

# THE SPECIALIZATION OF THE YOUNG GENERATION

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“Students who are conceived as «social workers», to whom the nation has entrusted its most important interests, will have to give their warm and lively contest through their county bodies, besides each university... These bodies will be obliged through the Law of Higher Education to submit to the University Senates detailed reports on their work. University teachers will have to give the students all the guidance for the development of cultural activities in the villages”<sup>1</sup>.

## Abstract

*The aim of the present paper is to compare the way in which the interwar students were trained and how the ones from today are doing the training. I will address the importance of the social service law for the young people who worked in rural areas, and then I will continue with the training of today's students who have a few hours of training, and in most cases it is not in the field. What I want to bring to your attention through this material is the growing number of Romanian students who finish a faculty and are being called specialists in the field relying only on statistical data. The state invests in their training by offering free education and granting scholarships, but after the students' graduation, it does not get anything in return. To analyze this issue I will use the report on the state of higher education in Romania 2017-2018 and media data releases.*

**Keywords:** Social Service Law, training, students, specialization, labour market.

## The social service law

The Law on the Establishment of the Social Service was published in the Official Gazette no. 242 of October 18, 1938. According to art. 1, the autonomous institution called the Social Service was meant to prepare and enforce both girls and boys, graduates from all classes of schools in the reorganization of villages. Other objectives of the institution were: knowing the country with the help of monograph research, creating a Cultural House that was meant to help and

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<sup>1</sup>„Studentii concepuți ca «funcționari sociali», cărora Națiunea le-a încredințat cele mai importante interese ale ei, vor trebui să dea concursul lor cald și luminat prin organizațiile lor județene, de pe lângă fiecare universitate... Aceste cercuri vor trebui să fie obligate, prin Legea învățământului superior, a depune Senatelor universitare rapoarte amănunțite despre activitatea lor. Profesorii universitari vor trebui să dea studenților toate îndrumările în vederea desfășurării activității culturale la sate” (Dimitrie Gusti, *Un an de activitate la Ministerul Instrucțiunii, Cultelor și Artelor [A year of activity at the Ministry of Instruction, Cults and the Art]*, București, Editura Tip Bucovina, 1934, p. 522).

strengthen the work of the Church, the School and the State Authorities; organization of schools for the education of the villagers<sup>2</sup>.

Under the Social Service Law, young graduates were enrolled for a period of three to six months to work in rural areas. At the end, each graduate was going to receive a certificate without which both the designation in a public job position and the granting of free practice were not possible. According to sociologist Dimitrie Gusti, this work that the young people did in the country was useful firstly for them, but also for the peasants. They had the opportunity to show what they could do while spending their time in the Romanian villages, but also to learn new things because the teams were multidisciplinary and thus they could learn from each other.

“The new organization of the teams gives the opportunity to the young scholars, who will have later, at the maturity, the responsibility for our country’s well-being, to go through the regenerative fire of the work for the villages. In the village, these young scholars of all specialties, sociologists, doctors, vets, theologians, agronomists, forest engineers, business masters, benefit from a wide open field in order to show their active and constructive patriotism, practical and benevolent action. They rarely have the opportunity to show their power of work and the creative energy.... The organization of the cultural work teams in the villages, comprised of students and technicians, becomes a new method, the practical and real method for the new organization of the Romanian life”<sup>3</sup>.

### **The law on student practice, today**

Law 258/2007 on the practice of pupils and students was adopted by the Romanian Parliament in compliance with the provisions of art. 75 and art. 76 par.(1) of the Constitution of Romania. According to art. (1), training is defined as “the activity of pupils and students, in accordance with the curriculum, which aims at verifying the applicability of the theoretical knowledge acquired by them in the training program”<sup>4</sup>. This training is based on a collaboration agreement or a

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<sup>2</sup> “Regele Culturii Românești” [“The king of Romanian culture”] in *Revista Foaia Diecezană*, (Caransebeș), 1968, nr. 43, pp. 1–2.

