

Senate's Office of the University of Bucharest

The University of Bucharest

Diagnostic Analysis

2007

1. UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST IN NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT

The universities rank among the oldest existing social institutions; the basic structures and organization principles of certain universities have remained unchanged for hundreds of years. Our institution was founded in 1864. Its significant moments are related to the middle of the 19th century and to the activity of great scientists educated between the World Wars, some of them working at the university until the '70s. Now it is the moment to imagine a future project, because the reference to the past is no longer sufficient for the decision making process.

In most countries of the world, the greatness of respectable age turns universities into reference systems. However, in Romania, public universities have been confronted with a hostile media campaign for the past couple of years. A vehement request for faster alignment with the Occidental standards is accompanied by one for a reorientation of the *university* education towards the student, a higher level of transparency in the decision making process within the academic autonomy. As unfair as it is that private universities are not attacked in the same manner, we have to admit that such requirements are essentially legitimate. On the other hand, the University of Bucharest takes firm action to apply in the entire institution the changes mentioned, which have already been made in many faculties. However, the European integration of our institution still has some steps to take: complete renovation and advanced equipping of the buildings, enriching the information sources, creating common programmes and several international networks, generated on fields of study. Last but not least, the attitude and mentality have to be thoroughly analyzed and changed. Many decisions are taken at department level, based on a short-term vision. There are not any management instruments yet, for an overview of the university strategies, through measures taken for each faculty in turn.

In the context of the extremely fast, ongoing social, technological and cultural changes, tradition can be an obstacle in the way of absolutely necessary adjustment processes. Universities cannot avoid these changes; on the contrary, they have to adjust quickly or even to initiate such changes. The rhythm of global growth estimated for 2007 is of 6%, while Romania may maintain a GDP growth of 6-7%. The growth of the University budget from public sources amounted to approximately 80%. Nevertheless, the number of budget-financed students at our university dropped this year by 600, i.e. 13%. Despite certain hostile positions at national level, one can presume that a Europe-integrated

Romania will soon grant approximately 2% of the GDP to higher education. Under these circumstances, it is imperious that we have a well structured project for the future.

Recently, our institution has been ranked in the top 500 of world universities, by the *Times Higher Education Supplement* magazine. And this achievement, which contradicts a well-known Bucharest political dogma (“Romanian universities are mediocre and cannot be ranked in top 500”), requires additional efforts, as well as a strategy to **maintain** this position, in the top of high-rated universities. From this point of view, world competition is very tight. Under the circumstances of Chinese universities receiving substantial support from their own government, with adequate financial resources and reforms, in order to be ranked in the top mentioned above, the University of Bucharest can count on an increase in the financial support provided by the public budget, but it also has to overcome several shortcomings and setbacks.

It is currently confronted with a few major challenges:

1. Fast innovation in the information and communication technologies and the use of these technologies in all the walks of life: at work, in communication, in public services, in family life, in spending free time. The teaching staff and the students have the obligation to use these technologies, to take part in their innovation, to include these technologies in education, to benefit from their advantages as soon as possible and to protect themselves from the possibly harmful consequences of their use. Unfortunately, many teaching staff members, especially those representing the older generations, consider that IT means do not contribute significantly to the learning and teaching process, ignoring the obvious. These professors hope to retire without having to learn the new communication techniques; however, they are still years from retirement, years which will be lost for the University. Even young people show the same reticence to the integration of teaching means into a common platform (e.g. the Moodle free application, accessible on <http://moodle.unibuc.ro/>), going for more personal, though less performing methods. The Internet is often used only for copying already created works.

The continuously growing amount of information, which is vital for the students and professors, can no longer be obtained through the old ways. We need databases of online publications. Currently, the University of Bucharest uses ProQuest and Ebsco (from the Central University Library of Bucharest), Project Muse and Hinari (purchased on its own funds). The university still needs large databases, such as Ingenta Connect, Jstor, ScienceDirect, PubMed. There are still a lot of things to be done, in order to integrate these data bases in the learning process, in order to use these data for Bachelor's degree papers and dissertation papers.

2. Accession to the European Union. After January 1st 2007, political instability saw a visible enhancement in Romania, as much as in other countries from the first wave of accession. Romanian universities are directly affected by this situation, because it is more difficult for them to foresee the functioning context of the following year. On the other hand, they are evaluated in the same context as the Western European universities.

We can anticipate a significant increase in the flows of students, especially from Romania towards the Western-European countries. It is also possible to witness an increase in the presence of foreign students in Romania, which however will not balance the wave of migrations abroad. The imbalance between the number of Romanian students going

abroad and the number of foreign students coming to Romania can generate new problems in terms of higher education budget in Romania. If the voucher-based financing system is adopted, by allotting travelling fellowships, it is possible that a large amount of the public funds allotted for higher education in Romania be expatriated, because the admission criteria for higher education will be the same throughout the entire Union. This will lead to an increased deficit of funding at the universities. On the other hand, Romanian authorities will also finance foreign students from the European countries. In certain fields, such as medicine, sports, psychology, it is possible to witness a significant increase in the number of students, through the migration of foreign students to Romanian faculties.

Accession to the European Union will have significant consequences at the level of the entire Romanian education system. The University of Bucharest will have to align with the quality and performance standards of the developed European countries. Otherwise, it risks losing its importance at national and European level. Countries such as France or Germany practise a much lower fee than Romania for university studies. If not for the daily expenses, it would be cheaper to study at the Sorbonne than at the University of Bucharest. Parisian universities are more prestigious than our university, for a good reason. However, currently, they are all part of the same political, supra-state unity, undergoing integration. For these reasons, the pressure of demands on Romanian universities will increase more and more. It is frustrating for a young man to be compelled to expatriate in order to obtain world-level education. It is the duty of Romanian universities to provide world-level education to Romanian citizens.

Taking into account the fact that Western European universities are more attractive than the Eastern European ones and the fact that the costs of studies paid by the students at the Western universities are lower for the time being (for the tuition fees component), it is possible that an increasing number of Romanian students opt for Western universities. The public image of Romanian institutions of higher education will permanently suffer on account of the comparisons. Thus, the chances of developing or even of maintaining at a certain level risk a dramatic drop for the Eastern European universities, including the University of Bucharest, unless these institutions take significant, visible measures, known to the public, in order to rise to the Western teaching and learning standards.

3. Globalization processes. Multiple forms and consequences. Globalization in higher education means that a student finds information in a virtual library, spread all over the world, that he can obtain his education under the guidance of a professor who is miles away, that he obtains a professional qualification for a global labour market, that he enriches his culture with elements from other cultures.

However, if a Romanian student can take the courses of a Master program from a Swedish university, living and working in Bucharest, Romanian universities are beginning to have serious competition. Foreign universities are already presenting their offers in Romania, at the annual RIUF fair. The University of Wales is active in Romania, followed by other foreign institutions. Some institutions choose partnerships to enter the market, especially MBA programs.

The Romanian high school elite, identified by international competitions, receive generous offers from American universities, long before applying to any university in the country. Our Doctoral students and master students are in great demand abroad, while

they can barely make ends meet at home. In the absence of an independent personnel policy (due to the fact that salaries are fixed on a national grid, while the rate between the professors' and the assistants' salary is of 1:5 – 1:7), the University loses some of the remaining talented young people each year.

Globalization can also represent the world-level extension of a culture belonging to a country or an economically dominant area, to the detriment of certain cultures which do not have enough force to protect themselves and, even less, impose themselves. Universities have an essential role in the protection of cultural identities. In all the matters discussed above, the University of Bucharest has to be an active agent of globalization, instead of being a mere bearer of its unavoidable consequences.

