the Romanian communist regime even more rigid and less predictable. In this context, the education became an instrument of the State for creating the New Man, committed to the Marxist-Leninist ideology, to the party and the president (Tudosiu 2010:6). Therefore it loses the main role it has in liberal democracies, such as leading to the development of the individual in a more complex manner, in accordance with the values it promotes.

The second category is related to the legal aspects. As previously mentioned, the Romanian communist regime had an instable and unpredictable path, which was reflected in the reforms in the field of education implemented through the enactment of new laws in this specific field. The first Law was adopted in 1947 and corresponds to the communist dictatorship phase of the regime. This law was drafted in order to create an education system able to form and to

provide a specialized labor force, especially in the industrial domain of activity, according to the soviet requirements. This law makes no reference to the international dimension of the education system, except the incumbency of learning Russian language. However, this can be related to the regime's policy, and not to the internationalization process.

The second Law was adopted in 1968, during the second phase of the communist regime, characterized by certain autonomy towards the Soviet Union. The international dimension of education is represented by the possibility, under certain conditions and only in some schools, for foreign languages to be taught. Other provisions related to the international dimension of the education refers to the possibility of offering scholarships abroad for exceptional students, but also to receive foreign citizens to study in Romania, according to international conventions and without entrance examination. Also, there was mentioned the possibility of making the equivalence of study certificates and diplomas issued by foreign higher education institutions.

The third Law was adopted in 1978 and corresponds to the third phase of the regime, characterized by neo-Stalinism. This law alleges the education's subordination to Party's policy. Related to the international dimension of education, it's stated the compulsoriness of teaching two foreign languages, and that the research and mobility were possible only based on cultural agreements or international arrangements. There is no reference about the grant of scholarships abroad, and the provisions related to the admission of foreign citizens are more elusive.

The third category is related to pragmatic aspects, more exactly to the impossibility of putting into practice specific activities related to the internationalization process. In what concern the number of international students, even significant during the 70s (Pricopie, Nicolaescu 2010:26), according to the statistics they were coming from Africa, Asia and South America, therefore from befriended countries of the regime, as a result of the bilateral agreements signed by Nicolae Ceaușescu during the detente-era of the regime. After 1980, their number decreased significantly, what we considered being a consequence of the new law of education and of the policy of isolation led by the Communist Party. In what concerns the mobility of academic staff saw the same dynamic, being drastically limited as a result of the same policy. As far as the presence of foreign teachers is concerned, they are present only during the 70s, as instructors of courses for teaching foreign languages and literatures (Balaci, Ionașcu 1964:74).

With regard to study programs and open access to information, it should be noted that, with the exception of foreign languages and literatures study programs, there was no program in other field of study taught in a language of international circulation. In addition, the international dimension was not integrated into the curriculum. As for the free circulation of ideas, revealing is a measure that aimed at the reorganization of the book fund. Among the measures mentioned were the elimination of old publications, the banning of other publications considered dangerous and contrary to the new ideology that had just been imposed, and the acquisition of new books obtained through internal production or donations from the Soviet Union (Bozgan, Murgescu coord. 2014:309)

From all the above we can advance a first conclusion, namely that during the communist regime we can't talk about a veritably internationalization process. Therefore, under any circumstances the origins of this process can be identified amid this period. In this case, a new question arise, namely when can we identify the first activities consistent to the internationalization within the Romanian higher education?

The stages of internationalization according to Jane Knight and Hans de Wit

During the 90s, while trying to impose the internationalization as a pertinent concept in the academia, Jane Knight and Hans de Wit (1995:6-8) started their endeavor by identifying the origins of internationalization at a global level. As a result of their work, we can now talk about three different stages of this process in the world.

The first stage started in the Middle Age and ended at the beginning of the 18th century. According to the two theoreticians, this stage was characterized by a very slow dissemination of information. Also, they identified as a common language within the academia the Latin language, but also the existence of common study programs and of a universal system of examination, used by most higher education institutions at the time, which encouraged the mobility. We have to mention also that the practice of equivalence of diplomas dates from that period, being however implemented only within the Christianity.

As a consequence, the internationalization favored the cultural exchanges and answered the need for education of the society (we are aware that back then the access to higher education was available mostly for the elite).

