

The Bologna Process in Romania

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The study¹ conceptualizes the Bologna process, primarily as a political process, rather than a simple structural and technical-administrative issue. We argue for the necessity of multi-actor, multilevel and multidimensional perspective in the analysis of higher education policy developments, with special regard to the Bologna-reforms. From a wider and political perspective the Bologna process in Romania proved to be an euphemism, which gives a political platform to and covers various reform ambitions: national and supranational, and ideologically neoliberal, new-managerialist change initiatives. We strive to present the various reform visions, debates and ideas emerging under Bologna process. Firstly, there will be characterized the Romanian higher education system, and the higher education trends and challenges (e.g. expansion of the system, the evolving tensions and problems) faced by the policy actors after the political transformation. Secondly, in a chronological and thematic arrangement the Romanian Bologna process, where several aspects of macro- and micro-implementation will be outlined.

Conceptualizing the reform as a top-down process

The Bologna process in Romania became a highly normative and ideological concept on higher education change. The change is conceptualized from above, with limited policy influence of local actors, though this model of planning and implementation of Bologna-reforms is general in Europe. The most visible features of the

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Bologna process in Romania are the governmental initiatives, decisions and legal aspects, in general, the activities and participation of political-administrative level in this process. As the Bologna process in Romania lives in laws and regulations concerning higher education, than the tempting perspective for an analyst is that of linear, rational, top-down approach, where the national governments and international actors are the most important and visible players. In this perspective any divergence from the politically and professionally constructed so called “Bologna-objectives” in national and international arena is conceptualized as the “deficit” or “failure” of implementation, deviation from and misunderstandings of the clear goals, defense of various *status quo*-s etc. In this perspective the legitimate standing-point is rooted to that proposed by the political and bureaucratic actors, and national and international expert groups or networks. The competing and alternative policy ideas and perspectives hardly get any public attention. The official policy ideas and enthusiasm dominate the scene, though, if an analyst takes a closer look to the Romanian Bologna micro-implementations, than will get a more complex picture on reform potentials at institutional and faculty levels.

However, the most effective conceptualization of Bologna-generated change remains that of from above (top-down), even if we have some sporadic, small-scale inputs (e.g. institutional case studies, thematic analysis on various aspects of Bologna) from various researches or everyday experience on this complex picture. The data sources concerning Bologna process in Romania are limited mainly to political-administrative level or that point of view. For example there is an abundance of official reports, policy proposals, action plans, the outcomes of political decision-making (laws and regulations) and a few governmental expert papers etc., whilst we barely get scholarly attempts on catching the Romanian policy developments under the Bologna-umbrella. Indeed, even several academic papers are elaborated in a genre of official report

following an administrative logic and normative language, and discussing the actual state of decisions, the political ambitions and policy outcomes of the central government and puffer organizations. In these papers we can follow the higher education change from technical and administrative point of view (e.g. which laws and orders were published, what number of programs were authorized under the new structure, how many credits represent the first cycle etc.). This gives the comforting sense for top actors of advancing the process. However, the analyst with academic perspective remains unsatisfied, since in its focus is not (only) the policy-maker, but the social-political phenomena. Additionally, these information sources and their characteristics involve epistemological and methodological traps for a researcher, since it creates the misleading impression that the transformations affects the institutions and programs at a similar degree and intensity as the political-administrative level. It is difficult to assess if the changes are essential or only formal (technical-administrative). Probably, these questions will become answerable only after two decades of transformations.

In our analysis we conceptualize the Bologna process, as a political process. The rationales for such conceptualization are of two types. In one hand, was and remain an initiative of the top (inter-governmental policy initiative), and renationalized by the governments and localized by the institutions and programs. In other hand the most of available data sources could be originated to the political-administrative level and puffer organizations. This limits the focus of the study, mainly to the macro-implementation and renationalization process of Bologna-objectives, where the local (institutional and program) perspectives are hardly present.

The transformation of Romanian higher education system after 1989

The Romanian higher education system has been developed from dual to a binary system onto the '90. After the Second World War the higher education experienced a spectacular grow of new institutions, which resulted in the emergence of a dual arrangement. However, this expansion was interrupted by the Communist regime, which continuously – in several waves – tried to decrease the number of institutions and limit the enrolment rates (e.g. close downs, institutional integrations). There were numerous local initiatives, which seek to establish institutions in underdeveloped regions and cities, however, with limited success.

Table 1: The number of higher education institutions (1938–1990)

1938	1950	1965	1975	1990
16	54	47	42 (7 universities)	43 (11 universities)

Source: Chitoran 1992, 597.

The institutional network was formed by the smaller university and larger non-university sector. The latest consists of polytechnics, and specialized higher learning institutes and academies, which offered professional, vocational, practice-oriented and a few short-cycle programs, as an alternative to long university studies. In this period several specialties (e.g. nursing, primary and lower secondary teacher education) were still offered in post-secondary level (several of them subsequently were upgraded). The polytechnics have had narrow portfolios, but the enrolment rates were larger than in universities. The non-university sector was highly specialized and fragmented. For example the most of independent institutions had very narrow portfolio with one or two programs (e.g. medicine, agriculture, architecture etc.). The existing eleven universities concentrated on traditional areas, as natural science, humanities, law and economics. According to their function they were

mainly teaching-oriented institutions, since the research has been carried on independent institutes, and only after the political transformation was replaced to the universities. Behind the older universities there were established in the '60s three universities, with the academic upgrading of specialized institutions. In addition, after the political transformation has been initiated again a larger vertical integration, when not only institutions, but programs were upgraded. Although, the original culture, identity and profile of these specialized institutions remain for a long time determining. (Chitoran 1992)

The quality control was realized through the admissions, which in spite of the dominant ideology favoured the elites of the time and remain highly selective. The elitist character of Romanian higher education, the impeding of expansion and limiting of enrolments was almost without precedent in Central and Eastern Europe. For example, when in Hungary on 100,000 inhabitants were 921 students, in Romania this number was only 694 in 1985. At the time, this is the lowest in Europe. The other considerable difference is in the size of the institutional network, for example, in 1990 the Romanian higher education included 43 institutions, and whilst this number in the smaller Hungary was 57 (the institutional size does not compensate the difference). After the political turn the openness has increased considerably due to the social pressure on enlarging the institutional system.