4. Development of mass higher education. Romania, as well as other countries, turned higher education into a mass phenomenon. In most countries where this system is applied, it is considered that it has brought remarkable progress, providing all young people with access to higher education. However, the Universities are not ready to face mass higher education: acute lack of education and research spaces, old, crowded or overused buildings, and acute lack of qualified teaching staff. Mass higher education also includes students with a reduced performance potential. Either for market-related reasons, or for financial reasons (in order to avoid losing some of the budget financing), less prepared students are kept in the system and manage to obtain degrees as well, which have the same value on the labour market as the degrees of their better trained colleagues. This phenomenon will not cease, if we pretend not to see it. It will continue and it will extend through *Lifelong Learning*, the training provided to middle-aged and old age persons. The university has to adjust actively, finding teaching methodologies for these new forms of education, proposing new content, appropriate for the needs of the new groups (which does not have in view education for excellence, but for career), making room for the newest and most advanced knowledge (through research activities, at the level of Master programmes and Doctoral programmes). The Bologna agreement requests that the first cycle of education provide adequate training for the labour market. Forming social and communication skills, as well as initiative and responsibility becomes more important than accumulating a large amount of theoretical knowledge. On the other hand, it is not acceptable that an increase in the number of students with degrees leads to a drop in the quality of Master programmes or Doctoral programmes, because these are not mass programmes.

There is some sort of Bologna-scepticism, which suffers from the absence of a project, because it does not bring solutions; it settles for an attitude of critical nostalgia. The University of Bucharest intends to assert itself as a university of research and, in consequence, the negative effects of mass education have to be circumscribed to certain Bachelor's programs with a large number of students.

5. Romania's demographic decline. The National Committee for Population and Development published the *Green Book of Population*. According to this statistics document, the Romanian population is dropping by 0.15% per year, which leads to an aging process. Instead of a demographic pyramid, we end up with some sort of tree, with a thin trunk and a rich crown, i.e. a few children and adolescents and a lot of senior citizens. The population structured on age suddenly dropped by 30% over one decade ago

and it remained at this level. The first age groups affected by the drop will reach the level of higher education in 2008-2009. The phenomenon is added to the migration abroad mentioned above.

The Ministry of Education, Research and Youth reacted to these predictions reducing the number of state-financed students by approximately 7.5%. This reduction was distributed to the universities, according to their profile, in the context in which some received more spots, while the others received less. Thus, exact sciences and technologies received more spots, due to their importance for the economic development, while social-human sciences received less spots.

Under these circumstances, with more money and less state-financed students, the quality of university education has to increase. If this correlation does not apply to our university, it will do so in the case of other universities. In this case, a drop in the number of fee-paying students attracted by the UB is estimated, though their number may still be high for the moment.

6. Internal and international competition. As long as Romanian higher education was only state education, under the control of the appointed Ministry, there was no competition. The occurrence of the private sector in higher education, the founding of new state universities, and the use of the tax system in the public education system led to the occurrence of strong competition on the Romanian market. However, the absence of proper regulations on this market may have serious consequences on certain institutions. The University of Bucharest cannot try to evade this competition process, by invoking its top 500 rank, its prestigious past and by considering that these arguments are sufficient to attract students. Certain faculties suffer from the lack of applicants and need an active, dynamic and strong strategy, which involves sacrifices and an honest desire to improve their image. The existence of faculties with the same profile in neighbouring cities, or even in Bucharest, where our colleagues teach, makes us question the desire to self-improve in some of them. If internal competition is represented not only by private universities, but also by some of our own employees, our chances to success are smaller. On the other hand, the Education Fair organized each year successfully shows the interested generated by our university in 30,000 visitors. This year, the visits organized in 29 high schools from other cities were a new and gladdening event.

A strong international competition adds to the internal competition. International cooperation, creating networks and common programs with double degree, represent a necessity in this context. An internationally prestigious university which intends to open a branch in Romania will hesitate to make this move only if the local institutions already have strong partners from the West. This type of cooperation is possible and useful, especial at the level of a Master programmes, Doctoral programmes or research. The University of Bucharest has to carefully consider the situation created by the spread of competition and to find adequate answers at the level of each department and of each faculty.

7. Losing monopoly on higher education. Using the legislative levers, the Romanian universities manage to maintain monopoly on higher education to the greatest extent, by controlling the issuing of national degrees and education certificates. This monopoly has already been fissured during the past years and can be lost during the following years.

There are offers of non-university higher training, which provide qualifications for the labour market, especially for the private companies. These *training* programs have the advantage of being quick, flexible and efficient. The training uses new methods, originating from America, which involve the trainee and allow him to practice his newly acquired skills. Another advantage of this method of alternative training of specialists is the speed of application. The time interval between the occurrence of an innovation and its use is shorter and shorter, while a company which is in great demand for specialists in a certain field cannot wait 5-10 years until a university can normally provide the first graduates. If their intention is to maintain a comfortable position on the education market, universities have to become flexible and to be able to adjust quickly to the requirements of the labour market.

National degrees are exactly the advantage of the universities. A training program providing a university degree as well is more attractive than a simple participation certificate for a training, which only attests partial skills. The Master programme is the education cycle which suits this type of offer the best. The Master programme has to provide at least three semesters of studies, including the practice period, in order to meet the requirements of the Bologna agreement. The difficulty lies in designing certain Master programmes starting from the needs of persons who are half-way their careers and who want to be on management positions or to take part in flexible activities, such as project management. The teaching staff for this type of programs will not necessarily be university-qualified, but it will also include collaborators with management experience in companies and institutions. Our faculties have to examine carefully the possibility to provide this type of Master programmes, which will allow them to adjust to the education environment of the 21st century. Master programmes of the Bologna type, which are connected to the needs of the economic and administration departments, could become a strong instrument in the application of development policies, if the universities prove to be intelligent enough to model these programmes to this end and to join partnerships with the relevant institutions.

8. Increasing inequalities of the chance to have access to higher educations. The number of students coming from the rural area or from under-privileged backgrounds has dropped dramatically in the post-1990 period, continuing a long-term tendency. Technically, there are faculties with no young students from the rural area. A reason for this situation is the constantly decreasing numbers of pupils from the rural area, who get to study in high school. The university has the moral responsibility to support young people from the rural area and from under-privileged backgrounds, in order to have access to secondary and higher education. Moreover, high schools from the rural and semi-rural areas are an essential source of talents for the universities, if we take into account the fact that approximately 38% of the population lives in the rural area. A direct connection between the university and a number of high schools from the neighbouring counties (e.g. the high school from Măgurele) is able to provide motivated candidates for our faculties.

9. Increasing competition for access to research funds. The University of Bucharest has a main double mission – higher education and scientific research. For a university of this type, scientific research represents not only a means of positioning in the European

and world hierarchy of universities, but also an important financing source. During the past years, the University of Bucharest has constantly been ranked among the top four institutions of higher education in Romania, in terms of research, always ranking the first or the second. The financing of research has seen a rapid growth as of the second half of year 2005. Currently, we are at the level of ROL 250 billion per year, a level which will have to be doubled in the following 3 years, in order to maintain our global position. A significant amount of this money has been used to equip the laboratories. Currently, we have up-to-date equipment, including an atomic force microscope, high performance magnetometers, spectrometers and chromatographs. However, the number of ISI rated articles reported by our colleagues has dropped from 350 to 324 in the last year. This situation could be explained by the fact that the researchers in question do not have administrative staff for the specific tasks related to the management of research projects and have been busier managing and purchasing equipment. If so, next year we should witness an increase in the number of ISI articles. Given that we already have sufficient research equipment, it is time to wait for scientific results. It is clear that the institution now has the resources required for a quick, progressive evolution and that public money will not be spent in vain.

However, the same growth phenomena occur at competing institutions. We are competing for research funds against the Politehnica University of Bucharest, against the Alexandru Ioan Cuza University from Iași and against the Babeș-Bolyai University from Cluj, as well as against a number of 250 technological institutes or research companies. In 2007, the UB was ranked the third by the Ad Astra association, using an algorithm in which the number of publications is divided by the number of teaching staff members.