<sup>3</sup> „Organizarea nouă a Echipelor dă prilej tinerimii la cărturare, care va avea mai târziu, la maturitate, răspunderea bunului mers al țării noastre, să treacă prin focul regenerativ al muncii pentru sate. În sat, acești tineri cărturari, din toate specialitățile, sociologi, medici umani și veterinari, teologi, agronomi, ingineri silvici, maestre de gospodărie, au câmp larg și măreț deschis ca să-și arate patriotismul lor activ și constructiv de acțiune concretă, practică și binefăcătoare, ei au prilejul rar să-și poată arăta puterea de muncă și energia creatoare de suflet nou și de stări românești. Organizarea Echipelor de muncă culturală la sate, alcătuite din studenți și tehnicieni, devine astfel o nouă metodă, metoda practică și adevărată, pentru noua organizare a vieții românești” (Dimitrie Gusti, *Sociologia Militantă*, București, Institutul Social Român, 1946, p. 250).

<sup>4</sup> „activitatea desfășurată de elevi și studenți, în conformitate cu planul de învățământ, care are drept scop verificarea aplicabilității cunoștințelor teoretice însușite de aceștia în cadrul programului de instruire”. (Law no. 258 of 19 June 2007, available at: <http://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocument/83810>).

convention, as the case may be, and it may be realised through a weekly program or all together at the end of the semester or year of study. This activity is mandatory and represents a promotion condition.

### Student practice today<sup>5</sup>

If in the interwar period everything was very well organized and the work done by the young people in the rural environment was understood “as a civic and national obligation”<sup>6</sup> of preservation and development of the village, nowadays, the training classes that students have to accomplish are no longer intended to enrich both the soul and the information they possess. Thus, the young people no longer have the notion of Romanian village, being disillusioned with national values and lost in the desire to have more and more (from a material point of view).

Nowadays, the students who are doing the training can choose where to do these hours, the number of worked hours being insufficient (a few days a year), and without an explicit link to the national interest. For example, the “Multi-regional Integrated Internship Program for Students to Increase their Employability Degree” project, developed by Adecco Human Resources, created the first site in Romania where pupils, students or graduates can choose from the training offers or stints of internship. This project aims at creating a link between: student, university, company. The student benefits from a range of internships stints in the field of interest; the company makes available to those interested internship stints that can help companies integrate students into the work environment and prepare them for a future career and the university analyzes the number of graduates who were able to integrate into the labour market. In theory, everything sounds good, but what is the situation in practice?

### “Theory as theory, but practice is what kills us”<sup>7</sup>

According to an article in *Adevărul Newspaper* (May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2010), Romanian students that wish to get a job, due to their lack of experience, found a solution: to follow the practical classes during the 3 years of study. If the faculty does not have a

<sup>5</sup> ANOSR, *Prima platformă de stagii de practică din România pentru studenți* [The first practice strategy platform for students in Romania], 2014, available at: <http://anosr.ro/prima-platforma-de-stagii-de-practica-pentru-studenti/>.

<sup>6</sup> „ca o obligație cetățenească și națională” – “Regele Culturii Românești” [„The king of Romanian culture”] in *Revista Foaia Diecezană*, (Caransebeș), 1968, nr. 43, pp. 1–2.

<sup>7</sup> Ziarul Adevărul, “Practica în facultate: unii fac, alții se prefac” [Practice in college: some do, others pretend], 3.10.2010, available at: [https://adevarul.ro/educatie/scoala/practica-facultate--unii-fac-altii-prefac\\_1\\_50ad44da7c42d5a66391ee69/index.html](https://adevarul.ro/educatie/scoala/practica-facultate--unii-fac-altii-prefac_1_50ad44da7c42d5a66391ee69/index.html).

training offer for students, they need to find a company where they can train in the field of their study. Even if a student benefits from a training offer or not, they also face the situation where the practice they perform is not often the desired opportunity. Below is a conclusive example from *Adevarul (Ibidem)*:

“Maria Tănase, a student at the Faculty of Business Administration in Constanța, during the training period at the Police and the Romanian Naval Authority, shared the flyers. «All we did was to share flyers on the beach»<sup>8</sup>. This is confirmed by Cristina Fit, the vice-president of the National Association of Students' Organizations in Romania, who says that «the internship is about marvellous things: students observe what employees do, helping with secretarial work and sometimes even making coffee»<sup>9</sup>. Thus, some students get disappointed.