The study period in the first stage varied between 3-6 years and led to two different type of degree (the engineering diploma and the higher education diploma). The studies leading to the university degree lasted 4-6 years and leads to licentiate (*diplomă de licență*) equivalent to Master in Arts degree. (Chitoran 1992) The main priority in higher education policy after the 1989/90 political transformation was the elimination of high political-ideological control over education in general and more concretely in curricula, the restitution of institutional autonomy, the reform of state-higher educa-

tion relationship, the creation of new legal frameworks, marketization and privatization, and the raising of enrolments. The accreditation as a new control mechanism was introduced in the beginning of the decade. In addition, it started the experimentation with the credit system in a consortium between four universities. This attempt covers various institutional and program practices on credits, but uniform system was not developed. These priorities led to comprehensive reform ambitions in higher education, which embrace all the important areas (institutional arrangement, sectoral governance and financing, training structure and curricular issues, faculty and staff etc.).

With regard to the higher education governance the periods of hesitating decentralization and certain re-centralization follow each other. There would be necessary to mention that the decentralization of higher education and institutional autonomy existed mainly as ambitions and principles of a political minority and in policy suggestions of the international organizations. The appealed institutional autonomy remains largely a wish dream, only the disciplines, the chairs and professors recover some autonomy and freedom.

An additional characteristic of Romanian central educational governance (the Ministry of Education) is the exceptional instability. The central administrative control is changing almost in every year; indeed, there existed even ministries of a few months. Despite the short-living educational political and administrative power, almost every minister is planning universal reforms and new acts on education. Under these unstable circumstances the working strategy for educational transformation is the incremental, small-step and small-scale changes through decrees. In addition, we need to note that the central political (parliamentary) power, the bargaining, lobbying and background agreements have a high importance in Romanian educational policy-making. The political struggles between various interest groups and the central political power are of higher significance in ultimate policy outcomes, than the profes-

sional and expert influence on policies, as compared to other – only seemingly similar – countries of the region (e.g. Hungary, Czech Republic). This rule of the game is stable and well-known between the players, thus at some extent counterbalance the limited potentials of ministerial control of education. In sum, the political power relations overwrite the professional policy-making.

The retention of the educational expansion in the Communist period after the transformation resulted in an explosion of learning ambitions. Thus the Romanian higher education rapidly starts to catch up in regard to the enlargement of institutional network and enrolment rates, but this process have been not followed by similar measures in increasing of staff numbers and improving of infrastructure. The participation rates were multiplied (quadrupled) in the first decade of the transformation (1989: 710, 2004: 2,860 to 100,000 inhabitants), while the faculty number only doubled in this period. The faculty/student number in the transition period has increased from 1/14 (1989) to 1/21 (2004). The participation rates of the given age group shows a significant improvement in openness of Romanian higher education: in the academic year of 1989/1990 the tertiary enrolment rate was 8,8% of the 18-22 age group (World Bank, 1998), whilst in 2008/2009 was 63,3% of 19-23 and above age group (Eurydice, 2009). These rates illustrates a remarkable opening and democratization, however, it would be interesting to show the social-economic composition of enrolled student groups according to institutional and program types.

One of the most important tools of the improvement in access was the liberalization of the founding of institutions (private providers). In one hand, this resulted from the higher education policy suggestions of World Bank Group, which was involved in and financed the reform, and in other hand due to the legal vacuum that entailed the repealing of the old law. In first years after transformation it is estimated the exis-

tence of 250 private higher education institutions², as a consequence of increased local demand for education.

Table 2: The number of students and faculties in Romanian higher education between 1989 and 2006

Academic year	Total		Public		Private	
	Student	Faculty	Student	Faculty	Student	Faculty
1989/90	164,507	11,696	164,507	11,696	0	0
1990/91	192,810	13,927	192,810	13,927	11,054	no date
1991/92	215,226	17,315	215,226	17,615	34,801	no date
1992/93	235,669	18,123	235,669	18,123	85,000	7,180*
1993/94	250,087	19,130	250,087	no date	110,880	no date
1994/95	255,162	20,452	255,162	20,452	114,500	no date
1995/96	336,141	22,511	250,836	19,994	85,305	2,617
1996/97	354,488	23,477	261,054	19,897	93,434	3,580
1997/98	360,590	24,427	249,875	21,633	110,715	2,794
1998/99	407,720	26,013	277,666	22,955	130,054	3,058
1999/00	452,621	26,977	322,129	23,809	130,492	3,158
2000/01	533,152	27,959	382,478	24,686	150,674	3,273
2001/02	582,221	28,674	435,406	25,174	146,815	3,500
2002/03	596,297	29,619	457,259	26,029	139,038	3,590
2003/04	620,785	30,137	476,881	26,400	143,904	3,737
2005/06	716,464	31,543	513,678	26,881	202,786	4,662

* Estimated data.

Source: Sadlak 1994, 16; National Statistical Institute 2004; Eurydice 2007.

The continuous expansion of private, local institutions was stopped by the introduction of quality control mechanisms, and the beginning of formal accreditation and licensing. As a result the number of private institutions has been reduced radically. With regard to these higher education initiatives and processes we have only limited information, but we know that they were mainly small, highly specialized institutions with a few (1-3) short-cycle, vocational programs.

² In official statistics are mentioned only the licensed institutions.

Table 3: The institutional network of Romanian higher education

Academic year	Total		Public		Private	
	Institution	Faculty	Institution	Faculty	Institution	Faculty
1989/90	44	101	44	101	0	0
1990/91	48	186	48	186	17	no date
1991/92	56	257	56	257	30	187
1992/93	62	261	62	261	66	381
1993/94	63	262	63	262	66	381
1994/95	63	262	63	262	no date	no date
1995/96	95	437	59	318	36	119
1996/97	102	485	58	324	44	161
1997/98	106	516	57	342	49	174
1998/99	111	556	57	361	54	195
1999/00	121	632	58	411	63	220
2000/01	126	696	59	438	67	258
2001/02	126	729	57	465	69	264
2002/03	125	742	55	489	70	253
2003/04	122	754	55	513	67	241
2005/06	107	770	55	554	52	216

Source: Sadlak 1994, 16; The Yearbook of Romanian Statistical Institute, 2004; Eurydice, 2007.

The emergence of the private institutions was accompanied by various expectations. For example, the private higher education will democratize the education market, will be the real alternative to the public higher education, will adapt to the social and economical demands more flexible and rapidly, will function as the centre of innovations, in sum, with the expressions of Levy (1986) and Geiger (1986) they will offer “better”, “more” and “different” education. In contrary, it turned out soon that the pressure toward academic integration, low human and financial resources, and rigorous, homogenous administrative frameworks hinder the fulfilment of these expectations.

The public institutional network after the political transformation was formed by the same institutional and program types as

before (universities, institutes, academies, colleges). In public sector the diversification takes place mostly in the content and program structure, rather than in institutional types. Major transformations regarding the diversification happen in the private sector, where emerged new institutional types known mostly in Western higher education. In this diversification the religious and national minorities had a central role (e.g. in the establishment of Bible colleges, community colleges and regional colleges in the very beginning of the transition). After the appearance of the new higher education law (1995) the majority of institutions defined themselves as universities or other institutional types that grant university-level qualifications (collective institutional upward mobility). Thus formally the system became university-dominated, but if we examine the institutional configuration, the size and program-supply of these institutions it can be realized that the system is a mix of binary and university-dominated system.