Access to the European funds is also important. With the creation of an *Idei* programme within the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7), there is no excuse for those who invoke structural obstacles in the way of access to the European research funds. The connection with researchers in Europe and all over the world is indispensable both to common publications and to access to funds of the European Research Space. The chain of weaknesses is obvious: there is not any recognition without communication with European colleagues and, without recognition, there is not any participation in the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7). Besides publishing articles in ISI magazines, it is also necessary to obtain ISI accreditation for our publications, which many times do not manage to have a normal issue rate.

The factors enumerated above lead to the conclusion that a new program is necessary, that the University of Bucharest needs a new strategy. The necessity to make major changes in the structure of studies and professional routes has been discussed several times in Senate assemblies (December 2007, May 1999, March 2000, May 2001, April 2002, February 2004, June 2006, December 2006, February 2007). Each time, decisions were made regarding certain principles of change, yet these principles were only partially applied. If we do not make the required changes now, we risk being overcome by the reality around us. It is not enough to move fast, one has to move faster than the competition.

2. IMPERATIVE ACTION OF CERTAIN CONTEXT FACTORS

The impact of certain context factors adds to the factors mentioned above, whose action is a long-term one.

1. **The announced public refinancing** of higher education had an unpredictable path. In 2006, the University of Bucharest received a 60 billion worth “penalty” when signing the first version of the institutional contract with the Ministry and receiving less money than expected. The coefficients for the Master programme, the Doctoral programme and for certain fields have dropped dramatically. In terms of quality, the division was made not only by state-financed students (for whom the financing is made), but also by the total number of students. Thus, large universities with fee paying students lost points in favour of small technical universities, which do not attract fee paying students. As a result, the first version of the contract attracted a huge wave of worries, because the salary increases announced by the Government could not be applied with such a small budget.

The university’s own funds are not sufficient to cover the deficit in subventions and to make a minimum of investments, current and capital repairs. Subsequently, in 2006, through repeated budget corrections, the university saw an improvement of financing. Important amounts of money were allotted to investments, renovations, capital and current repairs, which led to an improvement in the University infrastructure. Works have begun in a steady rhythm on the 9-storey hostel from Grozăvești. There has been a lot of work (although still insufficient) on the roof of the building from the Elisabeta Boulevard. For the first time, after many years, the Aula Magna of the Faculty of Law was renovated. There has been progress in the consolidation works started on the building of the Faculty of Theology. There have been renovation works in several hostels and faculty buildings. New thermal systems have replaced the old ones; new electrical and heating systems have been designed and implemented. New equipment has been purchased for the laboratories, which is still an ongoing process.

On the other hand, sub-financing at the level of personnel expenses has become more severe. Budget corrections only covered a part of the salary increases provisioned by the regulations. Covering the deficit in salaries was a strong pressure on the university’s own funds.

At last, in 2006, the policy of the Ministry of Education and Research saw a clear change in the allotment of resources to universities. The budget for 2007 could support the actions initiated in 2006. The level of financing per student increased; however, the number of state-financed students allotted to our university dropped.

2. The budgets allotted to certain faculties, in relation to the basic financing structure, present **major estimated deficits**. Practically speaking, certain faculties, especially the faculties teaching fundamental sciences, exhaust their resources from the basic financing on salaries only, and just until September-October. This financial context factor represented a decisive argument in speeding the completion of the program of changes. No one can take responsibility for a faculty which ceases to function due to lack of funds and we cannot hope to find miraculous solutions, coming from outside the University. The only solution, for the faculties which attract a small number of students, is to develop

research activities and to reduce the teaching staff proportionally to the number of students. This is the only manner in which we can handle the constraints of the situation correctly, under the circumstances of an increase in research financing and a drop in the number of students in certain fields. On the other hand, it is essential that the reduction of certain teaching staffs be accompanied by an improvement of the teaching activity, a better communication between the students and the professors, by the use of IT resources, publishing the support materials for the courses and the evaluation results, by the existence of student forums, using e-mail, etc. The problem of higher education quality can never be reduced to financing. Allotting additional resources is not justified if there is no proof of the exquisite quality of the teaching activity.

3. Legislative contradictions. Speeding legislative dynamics and insufficient correlation between various regulations have generated important contradictions among various regulations. Such contradictions exist between the legislation regarding education and legislation regarding labour and public finances. Doctoral students are seriously affected, due to the fact that their status is not clear. They are employees but they are not registered as such until receiving their title, which is 4 years later. They are also students, but they do not have the student specific rights. The methodological regulations elaborated when enforcing certain laws present important differences, which depend on the issuing institution: the Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Finances, the Ministry of Labour, the Court of Accounts. The universities are confused when they have to apply these regulations.

In this context, public acquisition procedures are extremely complicated. Serious constraints are involved in purchasing research equipment, with high technology features, which is not available in mass series. The dominant ideology based on which corruption acts are done in the field of acquisition harms the entire education system. The obligation to follow complicated procedures (for the researchers), tight deadlines for the completion of procedures, are serious hindrances in the way of research, in the way of the race against the clock for top results.

The result is a climate of legislative insecurity, which can be used by some to formulate untrue accusations against what goes on at the universities. Recently, a report of the Ministry of Finances has recommended that the financing for the university education be reduced, against the European policies in the field and against the Government commitment – only because the salaries of professors have increased, thus reducing the overall “efficiency” of the process. Under these circumstances, we have to ask ourselves where the coherence of the government action in Romania is and where is the sincere will to integrate with Europe, in the field of public policies.

4. Using external financial controls as a means to limit the financial autonomy of universities. A control performed by the audit department of the Ministry of Education and Research showed that the universities did not observe certain legal regulations, without taking into account the autonomy stipulated by law for the institutions of higher education, regarding the use of their own budgets. The mechanisms of financial motivation of the academic and administrative personnel involved in generating the university’s own income are drastically limited or forbidden, which will demotivate universities to act towards self-financing. The strongest negative impact is visible at the

level of the Rector's offices which are under pressure from two contradicting directions: the requests of the personnel who expect to be rewarded for the work to obtain additional incomes and the interdictions of the audit teams, regarding the use of financial stimulation levers.

Finally, the management of the audit department with the Ministry was changed. Nevertheless, the evil had been done. Innocent people had been accused. Noisy press campaigns had been organized regarding the corruption phenomenon in the Romanian higher education system, and the young people had been advised to leave the country, because the Romanian universities were "mediocre". The fact that the University of Bucharest is always ranked first in Romania, in various independent tops did not protect it from harsh press attacks (the practices of the private universities receiving tacit approval), determining us to question the real intentions of the various actors in the field of national policy.

5. Recentralization tendencies in the management of higher education, at national level. Although it is insistently stated that the policies in higher education are oriented towards the principles of decentralization and increase of institutional autonomy, the truth is that the regulations of the last couple of years have led to the reinstating of Ministry control over the universities. Some of the measures taken by the Ministry are justified, such as the method of unique registry book, used to verify the financing of each student, only once, for each of the three cycles. Even if some universities in the country have been confronted with a few difficulties in applying the university autonomy, these incidents cannot limit either in principle, or de facto, the extension of university autonomy, which continues to be one of the main mechanisms by which the universities adjust efficiently to fast changes, both at national and international level.

The current allotment of the state-financed students to the fields of study, though justified through an overall strategy, marks a new step towards centralization, due to the fact that allotting to fields of study has been so far a decision made at institutional level. The principle of global budget, based on which the universities used to receive funds according to their number of students and direct those funds according to their needs and their strategic plan is progressively more and more limited. Fortunately, the limitation manifests under the circumstances of receiving generous amounts, based on complementary financing. However, when the margin of this increase will be reached, the direction of institutional budget by the Ministry will have become a done deed.