The second stage is identified as starting at the beginning of the 18th century and ending with the outbreak of the Second World War. This stage is characterized by the exportation of the higher education systems, a consequence of the colonialism. In this period the internationalization seems to serve rather the national interest, observation reflected also in the subjects approached by the researchers in their works.

The end of the war brought significant changes in the field of higher education, representing hence the beginning of the third stage of internationalization which continues until the present day, according to both researchers. During the Cold War, the internationalization followed mostly the structure of the international security system, seeing that the academic/cultural cooperation agreements were signed frequently between befriended states. The decolonization imposed the increase of exchanges, but also led to the modification of the university's role, which became human resources provider, and only subsidiary a provider of science and knowledge. After 1989, the higher education became the engine of social, political and economic innovations. As a consequence, the importance of raising awareness regarding the cultural diversity became more prominent. Therefore, the role of internationalization in this period evolved from providing human resources educated in a competitive spirit of the free market to providing human resources educated in the spirit of multiculturalism.

The stages of internationalization of higher education in Romania

The hypothesis of this study is that the origins of the internationalization of higher education in Romania cannot be identified during the communist regime, but much earlier, with the establishment of the first higher education institutions in Romania, namely the Royal Academy of Bucharest in 1694 and Iasi in 1707². Since the first part of our hypothesis was argued above, we will proceed to prove the second part of it, by identifying the elements specific

² The establishment date of the Royal Romanian Academies as mentioned in the article represents a consensus among the theoreticians. There have been debates regarding the exact date from when we can talk about higher education in the Principalities. Some documents mentioned the existence of higher education institutions even at the beginning of the 15th century (Schola Palatina), while others considers the 16th century as the beginning of it arguing the establishment of Colleges. The historian Ovidiu Bozgan (1994:4) has been contesting the academic rank of the Colleges, discussing the very precarious development of the Romanian society at that time.

to internationalization. At the same time, following the periodization realized by Jane Knight and Hans de Wit, we will try to make a similar periodization for the Romanian case. The demarcation will be made according to the different cultural implications that this process had on the society at each particular stage.

First stage: 1694-1821

The first stage of the internationalization of higher education in Romania starts, as we have mentioned above, at the end of 17th century and lasted until 1821. During this period, despite their vassal status, the Principalities had frequent contacts with the Occident, as a consequence of the commercial and diplomatic relations. These contacts have favored the dissemination of the Enlightenment ideas of progress and paved the way for the development of the education in national language.

Even if in the academia there were many debates concerning the true existence of a Romanian higher education, we position ourselves on the side of academicians that recognize its existence, but also its discontinuous and limited character, as a consequence of the historical events and of the society's structure at that time.

During this period, we can find many elements related to the internationalization. One of them is the teaching language of the courses. Likewise the European universities at that time, within the Romanian higher education institutions were used the classical languages, such as Greek and Latin (Grigoriu 1978:43-49). The Greek language was seen at the time an instrument of the intellectual progress (Camarino-Cioran 1971:18), being the main language used by the academia in the south-eastern Europe. At the end of the 18th century, as a consequence of the diversification and multiplication of international relations, the study of French and Italian language was introduced (Balaci, Ionașcu 1964:16).

Another relevant aspect is represented by the content of the study programs (by the curriculum) which was inspired after the western universities' model (Filip 1994:12). Even the text books used by the Romanian Royal Academies were the same used in the Occident, which proves their broad circulation. The text books were translated or adapted by the professors of the academies (Ibid:45-46). The education reform from 1774 made the content of the study programs even more complex and divers by the introduction of new courses. At that time, philosophy, logic, physics, astronomy, geometry were studied at the Academies (Camarino-Cioran 1971:137-173).

Specific for the internationalization and present during this stage is the both ways academic mobility for students and professors. The archive documents and the relevant published literature attest the existence of Greek, Serbs, Macedonians and Bulgarian students who were attending classes at the Romanian Academies (Balaci, Ionașcu, 1964:11-24). In what concerns the number of Romanians who were studying abroad, Nicolae Iorga (1906:1) was stating that, at the end of the 18th century, their number was bigger than we would have expected. They were choosing Italian, German and French universities in their search for well reputed higher education institutions ((Drace-Francis 2016:48). Moreover, some of them were receiving financial support from the state (scholarships) in order to pursue their studies abroad (Camarino-Cioran 1971:10). In what concerns the presence of foreign professors/lecturers at the Academies, the archive documents are mentioning Laurençon, Munier as French language professors and Piccolas for Italian.