In Romania, both the secondary and higher education was selective. After the political change and the rapid expansion of the system the selectivity of higher education step-by-step decreased. Thus the selection has been realized mostly by the secondary education, and still this is the practice: the secondary institution through *Baccalaureat* qualifies their students for the admission to higher education where at the entry point is no selection or only an arrangement based on previous study performance.

The transformation of the structure and moving toward a new three stage model – not identical to the Bologna-model – began in the first years of the post-communist transition, mostly with experimental nature at few universities. From 1993 practically in three cycles are organized the university studies in a very similar construction to the French-model. The model has been constructed with regard to the study time in the next way $4/3+1+3/4$. In the first stage, we found the studies that lead to university degree (*diploma de licență*) and the college degrees (*diplomă de absolvire*). In the

second stage, are placed the one year advanced studies (*diplomă de studii aprofundate*), the master degrees and other specialized further education programs, whilst in the third stage, were placed the post-gradual studies (the doctorate). The long-cycle study programs (from 4 to 6 year) dominates the scene, without internal structuration and more entry and exit points, whilst the non-university short-cycle program offering were larger, but not comparable with that of Bologna-style Bachelor in terms of curriculum, further education and labour market functions.

From a narrow structural and systemic perspective we can summarize the development of Romanian higher education as follows. The retention of learning opportunities during Communism led to rapid expansion of the system and an institutional boom after the transformation. This expansion was followed by a differentiation and diversification of functions, institutional and program types, curricular philosophies, institutional visions and profiles, and a growing heterogeneity of students and academic staff.

The process did followed similar paths and created parallel problems that the Western European systems faced long before. Gradually, the Romanian higher education system has developed from a dual to binary, and later to the mix of unified and university-dominated arrangement. The continuous rapid transformations and the various tensions and problems which emerged largely remain unsolved. The Bologna process has created a new political platform for the reconsideration and solving of the problems, which explains the enthusiasm of several actors regarding the potentials of the Bologna-reforms.

Joining the European higher education area

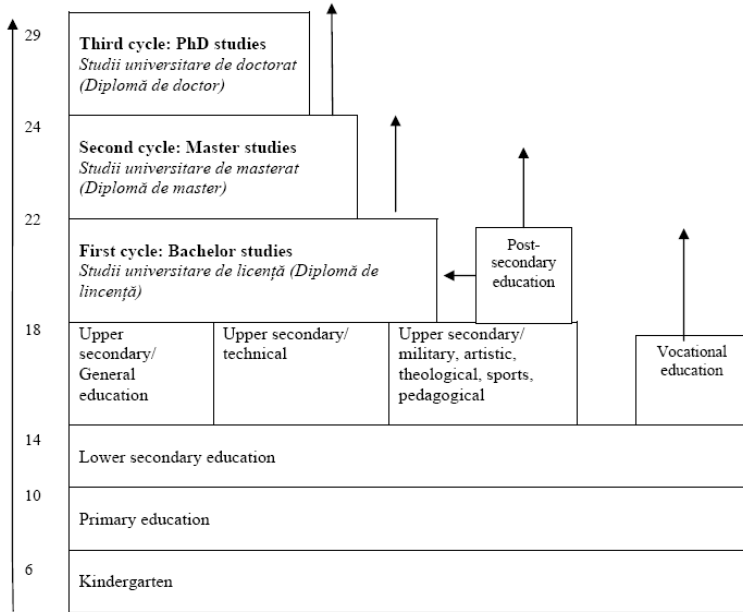
Short overview of the Romanian higher education system in the Bologna process

The Romanian higher education system is comprised by universities, university-level (institutes and academies) and post-university schools. In addition, between higher and secondary education stands the post-secondary education, which are organized by technical colleges of secondary level, lyceums and post-lyceums. These offer vocational, practice-oriented training (for example in health, accounting and economic studies), mostly for the occupation of lower level jobs in public services.

However, with the changing of occupational structure and educational system the status of these post-secondary institutions turn out to be unstable. Traditionally, the teacher education is arranged according to the level of education, where the pre-primary and primary-school teachers in pedagogical high schools, the lower secondary teachers in short-term higher education courses, and finally, the upper secondary teachers in long-term higher education programs are prepared, but in this area we also can register the gradual upward mobility all levels to higher education.

According to the Bologna action lines the long-cycle university studies were divided into two different cycles (Bachelor and Master). The entry condition for the Bachelor studies is the secondary school-leaving certificate (*bacalaureat*). The Bachelor and Master studies in the first-period of implementation remain uniform, which qualifies the diploma holders for the entry to the labour market and for further education.

Figure 1: The Overview of Romanian Educational System



Agenda, actors and policies

Romania was among the first countries joining the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) in 1999. During this period Andrei Marga, also known as the “European” and “the great reformer” stand at the head of the Ministry of Education. The period is often labelled as the harmonization and catching up of the Romanian higher education with European and international education policy trends. Under the Marga’s ministership and in a period of rapid expansion the higher education becomes a central policy issue; previously it was a peripheral theme compared to public education. As a response to various internal and external policy challenges he

promotes a comprehensive reform of the educational system. However, despite the supporting political climate only a few reform elements were able to muddle through the central decision-making and the local implementation. The aim of the comprehensive reform strategy is the complete elimination of the communist heritage and the Europeanization of Romanian higher education. The minister made several efforts to harmonize the Romanian higher education policy with the international and European reform policies. He is supported in the educational policy borrowing by learning and teaching experiences in Germany and the US. In addition, the first decade of higher educational transformation was supported financially and professionally by the international organizations (especially the World Bank Group), since Romania in this period does not have economic and financial resources to expand the institutional network in order to respond to the higher learning boom. The international organizations, consequently, left their markers on higher education system (e.g. large private sector, further strengthening of vocationally and practice-oriented programs etc.)

The central principle and constantly recurring theme of the Marga's higher education policy is the institutional autonomy and decentralization. In these policy visions and priorities the Humboldtian university concept is renewed. The international organizations – especially the World Bank Group – offer again education policy suggestions and loans for Marga's comprehensive reform, which primary objective it is to change (1) governance and funding of higher education, (2) the management of institutions, (3) to improve research and innovation at universities, (4) to promote cooperation between universities, society and economy, (5) to adopt new educational methods, and (6) to implement clear criteria in academic evaluation. With regard to the state-higher education relationship and financial issues the policy proposals of the World Bank has promoted the privatization and marketization of the

higher education and the introduction of the performance-based funding in various areas (e.g. income of academics, institutional funding). The overall aim was to increase and diversify the resources, to attract private resources, to enlarge the tuition fees, and to raise the ratio of private higher education providers in the system. The reform is started within the ministry: Marga strived to reduce the central political control over higher education and to arrange a new power division with the higher education institutions and buffer organizations. However, with limited success regarding the reduction of political control and increasing of professional (e.g. expert groups, professional corporations) influence on policy content. (see Marga 2001, 2006).