3. CURRENT STATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST

Any program of changes has to start from an objective evaluation of the current situation of the University of Bucharest, in which:

- nihilist criticism ("it is all a disaster", "nothing is right") is avoided;
- the traditions worth maintaining and developing are brought forward;
- the traditions with a merely sentimental value, which can hinder development, are identified;

- hypocritical self-eulogy is avoided, because it hides reality and does not allow the identification of correct solutions.

Such an analysis should identify the “strong points” the “weak points” of our institution. From this perspective, the Senate’s Office proposes a new analysis.

3.1 Strong Academic Points

The University of Bucharest has maintained its top position in the country in a difficult period. This is not a shallow statement; it can be proven through the national and international tops, through the statistics indicators and with certifications from authorized institutions and persons.

Diversifying the educational offer of the university of Bucharest. The structure of the syllabuses was aligned with the Bologna programme. This restructuring involved a considerable readjusting effort from all the faculties of the university. The number of specializations in the Bachelor’s degree programmes was reduced. On the other hand, the educational offer at the level of Master programmes was significantly diversified. This allowed the continuous increase in the number of requests for Master programmes, coming from the students of other faculties, as well as in the number of requests for professional requalification. The University of Bucharest has the human resources necessary for running new Master programmes, at an adequate quality level. The main limitation in using the entire educational offer of Master programmes is of financial nature. The minimum number of students taking the courses of a Master programme, who ensure the functioning of the programme, is continuously increasing, due to the dynamics of costs.

The system of Doctoral programmes was generalized in all the faculties, ensuring a more consistent preparation of the doctoral students. We have to mention that the University of Bucharest had experimented with the system of Doctoral schools 2-3 years before the legal regulations in the field were enforced. UB took the necessary measures to eliminate certain ambiguities and contradictions from the legal regulations regarding the organization of doctoral studies, especially those regarding the status of the doctoral student.

The University of Bucharest has an important potential for scientific research. This statement is supported by several conclusive data. During the last 5 years, the University of Bucharest has been first or the second in the national classification regarding quality indicators in the field of scientific research. In addition, UB has ranked among the first three institutions, in terms of value of research contracts obtained through national competitions. The University of Bucharest has a significant competition potential at European level as well. The value of research contracts obtained through international competitions ranks UB among the top institutions in the national classification of universities.

Increase of preoccupations for ensuring quality. The University of Bucharest was one of the first universities in the country to become aware of the importance of continuous improvement in the quality of programmes, activities of scientific research and of the organization and functioning of the institution. A consistent program of forming a quality culture was designed and implemented, while new procedures regarding the management and improvement of quality at the level of faculties and university were introduced. The University of Bucharest has elaborated its own instruments (textbooks, guides, procedures) regarding the ensuring, management and control of quality. Our procedures are available on the website and have already been published in printed version. These instruments elaborated by us have been taken over by other universities in the country. In November 2006, the University of Bucharest launched the second round of self-evaluation and evaluation of faculties and scientific research institutions. At this point, the faculties have already undergone the cycle of annual evaluation. Approximately 40 colleagues of ours have a certificate in quality auditing, which is acknowledged internationally (from TÜV) or nationally (from Simtex). Other colleagues are members of the ARACIS committees and participate in their activities, disseminating their quality standards to other universities in the country.

Fast development of education programmes for adults. The University of Bucharest is one of the first universities in the country to have emphasized the importance of programmes of continuous training. Many faculties understood that their future depends to a large extent on the way in which they combine their initial training programmes with a multitude of continuous training programmes. An important role in the fast development of continuous training programmes is played by the CREDIS department, which has provided the methodology and infrastructure for the functioning of these programmes, or at least it supported certain faculties during the first years of programme functioning. Through the continuous training programmes, the University of Bucharest proves its capacity to adjust to the dynamics of the labour market requirements, to meet certain important social needs and to ensure an increasing part of self-financing.

The **international activity** turns the University of Bucharest into an institution better and better known in Europe and worldwide. The number of Erasmus students who come to study in Romania nears 100 per year, and many choose to stay for the second semester, because they find the teaching environment appropriate. The number of students from Africa and Asia is also increasing. With 1000 foreign students per year (3%), we are still not an internationalized university. However, we have programmes in foreign languages and the potential to provide some new programmes.

During the last 8-10 years, the University of Bucharest has seen consistent progress in the technology of information and communication, through the development of the information resources. In this field, we are relatively well prepared, but we are still far from fulfilling the needs of the faculties. There are major differences from one faculty to the other: we have faculties with 5 students per one terminal and faculties with 40 students per one terminal. The degree of endowment depends a lot on what the faculty was able to do besides what the Rector's office was able to provide. In a crisis situation,

especially such as the one between 2000 and 2006, in which, practically, the investments were suspended for better times, the University managed to maintain and develop its material resources, through current and capital repairs, constructing new buildings and modernizing the existing ones. However, the University is very crowded; we do not have the minimum space for teaching activities in all the faculties and we have to rent spaces from other institutions.

During the past years, the University of Bucharest has initiated the **decentralization of competences and attributions**, in faculties and departments. The decentralization process has begun a long time ago in the academic field and has been transferred to the financial domain, which is more complicated. We believe that we chose the right direction, certain faculties being able to use their financial and material resources much better than in a centralized system. The extension of decentralization in the administration and use of financial resources did not take place to the rhythm estimated by the university board, due to certain divergences of opinion. The faculties with excessive budgets support the extension of decentralization and the enhancement of their autonomy, in terms of generating and using the funds, while the faculties with budget deficit are reticent about this measure. This year, the ALOP programme will be introduced at faculty level, for the deans to have the competence to initiate financial operations, with the available resources.

3.2 Weak academic points

Poor attractiveness of the educational offers from certain faculties. For several years, the faculties of exact sciences have entered an unfavourable context, both at national and at European level. This unfavourable context is explained by the fact that the teaching activities based on the syllabuses at these faculties are performed under conditions of great professional exigency, while the professional opportunities for the students are relatively modest by comparison with the offers made by other programmes. Until this year, when a Government Decision was issued stipulating that the incomes of researches can reach a margin of EUR 4,300, gross income per month, the research work had no financial advantages, which led to an important loss of young talents.

The absence of research demand in the Romanian industry is explained by the fact that technology is imported, while our companies are not motivated to export, but to import. In a country exporting technology, research is integrated into the product, which is not the case here. We consider that overcoming the unfavourable context requires an effort from the government, by launching a series of educational programmes of science culture, similar to those launched in Finland or the United States, but it also involves an effort from the faculties of exact sciences, in order to enhance the attractiveness of their educational offers. The government has increased the schooling figure for the field of exact sciences, but not for the field of sciences of nature, which is a lack of coherence or vision. It is the responsibility of the university to try to correct this route, through institutional measures.

Ignoring the quality effects of mass higher education. From an objective point of view, the students are not equal in terms of aptitudes. It is not a shame to acknowledge that our students are many and that we are accepting more and more students in our institution. Accepting students who, in the past, would not have passed the admission examination, the intellectual average of our student groups is dropping. However, we have not considered this matter seriously. There are faculties which have maintained the level of exigency from 10-15 years ago, applying it to a mass of students with different characteristics. As a consequence, the rate of school failures is very high. The answer lies in the direction of the preparation courses, of the propedeutical paths, but also in direction of reducing the coverage area in programmes. It is necessary to rethink certain programmes, starting from different professional and psycho-pedagogical reference points. It is known that B. Skinner obtained better results from children in special education classes, than from children in regular classes. Education is an activity which involves dedication, patience, and love for the youth, the need to encourage them and to help them take the steps of knowledge. The range of teaching methods has to widen, while the professors have to receive teaching missions wisely chosen: the Doctoral school leaders have to teach to the Doctoral students, not the first year students. Otherwise, this decrease of quality human material will propagate upwards, affecting the recruiting of professors as well.