As practice classes are mandatory and students do not want to fail, they decide to take advantage of this opportunity: some to put into practice what they have learned at the university, and others to get only the necessary documents that will provide them a passing grade.

### **Students and the labour market**

#### ***Statistics on the number of graduates***

The report on the state of higher education in Romania shows that in 2017/2018 the system comprised 93 higher education institutions, and 508 faculties. The state education represents 59% higher education institutions and 73% of all faculties<sup>10</sup>. According to these data, we can state that the state supports through the numerous of higher education institutions the professional training of young people in Romania. Only in the academic year 2017–2018, 538.9 thousand undergraduate students were enrolled, out of which 408.2 thousands in the public system<sup>11</sup>. Both the number of enrolled students and the number of institutions is high, but do these state institutions prepare students who, after their specialization, will serve the national interest or, in fact, create an inflation of university degrees?

According to the report of the Ministry of National Education, in the academic year 2015–2016, there were 80,815 graduates with a diploma of undergraduate education, out of which 58.2% represent the female graduates (47,050 students) and 41.8% the male graduates (33,765 students)<sup>12</sup>. Thus, it

<sup>8</sup> „Tot ce am făcut a fost să împărțim pliante pe plajă”. (*Ibidem*).

<sup>9</sup> „Stagiul se rezumă la lucruri mărunte: studenții asistă la ceea ce fac angajații, ajută la munca de secretariat și, uneori, chiar la făcutul cafelei”. (*Ibidem*).

<sup>10</sup> Minister of National Education, *Report on the state of higher education in Romania 2017-2018*, available at: [www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/Raport%20privind%20starea%20%C3%AEnv%C4%83%C8%9B%C4%83m%C3%A2ntului%20superior%20din%20Rom%C3%A2nia\\_%202017%20-2018.pdf](http://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/Raport%20privind%20starea%20%C3%AEnv%C4%83%C8%9B%C4%83m%C3%A2ntului%20superior%20din%20Rom%C3%A2nia_%202017%20-2018.pdf).

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 18.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p.18.

can be noticed that the number of female students who finish their BA program is higher compared to the number of male graduates.

In the academic year 2015–2016, most of them specialized in the field of Business Administration and Law (26.8%), in Engineering, Processing and Construction (17.5%), and Health and social assistance (13.79%)<sup>13</sup>. Thus, young people tend to specialize in areas where wages are simply higher; meanwhile, the students ignore areas such as Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Veterinary Sciences, Education Sciences and Services, Army etc. (the ones that serve the public interest and where the need for experts is high).

### *College graduates and the labour force*

After completing their studies, young graduates want to engage in the field in which they specialized, but this is unlikely because the demand of the labour market varies from year to year. Thus, students decide from the admission period to focus on areas with a high employment rate<sup>14</sup>. According to the report on the state of higher education in Romania, the number of students who decide to specialize in technical, economic or legal domains is increasing annually<sup>15</sup>.

According to INS (National Institute of Statistics) data, in Romania there are on average 60,000 vacancies. In 2017, most employees were those specializing in various fields, and fewer were skilled workers in agriculture, forestry and fishing<sup>16</sup>.

Also, the graduates of Romanian faculties find it difficult to integrate into the labour market after graduation. An example of this is the case of Radu, who graduated the Faculty of International Economic Relations of the Academy of Economic Studies (ASE) and has been looking for a job in the field without success:

“I have been trying to find a job for five months. I’ve been to more than ten interviews, but I have not been able to get a job up to this moment. Most companies do not call me anymore

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 21.

<sup>14</sup> România Liberă, “Piața muncii se schimbă de la an la an. Ce opțiuni au studenții care termină facultatea în 2018” [“The force market is changing from year to year. What are the options for graduating students in 2018”, 18.05.2018, available at: <https://romanalibera.ro/aldine/piata-muncii-se-schimba-de-la-an-la-an-ce-optiuni-au-studentii-care-termina-facultatea-in-2018-729290>].