The common experience of the Napoleonic educational system is that all reform initiatives are implemented from top-down, in a legalistic manner: the change evolves in central policy content and rhetoric, and in laws and regulations. Cerych (1995) notes regarding the Central and Eastern European countries that may exist only what is legalized by law or based on law. In this political-administrative context are conceptualized the Bologna-reforms. The signing of the Bologna Declaration occurred in the period of Marga's ministry. Shortly after this political act the ministry begins to work on creating the legal framework for the implementation of two-cycle structure and the moving toward an internationally more comparable and transparent linear structure. At the start of structural transformation, there was issued two regulations. One of the regulations was concerned with the starting of Master programs, whilst the other was aimed the internationalization of the Romanian higher education, by launching foreign language programs.

The implementation of two-cycle structure was and remains a formal-technical act: (1) the reducing of study time at first stage to 3 year of Bachelors, (2) the internal structuration of traditional long-cycle programs, and (3) the starting of Masters in system-wide perspective. As in other countries, the two- or three-cycle structure

did not follow the standardized model (e.g. 4+1, 3, 5+1, 5) in the first phase of implementation, especially not in the case of study periods and of the credit values, however, there is some convergence regarding the study time in the last years toward the dominance of 3+2 programs. The legal basis for the passing on linear model is the Act No. 288/2004, according to which the Bachelor programs last 3-4 years, the Master programs 1-2 years, and the PhD for 3 years. The implementation of the multi-cycle structure was scheduled to the academic year 2005/06, furthermore, the introduction of the ECTS is going to be compulsory, instructions are drafted about the joint programs, and the learning outcomes are also prescribed. In addition to these policy actions, the regulations have been emphasized the competence-, student- and practice-oriented education. The formation of the framework of internal and external quality assurance and its principles are also prescribed in regulations.

Some years later, the implementation of the Bologna objectives were packaged into a comprehensive reform program that aims to transform again the entire education system. Regarding higher education the Bologna and Lisbon policy goals are included in a strategy (Strategia... 2002-2010). Under this umbrella several objectives are emphasized: structural and curricular reform of higher education, restructuring of the governance and funding of the sector, reform of institutional management, the vertical differentiation and the hierarchization of the university-level institutions is highlighted, new selection methods are to be introduced, the competition among institutions is supported. Furthermore, they wish to diversify the program supply, to strengthen the university autonomy, to support the partnership between higher education institutions and business companies, to support international cooperations and to promote university research. The supranational and intergovernmental reform goals are unified under a comprehensive change initiative, where the Bologna process and higher

education policies of the European Union is set as the legitimation and reference point for particular national reform ambitions. The reform strategy envisions deep structural transformations, which finally not only lead to postponed deadlines, but cause large gaps between political rhetoric and institutional reality. The critics emphasize that the Romanian politics successfully transformed the European objectives into laws and regulations, which prescribe clear directions for the implementation. However, as they argue, on institutional level these visions are falling and there is a gap between these ambitions and the persisting reality. The micro-implementations occurred with various shortcomings, despite the fact that the aims of the Bologna-reform are not at all accompanied by such definite rejection and controversy that one can find in so called “Humboldtian-countries”. According to one’s argument regarding the schedule of the implementation the laws and regulations followed each other in such a rapid succession that it was impossible to keep up with them, furthermore, the amendments submitted to the rapidly developed regulations need continuous modification through amendments themselves. At the same time, the introduction of the Bologna-model was not accompanied by detailed guidance of the affected actors and on different levels of the system. (Singer et al. 2006)

The structural and curricular reform

The policy debates on the reform objectives and various policy issues (e.g. the future of the binary system, what is the desirable institutional configuration, how can the linear structure and the Romanian traditions of higher education be balanced with each other, and what is the role of different institutional types, both university and non-university institutions in the new arrangement), which dominated the political agenda in other signatory countries

there lacked or did appear only in informal discussions. In the public debates on higher education policies and problems the multi-cycle model has been viewed as an unequivocal and universal solution for all the problems of the Romanian higher education. The discourse has been dominated from the top-down, by a technocratic and progressivist political rhetoric, where the new structural arrangement it was viewed as without alternative.

With regard to the institutional configuration and reconsideration of the role of university and non-university institutions, there was made several efforts to create a unified system and to weaken the importance of institutional types. These formal policy initiatives produced a good ground for Bologna-reforms, where the program level and the vertical differentiation are emphasized instead of institutional types and horizontal differentiations. Within the current institutional arrangement the universities and university-level institutions (polytechnics, institutes and academies) are recognized. The differences between the types of institutions were tried to be reduced by acknowledging two types of universities, where the non-university institutions received the possibility to gain recognition as university-level institutions, namely specialized universities.

Consequently, in the Romanian higher education the binary configuration is preserved at some extent, where the polytechnics, academies, and institutes are specialized (traditionally, non-university sector), and they are organizing professional and practice-oriented programs. However, the university and non-university arrangement in their traditional form still did not exist. The internal structuration of institutional network takes place according to the higher degree offered and the quality of research (e.g. traditional universities at the top, most applied science universities at the middle, and most of ex-colleges, non-university and private institutions at the bottom of the internal hierarchy). The competition between the universities and university-level institutions is governed mostly

by traditional prestige and less by innovative answers to the external challenges. The Romanian higher education programs are oscillating between the tradition of vocational, highly specialized character and general educational emphasis promoted by the Bologna. The functional overlap and the vocational and academic drift between the university and the non-university sector can clearly be observed. In this arrangement the universities by integrating and academic upgrading the college programs, integrating several institutions of engineering and offering short-term study programs become functionally closer to non-university institutions. Under the Bologna process the vertical integration is definitely increased among the universities of engineering, institutions concentrating on professional education and the new institutions with narrow portfolios. Consequently, in order to preserve their statuses (for example not to be downgraded to specialized institutes) and to increase their possibilities they are not only launching higher-level programs (for example Master and PhD programs with which the university rank can be maintained), but they also put greater emphasis on the academic program supply and research. In fact, the running of academic programs is to be considered as one of the main devices to become a university, for ex-polytechnics, colleges etc.