Second stage: 1821-1947

We consider that the second stage of the internationalization of higher education in Romania started after the 1821 Revolution led by Tudor Vladimirescu and ended immediately after the Second World War. During this period of time, the Romanian Royal Academies have contributed to the spread of the national ideal and offered the required conditions to make the transition to the instruction in national language for all the study levels (Pascu 1983:354). Also during this period, as a consequence of the development of a new political and intellectual elite, educated in the western universities, a process of institutional reform took place. This process led to the establishment of the first Romanian universities, the University of Iasi in 1860 at the University of Bucharest in 1864.

One main element related to internationalization concerns the legal and organizational aspects of these new higher education institutions. The Education law adopted in 1864 was inspired after the French model, a model that had corresponded to a certain phase of development globally, but also to the need of the Romanian society at that time (Loghin, Platon 1972:70). The French model was imposed also at the organizational level, seeing that the way of organizing the University of Bucharest was very similar with the one of the University of Paris (Bozgan, Murgescu, 2014:49).

Another element of internationalization is the academic mobility for students and professors, which keeps developing during this period, despite the establishment of the Romanian universities. This can be justified by the insufficient development of these newly-established higher education institutions, which did not have the necessary infrastructure to guarantee an adequate research activity and couldn't provide students with all the qualification an occidental university would have done at that time (Nastasă 2007:165). On the other side, during the 19th century, the Romanian higher education system had no possibility to offer doctoral studies. Therefore those who were willing to invest more in their education were obliged to continue their studies abroad. The mobility took not only the shape of full time courses, but also short mobility, which will be developed during the 20th century, becoming a must in the 21st century. The increased number of mobility imposed the creation of a common system of equivalence and recognition of diplomas.

In what concerned the teaching of foreign languages, it developed also thanks to the contribution to native speakers such as Ulysse de Marsillac, Gian Luigi Frolo, Giandomenico Serra and Ramiro Ortiz (Loghin, Platon, Platon 1972:71). Moreover, departments for studying Slavic and Germanic languages were established, as well as departments for the study of Turkish language (Nastasă 2007:39). But maybe the most important development in this field was the one of the Romanian language as a teaching language, but also as a scientific subject for research.

The internationalization of higher education was facilitated during the 20th century by the establishments of foreign institutes having political, cultural and academic purposes. It started in 1922 with the establishment of the Institute for Italian culture, continued two years later with the French institute, and went further with the establishment of American, British and German Institutes (Bozgan 1994:40-60). On the other hand, Romania opened such institutes in France (Fontenay-aux-Roses) and Italy (Rome). The main activities were awarding scholarships for studies on mutual base, organizing conferences, equipping libraries with books, publishing scientific magazines, etc.

The activities related to the scientific research represent also a form of internationalization. We have to say that, even if during this period the research seemed to serve

more the Romanian national interest, following the international trend, it had a very important echo and a broad diffusion at the international level. As a consequence of the important scientific work done by our researchers, many foreign higher education institutions awarded them Doctor Honoris Causa title (Bozgan, Murgescu, 2014: 84). On the other hand, many Romanian scientists became members of the international academies or societies, such as Petru Poni, Grigore Tocilescu, Nicolae Iorga, and many others (Loghin, Platon, Platon 1972:160). The results of their work, alone or in collaboration with foreign researchers, have been published in English, French, German, Italian language, in many international scientific magazines, having a broad diffusion. At that time, the exchange of scientific magazines between universities was a common practice, representing a means through which the knowledge was dispersed.

The second stage of internationalization saw a diversification of the means of internationalization, which made the Romanian higher education an instrument for progress and a contributor to the unification process and to the affirmation of Romania as an independent state on the international level.

Third stage: 1990 until present day

We have argued above that for approximately 50 years, since the end of the Second World War and until the fall of communism, we could not talk about a true internationalization process in Romania. The few elements consistent with internationalization were subjugated to the Party's policy. Therefore, we are entitled to consider that the third stage of the internationalization of higher education started after the fall of communism, in 1990. It was a period when Romania started an institutional reform in all fields of activity, including the education system. During the first years of post-communism, private universities were established and old ones entered a reform process, renewing the content of the existing study programs, and introducing new ones.