<sup>15</sup> Minister of National Education, *Report on the state of higher education in Romania 2016*, available at: [www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/\\_fi%C8%99iere/Minister/2017/transparenta/Stare\\_sup%20%202016.pdf](http://www.edu.ro/sites/default/files/_fi%C8%99iere/Minister/2017/transparenta/Stare_sup%20%202016.pdf).

<sup>16</sup> România Liberă, “Piața muncii se schimbă de la an la an. Ce opțiuni au studenții care termină facultatea în 2018” [“The labour market is changing from year to year. What are the options for graduating students in 2018”, 18.05.2018, available at: <https://romanalibera.ro/aldine/piata-muncii-se-schimba-de-la-an-la-an-ce-optiuni-au-studentii-care-termina-facultatea-in-2018-729290>].

after the interview, although they tell me they will let me know the result via email, no matter if it is positive or negative. I do not get an answer via email, at least. I think I'm not fitting"<sup>17</sup>.

An advantage in hiring after graduation is the working hours during the faculty. For situations where young students do not want to work during the faculty, they can get involved in extracurricular activities that are often appreciated by companies according to Corina Diaconu, the general manager of ABC Human Capital recruitment and selection firm.

"There are a lot of voluntary-type actions that are being organized, they are true trade unions of the students who deal with such activities. They can serve as a recommendation for a job when the students decide to have a full-time paid job, working contract and all legal forms. This is a first step that they could make to somehow hinder their employment"<sup>18</sup>.

Companies encourage student engagement from college due to the fact that this is a long-term benefit. For example, West Cats developers Studios, Liviu Tudor argues that using the right student hostels (as recruitment nursery for multinationals)<sup>19</sup>, there are few cases where the students engage in the field, being attracted by a steady and accumulated income and the accumulation of work experience which will be an advantage for a future job.

### Instead of conclusions

Comparing the process of specialization of the younger generation from the interwar period to that of today's young people, we can say that in the interwar period the specialization served national interests. The state supported their training, and the young people through their practice in the rural environment helped to build and preserve the village, but also learn quite a lot from the experience, from an interdisciplinary point of view. Nowadays, the number of training hours that students have to do is very low and they are no longer meant to enrich both the soul and the information they hold.

<sup>17</sup> „Încerc să îmi găsesc un job de aproape cinci luni. Am fost la mai mult de zece interviuri, însă nu am reușit să mă angajez până acum. Cele mai multe companii nu mă mai sună după ce merg la interviu, deși îmi spun că vor face acest lucru, indiferent de rezultat. Nici măcar un răspuns pe e-mail nu primesc. Cred că nu sunt potrivit” (Ziarul Zinanciar, „Cine mai angajează absolvenți de facultate?”[„Who is employing college graduates?”], available at: [www.zf.ro/profesii/cine-mai-angajeaza-absolventi-de-facultate-3767078](http://www.zf.ro/profesii/cine-mai-angajeaza-absolventi-de-facultate-3767078)).

<sup>18</sup> „Sunt o grămadă de acțiuni tip voluntariat care se organizează, sunt adevărate 'sindicate' ale studenților care se ocupă de astfel de activități. Acelea pot servi ca o recomandare în vederea obținerii unui job în momentul în care studenții se hotărăsc să aibă un loc de muncă full-time plătit, cu contract de muncă și cu toate formele legale. Acesta este un prim pas pe care ei l-ar putea face ca să-și înlesnească cumva angajarea” (*Ibidem*).

<sup>19</sup> România Liberă, “Piața muncii se schimbă de la an la an. Ce opțiuni au studenții care termină facultatea în 2018” [“The labour market is changing from year to year. What are the options for graduating students in 2018”, 18.05.2018, available at: <https://romanalibera.ro/aldine/piata-muncii-se-schimba-de-la-an-la-an-ce-optiuni-au-studentii-care-termina-facultatea-in-2018-729290>].

Another problem identified is that the number of college graduates is growing, and this leads to a large number of graduates who are specialized only theoretically, but they do not have the necessary skills to have an actual expertise. This leads to employment in other fields, looking for a job outside the country, or simply increasing the unemployment rate.

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