Insufficient use of information and communication technologies in the professional training of students. Although progress has been registered in the field of information and communication technologies, there are still faculties which are far from using these technologies, especially in teaching and in professional training. Certain departments take pride in maintaining a very strong theoretical orientation, neglecting the huge practical outlets in this field, as well as the pressing need for professors.

The integration degree of technologies in the training process, as well as the level of student preparation to use them in their professional activity, depend essentially on the availability of the professors to train in these domains.

I have mentioned excellent fundamental training as a strong point; the problem is that in certain fields, the practice is insufficient. This is also the main reproach made to us by our students. The curricula have to ensure that the new graduates have the ability to do the job for which they are trained, as soon as they finish their studies.

Oversized specialty training and insufficient psycho-pedagogical training. Our point of view is that, for students who pursue a didactic career in teaching at gymnasium and even high-school, specialty training is oversized regarding work place requirements, to the disadvantage of psycho-pedagogical training. Teachers for primary school are faced with completely new aspects of teenage behaviour, which they are not trained to handle: drug problems, issues regarding school demotivation, violence etc. All these are phenomena present in our society; however we do not provide our trained teachers with any tools for settling difficult, even traumatic situations, which they will encounter the moment they set foot inside a school. Today, a chemistry teacher must be, firstly, a teacher, and secondly, a chemist. The pupils in whom he must develop the interest in chemistry will not judge him by his diploma, but by his communication skills, his educational abilities, which form teachers for the subjects taught in gymnasium. We

admire the American system, but we hesitate to follow their example. The current decline of pupils' interest in science is caused mostly by overloaded textbooks of which academic professors have sometimes been co-authors.

Deficient evaluation systems. Regarding our students' evaluation, it is still based almost exclusively on the final exam. The Senate of the University of Bucharest has decided, since 2002, that a half-term paper with specific weight should intervene in the evaluation process, a distinct grade for the seminar, as well as the grades for the written and oral examinations. Permanent evaluation through paper works, tests and other forms is still desultory, although this type of evaluation ensures a stronger motivation for learning and better knowledge assimilation. The evaluation based only on final exams and colloquiums leads to a deficient preparation during the semester, and the chances of passing exams, especially where demands are high, are reduced. If one is considering taking seriously the interest in training for one's profession, a student fails to form an appropriate competence just in a matter of days before the exam. It is imperative to increase the visibility of good evaluation practices, especially through website communication. We should not allow students to be evaluated by a single person, even if he or she is the course leader. We should include in the workload a number of hours of participation in evaluation committees. We should invite, for the final examinations, colleagues from other universities or even from abroad, employers, economics specialists, to form for the Romanian public a visible and clear image of the University of Bucharest's demands in different study programmes, as well as in their creation.

3.3. Strong Administrative Points

The University's personnel are formed mostly of experienced people, some of them with many years in the educational system. The manner in which administrative issues are settled here has been many times taken as a landmark in the national system practice by other Universities. The elected administrations carry out their duties with responsibility. Some of the Deans have taken seriously their duty of improving their training in the domain of academic management.

The Secretariats are reliable teams on whose databases one can rely. The accuracy of the data we have is essential for the decisions we have to make.

The University of Bucharest has a series of electronic applications. The personnel is trained and the major part owns an ECDL diploma.

The administrative procedures are published on the institution's web site.

The initiative of satisfaction forms which are distributed to students, job applicants, the internal public included, has recently been taken recently. These forms, deposited in boxes whose key will be kept by the Dean, shall be used for evaluating the administrative personnel and they shall have an auxiliary role. The personnel understand the role of a good communication with teachers and students, with colleagues from other departments.

Together with the growth of the students' number, the number of personnel in the secretariat has also increased, although on a minor scale. Some faculties did not hesitate to hire students to help with administrative tasks, as is the case in some American Universities. Another advantageous practice is hiring interns, for example, for archive preparation or in order to help with guidance for the public.

The administrative research personnel has grown also and it has attended various training programmes in the domain of research management, and it is using a central informatics application.

3.4. Weak administrative marks

The University of Bucharest is still facing serious difficulties in the administration of faculties and of the University. Administrative deficiencies may overburden the managerial performances of the Dean and Rector's office.

In many faculties, study formations are undersized. In other faculties, we have a major deficit of staff and there are faculties which have only 30% work places taken. Other faculties have a better situation, but with an unbalanced age structure because we practically have two major staff categories – the seniors and the juniors; we have very few middle-aged employees. In some departments, the teaching staff pyramids are capsized, so that there are very few young people. The seniors will retire in mass in some faculties, and within 3-5 years major imbalances will occur concerning staff structure. Some faculties have been cautious and made a strategy to bring new staff; others are still reticent with new employees on reasons of unpredictability. All these things make our University generally have **very high costs per student** with dramatic variation from one faculty to the other. The basic financial formula is known by everyone, but its implications have not been accepted equally in all faculties. If in one faculty we have 6 students per staff, it is only natural the result should be a very high cost per student. These faculties are practically unable to cover the costs from their incomes. There is a relatively good situation at the level of the entire University – an average of 20 students per teacher- but this average indicator is made on the account of some faculties which have 30 – 40 students per teacher. We must find an optimal balance. At the staff level, all this high cost per student is reflected by an insufficient remuneration because most faculties give remuneration at a minimum grid.

Deficiencies in the University's administrative services If the University of Bucharest has had important success with the reform at the academic level, we are still dealing with major problems in the domain of administrative reform. Some Deans are not sufficiently, or efficiently, delegating the administrative tasks, so that some information requests take up to two months to be centralized at the University level. The mechanism through which faculties can access relevant information from the University's databases hasn't been completed yet, or is sometimes working randomly.

Regarding the institution's demands, the administrative services do not have a sufficient number of workers with qualifications or an adequate behaviour to the new working conditions. Although administrative services are being permanently monitored and they have been the object of the Rector's numerous interventions, the changes occurred were insufficient regarding expectations.

They are many explanations for the dysfunctions at the level of administrative services.

The increase of workload, together with the preservation of several old technologies, makes certain services work sometimes overtime. At Human Resources-Organization – Remuneration, an electronic application is being used, but the carefulness

of national remuneration legislation, as well as the frequent extreme changes, makes the application be brought up to date almost monthly by programming it. It is here that the making of staff remuneration policy should be changed because no electronic programme can keep up with the permanent adding of weightings calculated with various formulas, which are afterwards included in other weightings or in the basic salary. We must relinquish the rules and the function states – traditional instruments of the '50s which are not capable of quantifying the work performed which cannot identify the merit, encourage the effort and dissuade absenteeism. We must use more of the University of Bucharest's pattern of staff performances' evaluation, elaborated by a committee under the guidance of Professor Dan Potolea so that the relation between scientific work, the attendance at faculty for the students' support, the aid given for the faculty management and the presence in mass media, for the dissemination of cultural knowledge and values be altogether the motive of remuneration.

The low remuneration rate demoralizes the high qualified personnel to come to work for the University. Better quality personnel have recently been hired for Financial Accounting to get rid of the tiresome balance account delays and of the associated administrative risks.

Although more programmes for professional training have been organized, some workers have not developed the necessary skills to work in a computerized administration. An age close to retirement is what characterizes some of our services.

The employees from some departments are poorly cooperating with each other, they often bring reciprocal accusations, induce conflicts which the administration spends a lot of time trying to settle, they refuse to cooperate independently, so we often witness '*zeal strikes*' which stop or delay the implementation of decisions.