In the first place we have to talk about the curricula, which have changed a lot, developing programs taught in foreign language and having a multicultural and global content. Today, the Romanian higher education offers 250 out of 1000 study programs (bachelor and master) entirely in a foreign language. Also their content was conceived in order to meet the needs of today's society, a multicultural and global one (studyinromania.gov.ro). In addition, there are approximately 400 joint degrees which increase the student's possibility to travel and to work in multicultural environments.

Secondly, the number of student mobility for short or for complete study programs abroad increased a lot. If we look at the Erasmus mobility, the best well-known and accessed by students type of mobility, the latest statistics show that approximately 4,500 Romanian students benefit of this scholarship. In what concerned the mobility for complete study programs, more than 26000 Romanian students have chosen to pursue their studies abroad. (UEFISCDI 2013: 23-55).

Another mean of internationalization is represented by the mobility of professors as lecturers or for research activities. This mobility is important because have benefits for both professors and students, leading to their development in a multicultural environment. The biggest number of foreign languages lecturers is working within the Faculties of Letters or in the Faculties of Foreign Languages and Literatures, where they are invited to teach their native language, culture and civilization to Romanian students. On the other hand, the Romanian language, culture and civilization are represented in more than 29 countries by 49 Romanian-

speaking lecturers in 29 countries (www.ilr.ro).

Another way of facilitating the multicultural exchanges is the participation in summer/winter schools and study visits. According to statistics, each year, more than 4000 Romanian students are participating. On the other side, the summer/winter schools organized by Romanian higher education institutions are attracting about 1700 international students.

The third stage of internationalization of higher education is characterized also by the extension of the cooperation in the field of education. Hence, Romania has signed 200 bilateral agreements with more than 100 countries. These agreements allow the awarding of scholarships for students and academic staff on a mutual basis, as well the organization of academic and cultural events having as main beneficiaries the students. Along with these bilateral agreements, Romania has joined many international academic networks aiming at the improvement of higher education. Among the main objectives we can recall the exchange of good practice or the participation in developing educational projects both at national and international level (<http://www.edu.ro>).

One specific element of this third stage of internationalization of Romanian higher education is the research development thanks to the many international research networks that Romania is affiliated to. The latest statistics showed a significant increase of the number of ISI indexed items, most of the articles being published in collaboration with researchers from abroad. There have been collaborations with French researchers (10.2%), German (10.1%), American (9.8%), Italian (8.9%), English, Spanish (6.6%), Polish and Hungarian (4-5%). On the other hand, more than 326 bilateral research projects were launched by Romania, having as partner countries the Czech Republic, France, Moldova, Greece, Austria and Hungary. We have to mention also the membership of Romania in research organizations such as Euraxess Network, European Higher Education Area, ERA-NET, JTI, National Research Agency, European Science Foundation, etc. (UEFISCDI 2013: 60-62).

Last but not least, this third stage of internationalization can have as marker the increased engagement, in a more organized and structure manner, of the students from all over the world. An example in this sense is the Erasmus Student Networks which promotes and facilitate the organization of social events and the cultural exchange between international students and Romanian students is facilitated (<https://esn.org>).

Since this third stage is still developing in the present, it is difficult to identify the cultural implications that had on the Romanian society. However, we can affirm that the internationalization process contributed on the reform process of the Romanian higher education. On the other hand, it introduced a multicultural and global approach that contributes even today to forming individuals ready to work in an interconnected society from all points of view.

Conclusions

The present article emphasized the complexity of the internationalization process and led to the identification of the very important cultural implications that has had and still has on the Romanian society.

Furthermore, we have demonstrated that the internationalization of higher education in Romania finds its origins at the end of the 17th century, when the first higher education institutions were established. This observation contradicts the assertion that the internationalization manifested for the first time in Romania during the communist regime, in the

70s.

The results of the research have shown a certain deviation in what concerned the periodization proposed by Jane Knight and Hans de Wit for the international level and the one we argued for the national/Romanian one.

Being very less approached by the national academia, this article may work up the interest of the researchers to fathom this subject, the possible results being useful for the decision-makers in the field of higher education.

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