At the same time, in the curricula of vocational programs were increased the academic content, while earlier they were mostly practical. The increasing of academic and theory-oriented curricular elements within the specialized program supply aims to provide higher permeability between different institutions and opening the way toward further studies (Master programs). But despite observable academic drift the vocational and professional programs preserved their traditional characteristics, especially the high specialization of Bachelor and Master programs, thus offers useful and directly applicable knowledge and skills on the labour market. Additionally, their research profile is highly applied instead of basic research.

Under the political umbrella of the Bologna process the problem of Romanian institutional network and the possible integration of small, local institutions to large-scale universities again were placed on the agenda. After the political transformation takes places the first wave of a greater institutional integrations, when some university-centers rapidly, incoherently were formed. These shortcomings raised internal tensions and quality concerns. Under this second wave of policy ambitions regarding the integration, there is claimed to put higher emphasis on regional aspects and mission of institutions. According to the plans the authorizations necessary for the founding of the new state institutions will only be issued along with the consideration of the regional demands by the Ministry. The strategy seeks to form such universities in particular regions that cover the whole spectrum of higher education and offer study opportunities in every program level. However, the drivers behind this regionalization project seem to be financial and administrative, with special regard to the perceived proliferation of programs and institutions, where a regional restructuring allows the central policy-making to rationalize the network.

At the same time, the performance-based funding and other performance criteria envisions the hierarchization of higher education institutions according to prestige and quality. In order to improve the quality of private higher education the standards required for the accreditation and authorization will be more rigorous (Strategia... 2002-2010).

The introduction of the Bologna-model legitimized the reconsideration of the program structure, namely the rationalization of the proliferated program supply. Within the Romanian higher education, the education areas, the program branches and the specializations (Bachelor programs) are not defined by the organizations or professional bodies entrusted by the academic community, but the Ministry (approval by decree is necessary). This practice is considered as the maintenance of centralization in some actor's perspec-

tive, which incited heavy criticism. During the implementation of the cycle-structure the already existing 369 specializations were reduced to 60 and the Ministry elaborated a new program structure. However, from then the number of Bachelor specializations continuously grows (for example, in the years 2008 and 2009 their number was approximately 313). (Singer et al. 2006)

The implementation of the two-cycle programs was started in the academic year of 2005/06. The Bachelor programs were envisioned as unified, with 3-4 years study length, which according to the original concept provide opportunities, both entering the labour market and the further studies. However, lately the legitimization of existing differences (e.g. professional and academic, as a very simple differentiation) in Bachelor programs was placed on the agenda. The unified Master programs have been implemented in the 2009/2010 academic year at the universities, but before this a number of universities have experimented with Master programs of 1, 1.5 and 2 years. Today the study length converges to 2 year programs. However, the structure of program levels and their relationship was weakly conceptualized. The micro-implementation of Bachelors was fulfilled in most cases without any vision on advanced levels. In several cases, there was launched Masters which stayed alone without Bachelor input, but despite of this received accreditation. In Romanian higher education there are available four types of Masters (academic, engineering, arts and professional) and two types of doctoral (professional and academic) programs beside the unified Bachelor programs.

A research was examining the reception of the Bachelor and the experimental Master programs directly following their introduction among the faculty and the students (Novak 2006). According to the results, within the Bachelor programs the curricular goal is to offer comprehensive and deep knowledge to the students (general and specialized, disciplinary and professional) similarly extensive as in the old-programs. As a result the Bachelors from curricular perspective are interpreted mainly as a finishing cycle. All pre-

vious knowledge is to be taught in the first-cycle with the formal transformation or more adequately forcing of the previous four-year curriculum into three years. The majority of faculty staff views the content of the Master programs more or less similar to Bachelor programs according to another survey (Voicu 2007), which is especially parallel in the first period of study. This curricular arrangement was elaborated to provide access opportunities to Master-level degree for students from other institutions and programs in order to supplement their knowledge and competencies. However, there could be considered as a possible explanation the old curricular visions, which strive for extensive and deep knowledge on most programs and is cyclical in arrangement.

Table 4: Content of the Master programs in the opinion of faculty staff of universities (%)

Master programs	University status		Size of the faculties			Total
	State	Private	Under 500	500-1400	Over 1400	
The material of the first cycle is taught again	2	1	2	1	1	2
Some of them teach again the material already explained, the others are new	19	32	30	16	15	20
Most of them are new, the others teach the materials already explained	57	52	56	55	63	57
All of them are new	22	15	11	27	21	21
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Voicu 2007, 48.

Opinions are varied regarding the value of the Bachelor programs on the labour market. We need to note that the researches consider the perception of Bachelors mostly from the viewpoint of academ-

ics and students. There is very little knowledge from the labour market side. Two thirds (62.9%) of the faculty think that the Bachelor programs offer sufficient knowledge and skills for finding a job, especially because the labour market is heterogeneous, rapidly change and has vague demands toward the employees, while the knowledge of those completed the Bachelor programs are general enough and partly specific to be able to adapt to the particular demands. However, there are also counter-arguments. The 26.1% percentage of the faculty thinks that the acquired knowledge and competencies in the first cycle are too general for the employers' demands. They state that under the short three year study period the students do not receive enough theoretical, professional and practical preparation, and in addition the labour market is not able to receive them (Novak 2006). Although the students are more satisfied and optimistic regarding the Bachelor programs, nevertheless they see that the current system is forcing them to further learning, since only in this way will be their degrees fully valuable on the labour market. According to the faculty, in terms of study length the programs did not become shorter, but longer, because the majority of the students intend to learn further (Voicu 2007). In order to assess the real labour market value of Bachelors, there need to be conducted further researches on the status, wage, working conditions etc. guaranteed by a Bachelor diploma and on the reception by different sectors (public and private).

Implementation of the curricular reform is considered to be unsuccessful and misconceived by some authors. Furthermore, they talk about the survival of the old content within a new framework. The content of programs and the introduction of means necessary for flexible learning paths are also criticized. The aim was to create a large number of optional courses, with which the students would receive greater freedom and responsibility in organizing her/his studies. Instead, the current experiences show that the prearranged paths are available only and in the Bachelor programs compulsory

courses remain dominant. In addition, the curriculum is yet more disciplinary against the interdisciplinary contents envisioned by reform strategies (Singer et al. 2006).

The credit-system was introduced in Romania directly following the political transformation, within the framework of the Erasmus-program, but as a unified practice it was finalized in all cycles and at all institutions only under the Bologna process. It is compulsory for all Romanian universities from the year 2005/06. According to the concept of the ECTS it provides possibilities to form standardized credit-systems at the universities in Europe and Romania, and by the credit-transfer system it provides mobility within the European Higher Education Area. With the introduction of the ECTS the learning outcomes are to be defined formally in competences and student-centered and innovative teaching methods are to be used.