The Rector has made constant efforts to hire new qualified workers. Each year, 5-6 contests have been organized to hire qualified workers for Human Resources services and Financial Accounting. These contests did not follow through with new employments for several reasons: those who had necessary qualifications the University wanted did not accept the job because of the low remuneration. Neither did the repeated appeal to some firms from the resource department succeed, because these ones require a fee from the employed customers' salary.

Insufficient involvement of faculties' administrations in exerting decentralized attributions.

The faculties' situation is unequal from this point of view. Some faculties have competent administrative personnel, while others do not have the necessary staff to efficiently manage the material and financial resources. It is necessary that the faculties hire personnel for goods and services acquisition activities. The support given at the beginning of this year by the faculties' administrators for concluding the annual acquisition plan was welcomed and it must be strengthened next year, starting in autumn. The Rectors' office will carry on with the administrative staff training programmes in faculties.

From the analysis of the University of Bucharest's current situation and considering the action of the national and international factors previously mentioned, one infers the need to make important changes in various aspects of academic life. What is important is that these strategies should be applied and readjusted based on dynamic factors which act over higher education.

4. Necessary changes

4.1. Change Objectives

The changes the Rector advances in the Academic Senate are oriented towards a few great objectives:

a. The compatibility with European academic structures

The University of Bucharest has begun an ample process of reorganizing the study programmes according to the Bologna process. In the academic year 2006/2007 the reorganization of the BA degree programmes will reach its end and the MA programmes' reorganization will carry on. In some faculties a concurrent reorganization of the BA doctorate degree has taken place. The compatibility with study structures from the European Higher Education Area has already generated its first effects. The Rector's office and the Dean's offices of the faculties will proceed in the academic year 2007/2008 to a complex analysis of the Bologna process impact on the quality of training through study programmes, of the influence of the reduction of the BA degree period had over the investment in the labour market. The obligation to release the Diploma Supplement has been introduced, which compels to an analysis of the present study programmes in terms of competences. This year, on June 15th, the UB is organizing, a vast debate about the concept of competence and about tests for evaluating someone's competence. Regarding the employment of our 2006 graduates, the database shall be analyzed, which so far has been done by the Bureau Diploma. The analyses made by the University of Bucharest will be compared to the analyses made by other national and international universities. Readjustment measures will be taken based on these analyses result.

Moreover, the Rector's office will take action for the adoption of the necessary legal regulations needed to ensure different placement of students with a BA degree d, with an MA or PhD diploma.

b. Rationalizing educational routes, in order to reduce failure rate and to avoid the conduct of studies without certification. We have qualified personnel; we have centres which could make a student pre-selection regarding skills and abilities while avoiding an undifferentiated entrance in a specific training route. On the other hand, students who obtain a diploma must have and be able to prove that they own those abilities foreseen in the European Qualification Framework, which will be soon given a national framework.

c. The transition from professor-centred teaching to student-centred teaching.

Our education is currently still a 20th century education, sometimes even a 19th century one, an education *ex cathedra*, a teacher-centred education. It is time we also passed to an education oriented towards the student's expectations and skills. The Senate of the University of Bucharest has adopted a document regarding Student-Centred Teaching which establishes the main strategic directions to follow in order to reach this objective.

The integration of training in communication and information technologies, based on socializing, counselling and orientation is also necessary.

d. The psycho-pedagogical training improvement for future professors.

To the delight of our pedagogical colleagues, we state that the didactic profession is truly a profession and that it needs training just as any other profession. We train jurists, mathematicians, physicists, but, in a very small number, we also train teachers. One pedagogical course, one psychology course, and one of methodology and pedagogical practice is not sufficient to build didactic competence. We ask the department of psychology and educational science to offer us a new schedule regarding the manner of professor training. The MA programme has an important role in forming the competences for professors who teach at high-school and university level. It is here that the so-called *new skills* must be formed, which will define the labour competition of the 21st century.

e. Large scale use of information and communication technologies.

Of course, among other internal objectives, we cannot ignore the fact that we live in a world dominated by technology and communication which may lead to new social break if not taken into consideration. We, the University of Bucharest, have no right to assume these risks, to train graduates who are not capable to handle and control these technologies. And it is not just about the training at the Faculty of Mathematics and Informatics; it is about the students' general training. We will organize a method of acknowledging and awarding the departments which use online application in the teaching-learning process.

4.2. CHANGE PRINCIPLES. CHANGE MOTIVATION

The changes we advance will be made in relation to principles which can be found in our fundamental documents, the University Charter, or in our common experience of the past 16 years.

a. Maintaining and reasserting the prestige of the University of Bucharest.

We consider that it is not a praise in vain to state that the University of Bucharest represents a quality brand of higher education in Romania, a brand which we have to keep not only by evoking a glorious past, because conjuring the past as the soul means of legitimacy argumentation is running short. We must pass the test of honesty and admit that we have a student percentage which receive undeservingly the diploma, or at least, under the standards of our university. We keep in our system students who are not capable of performance, without offering them an intensive training adapted to their possibilities and rhythm, and we keep them until they graduate and receive their BA. We want the University diploma to correspond to the student's real training.

b. The correlation between the student flow and the labour market demand.

The University is not a labour force agency; yet it produces for an economical and social context and it must produce in relation to what the labour market demands. In general, we

have not offered unemployed people to society, but we have also specializations for which we have not managed to ensure an adequate placement in years. Only if we take this in consideration will we succeed in drawing a large number of students. Considering that the new young generations are less and less numerous because of the demographic decline, in a few years we may come to face great problems in covering the admission places.

c. Means of differentiating elite and mass studies.

The programme we advance suggests that in our university elite groups should be differentiated from mass groups. It is nothing shameful or elitist to say that people can be differentiated by their intellectual potential and by their professional performances and we should offer them a means of studying congruent with their ability.

It is derogatory that a well-prepared student should get bored at courses, not because he wouldn't have from whom to learn as much and as fast as he can, but because he is together with another 100 colleagues who only want a passing grade. The elite groups can have the form of groups whose study plan contains more in-depth subjects and some optional ones. Professors who teach these groups must organize them in project teams, they must communicate daily or weekly and they must document the obtained results.

In what concerns the MA cycle, some study programmes can be thought out as performance, but only with distinguished results.

d. Remuneration improvement for didactic and non-didactic personnel.

If changes in the remuneration policy occur, we will manage to cope with the above mentioned circumstances, and we will be able to increase the wages according to the evaluations.

e. Setting a new policy development for the University.

The vacant spaces for construction that the University has are running low. Some of the buildings we have now have been reclaimed, and it is possible we may lose them in a few years. Regarding this matter, we must decide if we are going to build or if we will concentrate more on a better use of our available space. Our wish to expand in new spaces is being limited by two factors: firstly, our colleagues' repulsion towards the thought of moving into a new campus, which could be, for example, in Măgurele; secondly, the need to purchase others terrains at sky-high prices. Our research, through the *Impact* programmes, has already reached the advanced stage of preparing new building sites with structural funds support from the Government. Other expenses will be needed for strengthening the material endowment of MA and PhD programmes. This, of course, on the condition that our educational offer will convince the students that an MA at UB is an important asset and that our doctorate programme is a plus in one's career.

If we cannot make the changes above mentioned, we will engage in a process of limiting the decline and we will not have the sufficient funds to expand. It is possible to also ensure the University's development if we do carry out these changes, and if we are determined enough.

4.3. Target groups

Our faculties are oriented mainly on initial training. The demographic statistics assure us that this 'clientele' for initial training will recede and we will have to turn to other new ones. Consequently, we must develop new educational offers. Day attendance is still the University's main element, but we must orient ourselves towards open and distance teaching and low-frequency teaching, which needs new regulations, and especially towards continuous training, *lifelong training*.

Our target groups are still young students, high school graduates, but I think we must apply what we have set up to develop many times before – post-graduate studies, as well as professional reconversion and continuous training, which are being financed with important funds. Accordingly, we have to identify those competences needed at the middle of the career, in order to reach higher responsibilities and to be able to handle more complex and riskier situations, and to offer this type of training to a public of professional active people. Starting from the experience of other European countries, certain study programmes are interesting especially because of the so-called 'University of the Third Age'. Finally, we have to orient ourselves towards partnerships with other universities, some of them geographically remote, national or international, for programmes with local opportunity.

4.4. NECESSARY CHANGES

a. Cultural quality strengthening in the University of Bucharest

In Romania, as well as in Europe, the attitude towards quality assurance is present in two extremes, both of them to be avoided. For some, quality assurance is a remedy, the medicine for all evil, medical clinic and police, the means through which we can escape sub-financing, the crowning of the righteous and the punishment of the sinful. For others, quality assurance is nothing but paperwork, and bureaucratic invention which is a waste of time, a pestilence invented by administrators. Actually, quality assurance has no meaning if it doesn't start by persuading that it has a counselling and monitor status in view of continuous improvement. The principle of constant improvement is indeed the core idea of quality, upon which no negotiation can be made. Those who preach maintaining the *status quo* against continuous improvement and say this is impossible or useless, they are the conservatives, 'the bad guys'. This is where the line crosses, splitting the two sides. But once the principle of continuous improvement is admitted, which is first of all an ethical principle, then a professional one, anyway, one of good sense and good faith, the improvement measure and rhythm may differ. The culture of quality promotes an art of negotiation so that an optimal progress is obtained without bewildering the structures and the people, without imposing disproportionate demands. It is essential for our students to be drawn in the processes of quality evaluation. It is not for creating a tribune from which to require the minister's resignation – of course – but for presenting an alternative and complementary point of view for the procedures of the institution, thus making the action more pertinent and precise. They are the main

beneficiaries of our activity – it is absurd to pretend that they are not capable of judging whether the activity from this University is good or bad for them.

b. The decrease of courses per week and the increase of independent study volume

We advance that for general studies, for I and II year, the number of courses be 26 for the technical profile, and 22 for the social and humanities profile. For the semesters 5-8, the number of courses per week should be 22 for the technical profile and 18 for social and humanities; 12 for MA and 8 for PhD. The laboratory courses may be delivered by the PhD students. The connection with the students will be enhanced by using e-mail, by sending the lecture materials in attachment and by keeping a forum for each lecture. The content of the seminar will be given by the students' interventions concerning the materials studied at home. The role of the professor will be that of a moderator, of a learning facilitator. The memorizing capacity will thus drop, being replaced by the student's capacity for planning and organizing his work. The students to be eliminated during the academic year will not be those who refuse or are not capable to learn by heart a certain number of pages, but the ones who refuse or are not able to come with a paper at a certain deadline, or to apply a preparation plan, to collaborate for common tasks. Even the context of the lecture will be more interactive under these conditions. At specific intervals, at least in the middle of the semester, the students will have to present paperwork, micro projects, and essays for the continual evaluation. Thus the decrease of attendance classes will not be associated with the decrease in learning quality, but with its increase, after the American university model. Learning by heart will decrease in the favour of problem solving. Students will receive homework which does not imply the reproduction of the content, but its systematization, the search for additional information, case studies, and the reflection upon concrete situations with dilemmatic or paradoxical value. The professors will have *office hours*, namely counselling, which they will do only in an attendance based system, or by e-mail.

c. The size change of study formations.

The second level of intervention is the institution of appropriate student series. At present, several faculties either have too large or too small course formations whose costs cannot be covered from the income on the respective number of students. For general academic studies, the course series should be of minimum 100; where there is a great number of students more series can join in. For an efficient organization, a minimum of 30 students for the MA programmes and 20 students for the PhD programme is required. (We are aware that the Minister's budget place allocation ridicules this efficiency calculation.) The seminar groups can be formed of 30 students for general disciplines and of 15 students for laboratories. In faculties with too great course series, we recommend that they be brought to parameters which will allow the professor to keep an eye on the learning process, at the lecture and seminar, under the form of support, of a personalized counselling which must reach each student. In a semester course of 28 courses, it would be sufficient that 3 students be interpellated or interpellate the professor in order to create a dialog. At a seminar taken twice a week, a student has almost a class per semester to express himself. That is, of course, if they are presented the subjects and they actively

interfere. It also takes action to make the students understand that they must learn during the entire year.

d. The utilization of information and communication technologies.

In the past few years, the UB has made great efforts in the IT domain. At present we must accept the following two ideas: the world will work in networks and the educational system will have to find solutions in order to adapt to the new information society. We must admit that we have the same problems as everyone else and we must find the appropriate solutions. The solutions we have already tested and which we present here are:

- **The generalization of the ECDL module in all the University's faculties.**

This ECDL module, which was a European project and ended with a number of 7 courses, represents the introduction and elementary knowledge for using the computer. The first module refers to the general use of computers and this module has become a standard at the EU level. It was adopted even on an international level outside the EU, as ICP. We tested it in November – December 2001 on 100 teachers, people who had gained experience in using the computer over a short period of time and who managed to pass the psychological threshold. Those who passed through the elements of this module admit that it is very user-friendly and easy to assimilate. The Senate Bureau demands that the basic ECDL package should enter in the training of students, of the teaching staff and of the administrative personnel. It will be taken into consideration for the evaluation of the teaching staff and administrative personnel. In the first semester of the academic year 2007-2008, we will make an analysis, at level of the University, concerning the degree of IT competences used in teaching by our colleagues.

- **The use of information and communication technologies in professional training.**

In many faculties, there are concerns about introducing the computer in the teaching process: at Physics, Biology, Mathematics and Chemistry, we have already entered the stage where the instruments are already being used. But even at Foreign Languages, the use of the projector for sustaining the diploma of study is already generalized. In Sociology and Political Science there are many teaching staff that use electronic applications in the process of teaching. We managed to own such an *e-learning* platform by having a very flexible attitude and now we are making an effort to develop this project.

Distance MA programmes are a way of attracting new faces, but, if they want to teach, the staff must learn to use the *e-learning* platform.

- **Establishing new specializations in the domain of informational and communication technologies**

We will support the specialization of Information Technology and any other proposals that will come on behalf of the respective departments. All the statistics point out that in Western Europe there are currently workplaces available in the informatics domain. There is unemployment in those societies in general, but, on the other hand, there are

workplaces in these domains. Consequently, we must adapt our educational offer to the needs of European society and to give the students this opportunity. In what concerns the students, many of them tell us that they came to the faculty in order to get a diploma. It is a very wrong and detrimental idea to have. They have come in order to find a job. There will probably always be a demand for jobs in the IT specializations over the next 50 years.

e. The improvement of student evaluation system

The intervention over the evaluation systems does not have an economical impact, but it must be taken into consideration in order to ensure the students' quality training. The University Senate has already adopted a new three-element grading system:

- An extra credit element
- The continuous evaluation during the semester through a variable number of homework, individual studies and computer tests
- The final exam.

The number of tests and projects will be defined so that the final grade will be the outcome of these works. The proposed formula was:

- 10 % extra credit
- 40 % from the annotation made during the semester
- 50 % of the final grade.

The system is balanced in such a way that it weighs both the intermediary and the final grade; the **precondition** for the final exam presentation is the attendance at all tests given during the semester. Another mechanism will foresee the student's gathering a minimum of points from the preliminary tests (class attendance may also contribute) in order to take the exam. In what the results are concerned, they are now, strangely enough, a lot easier, because the student doesn't have to go through all formal training steps of the semester. We propose that, in order to be allowed to take the final exam, the student prepare, within a set time limit, a project similar to the midterm one.