There are constant debates between the Rectors Conference and the student councils on the method of the implementation of the ECTS, current level of the implementation, on the students' freedom and the shortcomings of credit-transfer system. There is no agreement on what should be reflected in the credit value (for example workload of students, attendance on seminars and lectures, competences etc.). Student councils often criticize the introduction of the ECTS and the practice of certain institutions regarding credit allocation. The existing credit allocation practices do not reflect the work of the students, but that of the faculty, because it is provided mainly on the basis of attendance of seminars and lectures. However, considering the weight of the courses in a program, there are large differences regarding the credit value of a given course, in spite of the fact that the students work are the same or even more in some courses. Recognition of extra-curricular activities of the students with credits is almost totally missing from the credit allocation system in Romania. The credit transfer and the recognition practices are raising further problems. According to the students experiences from the Babeş-Bolyai Univer-

sity regarding mobility the credit transfer is not processed efficiently, because the credits and competences gained at foreign universities are not always acknowledged in the mother institutions (for example the courses are qualified as facultative or optional, or the content and the length of the course does not match perfectly and this is the reason of not acknowledging the course). At the same time the following problem appears: while the Romanian universities acknowledge for example the credits gained at a French university, this is not so in reverse. The inside mobility and credit transfer has the same characteristics: practically exist only between the high prestige universities that mutually acknowledge to each other the studies undertaken.

Table 5: Opinions on the acknowledgement of credits within the Erasmus-program (%)

	Faculty	Students
Credits are acknowledged regardless of the method of acquirement	10	12
Only the credits gained on courses with similar content are acknowledged, to acknowledge the others the students must take exams in the mother institution	56	22
Regardless of the credits gained within the Erasmus-program, the students must take exams from all courses	5	9
No information on the Erasmus-program	4	28
Does not know what happens with the credits	25	30
Total	100	100

Source: Voicu 2007, 51.

A general opinion among the signatory countries that the Bachelor-level fulfil the function of mass higher education, whilst the Master- and mostly the doctoral level concentrate on the elite higher education. However, these expectations in Romania similar to other countries (e.g. Slovakia, Serbia, Poland, Ukraine) remained unrealized, since the student masses still wish to continue their studies.

Consequently, the social acceptance of Bachelors is low, except the vocational-oriented programs (e.g. informatics).

The first two cycles are seen as the place of mass education, whilst the doctoral cycle takes the role of elite education. However, we must admit that this picture is differentiated according to disciplines and study areas. The public financed places according to different program-levels support this statement: 62,000 on Bachelor programs, 34,000 on Master programmes and 3,000 in PhD courses (2008-2009). These numbers in Master-level even is higher, but not registered, because the public services (e.g. public administration, health, education, social services etc.) finance for their employees the further studies, thus the Master-programs have a wider market between adults and also is funded by public budget.

Quality issues in the Bologna process

In the academic and political debates the higher education steering reforms (e.g. steering through quality standards, university rankings, performance indicators and funding) received more attention from the actors than the structural restructuring. In addition, this latter issue (the implementation of multi-cycle structure and various relating policy tools) are viewed from the perspective of governance reform and quality assurance. We could claim that these issues are gained more importance on higher education policies and actors perspectives than the original Bologna-objectives.

One may find several alternative and competing concepts within the public debate on what is quality and how can one measure it (for example, the number of Nobel-prizes, internationally recognized professors, Romanian institution in the international league tables, correspondence to the envisioned aims, number of international students in particular institutions etc.). The discourse on quality in Romanian universities is currently dominated by the

place of universities on international rankings and between top-universities, the problems regarding the fulfilling of international performance criteria's (mostly measured and envisioned through research performance and hard science perspective), the potentials of internal hierarchization and additional funding according to the performance. These claims, issues and ambitions define nowadays the renewal perspectives of quality policies and higher education. This policy discourse gives a context for the debates on higher education restructuring. The argumentation of reform strategies are concerned primarily with the issues of quality and performance. As one can easily observe the Lisbon agenda governs the content of these higher education policies.

The diagnosis of internal actors formed about Romanian higher education with specific concern on quality is as follows: the majority of the Romanian higher education institutions are unable to conform to the European quality standards, they hardly ever take part in international research and development, the level and potentials of innovation is low, they cannot meet the labour market demands and they generate unemployed graduates, and the corruption in the system is extremely high. In addition, the main concern is that the Romanian universities are unsuccessful to enter the global leagues.

The most important policy means in governing and controlling higher education are the quality assurance and the performance indicators developed according to the British-practices. The most important actor in higher education governance besides the Ministry of Education (government) is the ARACIS (Agenția Română de Asigurare a Calității în Învățământul Superior – The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education). The organization is responsible for the program accreditation in Bachelor- and Master-level. In addition, elaborates proposals for institutional accreditation to the Parliament and its educational commission, since in Romania the accreditation has two pillars: professional (program accreditation/professional decision) and political (institutional ac-

creditation/political decision). Furthermore, in the new governance structure there are other buffer and governmental organizations in charge to carry out institutional audits and evaluations, which fulfil their roles in the following structure: the CNATDCU (Consiliul Național de Atestare a Titlurilor, Diplomelor și Certificatelor Universitare – The National Council of Recognition of University Titles, Degrees and Certificates) carry on audits regarding human resources; the CNFIS (Consiliul Național pentru Finanțarea Învățământului Superior - The National Council of Higher Education Funding) examines the efficiency of institutional management and leadership; finally, the new University Ethics Council (Consiliul de Etică Universitară) protects university ethics, mainly with regard to the research ethics. These buffer organizations control the higher education institutions through performance indicators and according to recent policy proposals through funding, and as a secondary effect seeks to empower the Romanian universities of highest prestige and reputation in order to promote internal hierarchies. In addition, the planned resource concentration to these excellence places wish to support their entry to the international higher education market, preferably with the gaining of some top positions in international rankings.

The above mentioned buffer organizations undertake various functions in Romanian higher education. Under the implementation of the Bologna-reform the ARACIS was transformed from the old Accreditation Council to a quality assurance agency, which means also a new function behind the accreditation.

The council is organized along different study fields and fulfils two tasks: (1) accreditation of the Bachelor and Master programs, and (2) quality assurance within these levels. *The accreditation.* The ARACIS elaborates the methodology and standards of the accreditation of the different programs, and on the institutions' request, evaluates their study programs. The evaluation of the ARACIS is the basis for the institutional accreditation by the Par-

liament, which is recorded in accreditation laws for every institution. *The quality assurance*. It develops the standards and the performance indicators for the higher education quality assurance. It prepares institutional audits, controls and evaluates the formation and functioning of the institutional quality assurance, the introduction of which is compulsory in every institution.

The other important actor of quality-policy is the CNCSIS, which evaluates the research and scholarly performance of institutions, elaborates performance indicators for evaluations, and classifies the institutions, faculties and programs, providing hierarchies. Furthermore, undertakes the accreditation of publishing houses and scholarly journals, and funding of university research projects (competitive resource distribution, organization of grant competitions) post-gradual study programs and research centers. The organization has six committees formed along the lines of different scientific areas, where the members are selected from the academic community, especially those who are considered with the highest national and international reputation in their fields.

The central task of CNFIS is to make proposals to the Ministry of Education for the distribution of financial resources among public institutions. The organization as one can observe influences the higher education through funding. Currently, it is preoccupied with the task of developing new funding methods and performance indicators, through which the funding of the budget institutions could be differentiated (e.g. funding of excellence). The working material issued by the council views quality primarily through scholarly and research activities. The evaluation standards follow the criterias elaborated by the European Union almost literally. These are the following: (1) national research contracts, (2) international research contracts, (3) research contracts with companies, (4) accomplished doctoral dissertations, (5) studies and articles published in referred and reviewed journals, (6) books published by recognized publishers, (7) inventions and patents, (8) research centers or recognized

art pieces, (9) membership in professional organizations and academies, (10) national awards for scholarly research (Analiza... 2008, 4). One of the most debated parts of the indicators is the introduction of ISI-articles into the evaluation and regarding them as the most important aspect of high quality, regardless of various aspects of higher education and research (e.g. different scientific areas and levels, program- and institutional types).

The Presidential Committee for the Analysis and Policy Elaboration in Education and Research (Comisia Prezidențială pentru Analiza și Elaborarea Politicilor din Domeniul Educației și Cercetării) was convened by the Romanian President in 2007 in order to prepare a strategy for higher education and research, entitled “Education and Research for Knowledge Society” (Educație și Cercetare pentru Societatea Cunoașterii). Regarding the policy goals this strategy also follows above mentioned direction. They wish to achieve such specific goals in the higher education until 2015 as (1) placement of three universities on the world rank for the 500 best universities, (2) reaching the EU innovation average and increasing the academic “production to its quintuple, and (3) supporting the academics to become the “elite of the nation”. They wish to achieve these objectives with the following policy ambitions:

1. differentiation of the universities and the concentration of resources,
2. reorganization of the human resource policies,
3. promotion of the student-centered universities,
4. modernization of the management and leadership of the universities,
5. differentiated and flexible funding of the universities,
6. provision of the quality and relevance of the university higher education,
7. reorganization of the R+D+I system.

The experts propose the external evaluation of performances of both public and private institutions, and where this is too low the public institutions can be sanctioned with the withdrawal of budget resources, whilst the diplomas of private ones must be refused to recognize by the state: it is argued that the academic mediocrity can no longer be sustained from public funds (Educație... 2008). Differentiation and hierarchy of the institutions are to be configured along four groups, where (1) the first would contain the research-intensive universities that have programs in each cycle, but the gradual and postgradual programs are emphasized, (2) the second would be made up by research and educational institutions which organize mostly Bachelor and Master programs, (3) the third contains the education-oriented institutions mostly with Bachelor programs, and finally, (4) the fourth are the institutions organizing vocational courses (Educație... 2008).

The quality of Bachelor- and education-oriented institutions are hardly discussed, which means that is not considered as an aspect of competitiveness. The content of higher education policies suggests that are elaborated primarily from the perspective of the institutions offering advanced education levels (Master and doctoral). Currently according to the strategy (Educație... 2008), the most important issue regarding the Master- and doctoral programs would be to stabilize the professional status of the Master programs (for example they shall be accompanied by higher income and positions), to strengthen the four types of Master programs with governmental regulations, and in order to strengthen the professional orientation in curricula one third of the training activities would be carried out by practice-oriented professionals. Seemingly, the higher education policies under development and partly implemented keep the smaller, alternative institutions at the periphery. According to the assumptions, the vertical differentiation supported by governmental means will not only give additional dynamics to higher education, but will strengthen the homogenization proc-

esses. The universities with narrow portfolios will be forced by these higher education policies to grow, constantly provide new program levels, and strive to enlarge their research potentials. However, there is still the question what kinds of possibilities are available among the scarce resources and to what kinds of solutions can these institutions recourse to. Summarily, we can state that the so called 'Ivy-League anxiety' is strongly present in the Romanian higher education, and the governmental policies strive to achieve internal hierarchies and the strengthening of vertical differences through the quality assurance.

Internationalization and mobility

Regarding the real developments of internationalization and the internationalization policies of the Romanian higher education we have scarce and uninformative sources. Therefore we are to present here only modestly elaborated and poorly grounded part of the article. In general, we can argue that the highly formalized and structured curriculum and learning paths, with the dominance of compulsory subjects hinders the intra-national and international mobility. There were various programs launched within the Erasmus and Tempus programs from 1989 and 1991 to improve the mobility of faculty staff and students. In 1998 Romania joins the CEEPUS program (Central European Exchange for University Students Program), which makes possible the mobility of the faculty and students between universities on all levels of the higher education. The barriers of the academic mobility formally were overcome in all of the Bologna-countries. According to this in Romania also were made several policy efforts to eliminate the structural and organizational barriers to mobility (e.g. implementation of a cycle structure, modularization of curricula, introduction of credit-system, international institutional agreements, scholarships etc.).

However, such particular hindering forces as the financial problems and substitution of the staff in their mobility period still exist. Different tools were developed and implemented concerning the recognition of outside study period, but despite of this it seems that the number of Romanian students participating in the Erasmus-program, although shows an increase, but is still behind the expectations. An interesting addition to the problem is that in 2007 28% of the Romanian students knew nothing about the Erasmus program. (Voicu 2007)

Table 6: Number of the institutions and students participating in the Erasmus program

Year	Participating institutions	Students
1998/99	30	1,250
1999/00	32	1,497
2000/01	40	2,000
2001/02	45	2,110
2002/03	45	2,400
2006/07	no. date.	3,350

Source: Ministry of Education, Research and Innovation 2008.

According to the Eurydice-report of 2009 – which also watched mobility under the framework of other programs – the percentage of the incoming and outgoing students in Romania falls between 1-3% (Eurydice 2009, 44). From this the percentage of Erasmus-students was 2.1% in the year 2006/07. The most important target countries of the Romanian students are France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Hungary from Central Europe, additionally, the United States is also popular (Erasmus Statistics, 2006-2007). Romania within the European Higher Education Area is primarily a sending country. If we do not count the students arriving from the Central and Eastern European countries, the most of international students studying in Romania are coming from the Arabic countries and Middle-Asia, and not from Western Europe or North-America,

which would be so highly appreciated by the actors. At the same time, it is important to note that majority of the students coming from Central and Eastern Europe are from Moldova and their mother tongue is Romanian.