Although it was adopted by the Senate several years ago, the aforementioned system has not been implemented in all the faculties. The Rector's Office will make this system applicable at the level of all study programmes. During this year, the commission shall be asked for an analysis for the approval of the study programmes.

f. Positive motivation of academic community members

For the past few years, the University of Bucharest has been awarding valedictorians during ceremonies with outside guests. Last year, for the first time, authors of ISI rated articles were given awards, as well as many other colleagues with outstanding merits. We will proceed with this routine and we will diversify it. If possible, we will make the award quantum more significant. We hope that students will be encouraged to keep in touch with the university as alumni. We will encourage and offer support to faculties to organize professional contests. In what concerns the evaluation of the administrative personnel activity, as the new modules of electronic management are implemented, it is possible to make a direct measurement of their work by finding the number of registrations. We were surprised to see that some employees could not justify their activity for days. On this account, the personnel will be awarded or it will lose weightings, receiving penalties if it does not fulfil its duties in normal parameters. Of

course, negative motivation is out of the question, under the minimum salary, unless, according to the labour law in cases of serious misconduct, and we will not take such situations lightly.

g. Rethinking the structure of certain faculties.

Faculties which have a strong research component and a deficit of candidates at admittance must decide to organize their high level research structures using the human resources of MAs and PhDs. At the University of Bucharest there are many examples of research centres with dozens of substantially financed projects. Hundreds of ISI rated articles are being published and international partnerships are being made. At present, certain departments are accumulating didactic and research norms. But, while the research norms are being well-financed (and they'll receive better financing under the new government's decision), the didactic norms involve small study formations, whose student number does not economically sustain the existence of that norm. An improvement of the teaching-learning process will occur by structuring new judicial study formations, and the teaching staff which does not have sufficient courses will only receive a research norm. Thus, the time allotted to research will grow, with better quality results. The excessive fragmentation in study directions with few students and the effort to find students in order to sustain some artificial structures will stop. Most of all, the MA programme, a study cycle ignored by the present legislation, must be reorganized according to independent learning principle. With 12 or 14 courses per week, the lecture model *ex cathedra* is completely outdated. Only a simulation of research competence forming, respectively of administration, is obtained, particular for the two MA forms. The students legitimate their presence in the MA if they learn to do new things and if they prove this by homework, communications, and original master's essays.

The MA programmes with few students are detrimental to the institution's image because it sends the message that teaching is organized so that the teachers make their norm and that there are not enough students interested in our MA programmes. Actually, the university has more than 1600 MA students, but they all go for certain MA programmes where they come in hundreds.

h. The fluidization of administrative operations.

The University of Bucharest needs an optimal circulation system for the purchase - financial – accounting operations. Such a system must be ensured either by the respective departments or by a different service. The main difficulties occur because the purchases are not foreseen in the annual plan, they are decided upon in haste and the avoidance of legal procedures for public purchases is preferred. Communication difficulties appear especially at the level of the Legal Department. Some researchers insist on interfering in all the steps of the operations, which makes them lose precious time. The procedures state that the faculties' administrators should take care of all these activities for the entire faculty. But in some cases the work volume is too great. It is urgent that a solution be found. As usual, the solution will need a change in the behaviour of both sides: hiring qualified personnel, a smaller personal investment from the researchers' part in the matter of purchases, correlated with starting the procedures on time, and from the administrative personnel's part, a more sympathetic, cooperating attitude, better communication and, most of all, efficient procedures of consultation and communication between services.

i. The preparation for the implementation of an integrated electronic accounting system (ERP)

In the 21st century, the University of Bucharest must become a more *intelligent institution*, according to Bill Gate's saying, by using electronic means of communication and data transmission. This demands the formation of communication and decision routine and a minimum formation regarding the management of our colleagues' responsibilities by debates, and especially a common view on the institutional indicators. An electronic accounting system of any kind firstly needs communication to be ensured. We have agreed upon a VPN (Virtual Private Network) with an encrypting system of the commercial banks level. For now, it will be used for transmission of data referring to the students' academic planning. If this system functions properly, then we could use it for initiating financial operations, which requires authentication through an electronic signature system. Therefore, the documents will not have to travel physically in order to collect all kinds of stamps and signatures, but they will travel mostly in an electronic integrated system. During the year of implementation, the system will add all its modules in turn, so that we will have compatible procedures with those of a Western university which uses an enhanced ERP system. Thereby, starting with the payment of student fees, and ending with investment costs and equipment for study programmes, all the data will be accessible for this application's decision factors. The SEAP public purchase system is already being used at a national level which requires electronic communication. The University of Bucharest cannot remain behind in this domain's national standards.

5. POTENTIAL RISKS AND OBSTACLES IN THE CHANGING PROCESS

As with any extensive project, there are risks. These risks may appear if the renewed decisions are being taken without conviction or if they are applied with the intention of demonstrating that they were poorly planned from the very start. I think each member of the academic community should assume responsibility for active participation in the institution's academic dynamics and for improving the quality of the present process.

All programmes which aim to make deep changes in a system may face a series of obstacles, especially of the psychological sort:

a. The refusal to assign responsibility and transferring it to external factors.

The easy way is to assign the responsibility to the Government, which should act in such a manner as to make our life easier. The tasks of financing education, culture and that of maintaining the endangered specializations belong to the Government. But, actually, the Ministry of Education consigns public funds to the University, with its limited decision structures and academic self-sufficiency, to make, at a palpable level, all that it is better for the development of culture and education.

It is considered that each individual project should be separately financed by the Ministry. Actually, this way we are willingly giving up any trace of self-sufficiency left.

From the Ministry's overall assigned funds through the actual finance mechanism, it is the duty of various structures within the institution to ensure the students' training, the IT competence forming, the spiritual management education, the purchase of books and magazines etc. The notion that the Government's assigned fund should be exclusively used for remuneration is wrong and it leads to serious administrative errors. The refusal to integrally conceive the finance of all essential activities within the teaching process leads to an accumulation of separate financial tasks, one independent from the other, which grow without measure or proportion.

b. Conservatism.

Radical change is stressful and people generally avoid stressful situations. Someone who used to work in a specific system for years and managed to cope with this system can hardly accept a change that may generate in a context which the respective person cannot easily control, which he cannot adjust or which he could eliminate completely. The fear of change and the fear of being negatively affected by this change are generally disguised in ideologies about keeping traditional values or keeping the high quality of the Romanian teaching against the *reformist fantasies*. It is even harder when decision factors decide to use populism, that is, the promise of maintaining the *status quo*, so they can oppose the institution's continual improvement.

c. The lack of appropriate knowledge of the proposed programme for changes.

The ignorance of any kind of the proposed programmes of changes and the adoption of critical or alarming attitudes on account of distorted or simply false fragmentary information are well-known to some groups of colleagues. Often the administration's intentions for change are condemned based on vicious rumours. We will use the University's website and e-mail correspondence to make better known this programme.

d. The lack of interest towards the institution's situation

Some members of our community, although they are very competent persons in their field, do not care of what happens to the institution in which they do their activity. They only express their dissatisfaction, especially when they encounter personal difficulties. We ask each member of the academic community to show solidarity towards the university they work in, to be concerned about the students' trust and the future of this institution and to work for the good of it all.

e. The verbal agreement of reform but made on behalf of others.

The polls indicate a very high percentage of Romania's population is in favour of reforms. On the other hand, a new legislative package for higher education has been held at bay for almost 10 years, under governments of different political sensibilities. In the last two years we have witnessed some energetic efforts, maybe not so bright, to make a reform in terms of increasing the University's autonomy and creativity. But up to the present, the chances of passing in Parliament a new legislation in this domain seem to be proportional by its conservatism. The high number of failures in punctual reform projects makes us believe that many Romanians wish this reform only in principle, for show, and

on the condition that others be affected and not them. We hope the members of our academic community will avoid the traps of this stereotype and they will accept to be blaze the path in the process of change, if they intend to take pride, in the years to come, in their being a part of this university which can be found in the world's top 500.