There are no analyses available on other dimensions of internationalization and such finer aspects as for example the question of how can the institutions with different legal status (private) take part in the programs aimed the internationalization of higher education. There is a wider agreement between the academics regarding the importance of national and international (especially among the European universities) cooperation. In order to support this we frequently find arguments that promote the academic and professional mobility, the mutual recognition of studies between the partner institutions and the harmonization of the programs. At the same time, some actors argue that the international cooperation and the harmonization of curricula will enhance the employability of students and there are various benefits (e.g. language skills, knowledge transfer etc.) from the experience abroad (Singer et al. 2006). Regarding the internationalization of the education one third of the academics think that they are able to teach in a foreign language, whilst the majority (78%) agrees about the necessity of more foreign language programs in Romanian higher education (Voicu 2007). However, there is no research data concerning how the institutions must support the incoming students with additional services (e.g. mentor programs, counselling).

Recent higher education policy developments

The Romanian Parliament after several years of negotiation passed a new comprehensive law on education (1/2011 Education Act). The new law reflects the higher education debates and the perceived challenges of Romanian higher education system, namely

the “quality deterioration” of faculty staff (especially the dilution of professorial performance), the elimination of all-pervading corruption and nepotism in higher education, and the problems regarding the academic and professional, practice-oriented curricular emphasis, the poor international/global performance and lack of internal transparency of Romanian higher education system. The policies traced from these challenges are entirely new in higher education, whilst in other areas little or no considerable modification was initiated. As one can easily realize, these small-scale reforms - probably except the introduction of Habilitation – are based on very similar concerns and policies to other Bologna- and EU-countries (Lisbon Process).

Firstly, the problem concerning of low scholarly and professional achievements of Romanian professors is to be improved with the introduction of Habilitation (*atestat de abilitare*), a certificate previously unknown in Romania. The procedure, however, is not as complex as in other countries (e.g. Germany, Hungary), it consist only of the elaboration and public defense of a thesis before an academic committee. The Romanian Habilitation qualifies for supervising PhD students and the occupation of university professor positions. In addition, the appointment to various university positions (assistant, lecturer etc.) is abolished from the previously required “oldness” (age discrimination) in the higher education. According to the new policies the professional and scholarly performance would govern the appointments to these positions; however, the higher education institutions maintained the right to shape this appointment practice.

Secondly, the other considerable higher education policy innovation is the differentiation of second cycle to three types of Master programs, with underlying curricular emphasis: (1) professional Master, (2) research Master, and (3) didactic Master. The real improvements are the separation of academic and professional Master degrees, where the first is not only the preparation for further stud-

ies on doctoral level, but could be recognized as the first year of doctoral training. Additionally, the research Master would be organized by the doctoral schools. The latter focus on a deep and specialized education, mainly for entry the labour market. Moreover qualifies even for further studies at doctoral level, but without the time-benefits assured by the research Master. These changes could be considered as the hallway for several institutions to be transformed into “specialized” institutions, which offer specialized Masters and Doctorates (e.g. M. Ed. or Ed.D.), indeed, in some areas instead of uniform first-cycle specialized Bachelors (e.g. teacher training).

Thirdly, the government and semi-independent puffer organizations implement the policies regarding the hierarchization and classification of institutions. We can argue that the rationales for such policies in one hand are financial in nature, in other hand creating transparency of missions and profiles. The Romanian higher education institutions are classified into three main categories (still without sub-categories): (1) the teaching-oriented institutions, (2) the teaching- and research-oriented, and artistic institutions, and (3) advanced research and teaching institutions. Seemingly, the vertical differentiation overwrites the horizontal differentiation, whilst the categorization according to the existence and quality of research overwrites the categorization according to functions. As well, the Bachelor and Master programs will be ranked, which provides the basis for differentiated public funding. Behind the government and their organizations exist alternative rankers (the Ad Astra non-profit organization) producing Shanghai-type rankings of institutions and programs. Their rankings are biased toward the scientific activity and performance of institutions. The consumers of these classifications and rankings are mainly the policy-makers (the governments), rather than the students and industry, since the culture for such informational services still is almost inexistent.

Concluding remarks

The intergovernmental (Bologna), supranational (EU) and national higher education policy perspectives have clearly overlapped in recent Romanian reform initiatives. From a wider and political perspective the Bologna process in Romania has proved to be a euphemism, which gives a political platform to and covers various reform ambitions: national and supranational, and ideologically neoliberal, new-managerialist change initiatives.

The degree reform, namely the implementation of a multi-cycle structure, creates an umbrella for agenda-setting and policy formulation of re-imagining of state and higher education relationships through the lenses of new governance ideas (governance reforms), challenging the established power-structures and introducing new institutional management arrangements, and creating frameworks for new funding and control mechanisms (evaluations and standards, performance-based funding). This ideology and discourse continuously mark the Romanian higher education reform ideas in the last decades, however, in practice these remained only partially or even not realized in the level of institutions.

The reform choreography followed the traditional perspective, as it was a closed, top-down and bureaucratic process. In this arena the institutional actors had no influence on Bologna-policies. The preconditions for and leeway of these reform initiatives are the higher education traditions and the local interpretation of policy goals, which in the perspectives of reform enthusiast is considered as the distortion and throw of the original goals. From a narrow technical and structural perspective the Bologna process indicates the implementation of the two- or multi-cycle degree structure. Under this process the institutional configuration formally tend to develop into a mix of unified and university-dominated system, where the higher education policy strive to strengthen the vertical differentiation and the program level are emphasized, instead of institutional types and horizontal differentia-

tion. Accordingly, the internal and external competition is viewed as a high political priority.

The implementation of the new degree structure in the political discourse was considered as a universal solution for various problems of the system. However, the debates on various issues (e.g. institutional arrangements, institutional and program types, curricular philosophies, different functions in unified programs etc.) and expectations (e.g. the causal relationships between structural reforms and the improvement on quality, attractiveness, relevancy etc. of programs) remain unrealized or takes place only between a small and closed minority of policy actors. With regard to the curricular and program visions, as one can observe, the old curricular and program philosophies survived under the new frameworks. The perceived shortcomings of implementation did support this observation.

Under the implementation of Bologna-goals were also reconsidered the quality control frameworks. Regarding this arrangement, the power and control over higher education was redistributed between the state and the buffer organizations, empowering the latter organizations and thus strengthening the central control by various evaluation and quality mechanisms. These processes according to the expectations will lead to the deepening of vertical differences, will raise the performance of some institutions and creates the possibility of the emergence of internationally recognized universities.

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