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EDUCATION AND DEMOCRACY. THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AFTER 1989. THE CASE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST

Claudia Maria UDRESCU

Faculty of Political Science, University of Bucharest, Romania

Abstract: *The collapse of the communist regime in 1989 brought numerous transformations and changes within the Romanian society: political, economic, cultural ones.*

A very important issue for the formation of future citizens is the education. We will have a particular focus on the introduction on the curricula and the development of social sciences after 1989, since various disciplines were cancelled and unified with others within the faculties in Romania. Another were unified under the umbrella of a very ideological process of learning and teaching, namely Academia “□tefan Gheorghiu” in Bucharest.

The interest for the faculties of social sciences was very high after 1989 and we can relate this interest inside the University of Bucharest with the new teaching of anthropology, psychology, sociology (in its variety), political science, European studies and so on. The spread of such disciplines included also in the Masters programs show the need of the students for developing an esprit critique and to learn also how to contribute to the needs of the society in its way towards modernization.

Keywords: *education, social sciences, democracy, post communism, university, citizens*

1. INTRODUCTION

1989 is the year of the transformations, on a way of no return. Democracy, transition, freedom, free market, free election, political parties seem to be some of the *lieux communs* of every citizen who are trying to describe the period and to participate to the political life. Democracy becomes a place to be and a lesson to learn or teach. The revival of the social sciences after 1989 is partially explained by the need of teaching and learning how to be a citizen. Old faculties regained their position, new faculties were created, and new disciplines appeared following the path towards democracy, such as psychology, journalism, political science, administrative science, European studies, public relations etc.

Education represents one of the most powerful issues related to the transition of a democratic regime. Such regimes need educated citizens and well trained civil

servants, in order to populate the newly created institutions. On the other hand, education is a source of legitimating of new political parties, without any roots in the society.

We are taking the case of the University of Bucharest and focus on the creation of new faculties and disciplines of study after 1990.

2. THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL SCIENCES AFTER 1989

2.1 Breaking with the past. The development of the social sciences is struggled by the need of eliminating any form of ideology after the chute of the communist regime. Within a symbolic action, the first government Petre Roman on 13 February 1990 decided to close the Institute of historical, social and political studies and in March 1990, the same government decided that some

research institutes, which previously belonged to the Ministry of Education, will be part of the Romanian Academy: the Institute for Philosophy, Institute for Sociology, Institute for Psychology, Institute for Social Theory.

Similar decisions are taken in the first years of transition in order to manifest at least formally the elimination of any links with the past regime, such as the closure of all higher education institutions aimed to the education and training of the members of Communist Party, the cancelling of any discipline related to the communist ideology, the forms of the communist education in the university etc.

One of the most important decisions in January 1990 is to close the Academy *□tefan Gheorghiu*, created in 1954 by the unification of *Andrei Jdanov* School and the University of the Workers of the Communist Party. In 1965 the *□tefan Gheorghiu* School became the Academy of Social and Political Sciences (Mihai Dinu Gheorghiu, 2007: 91-93). This Academy offered diplomas in political and economic sciences, philosophy, sociology or history of the workers movement, delivered by the Ministry of Education.

As a consequence of the creation of the Academy of the Communist Party, the faculties of sociology are closed; the faculty of history was unified with the faculty of philosophy. Another consequence of this type of higher education is the strong trend in technical studies, following the communist idea of linking the teaching with the production system.

2.2 New faculties in the University of Bucharest. In 1990 the University of Bucharest comprises only six faculties. The Faculty of History-Philosophy includes chairs of economics, sociology, political science and psychology. During the debates in the Senate in January-March 1990, the Faculty of History requires its separation from the Faculty of Philosophy and becomes independent.

On 19 January 1990 the Government decides to create the Faculty of Psychology and Sociology with the headquarters in the Leu complex, the former headquarter of the Communist Party Academy *□tefan Gheorghiu*, and the first dean of this faculty is

prof. Ioan Mihăilescu (Mihăilescu, Rostás, 2007: 233). The Faculty of Psychology became autonomous in 1992, following a decision of Mihai Golu, ministry of education at this time.

The same decision (55/19.01.1990) created the Faculty of Journalism, which took the logistics and the location of the Faculty of Journalism of the *□tefan Gheorghiu* Academy. In order to continue their studies, the students of the former Faculty of Journalism had to pass an exam in front of a commission composed by civil servants from the ministry of education, professionals from the press and cultural institutions.

The Academy *□tefan Gheorghiu* is closed by the government on 19 January 1990 and the members of the Senate of the University of Bucharest don't recognize the PhD degrees of the professors delivered by the former academy, so that they are not allowed to teach in the University of Bucharest after 1990.

The same governmental decision from 19 January intends to create the Faculty of Higher Political Studies in the University of Bucharest, by organizing postgraduate degrees of two years, in order to contribute to the education of the professionals working for the political parties, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and for higher education institutions. The courses to be taught in this faculty organized in two chairs (Political Analysis and International relations) were History of political thought, Contemporary political systems, Theory and practice of negotiation, Comparative constitutional law, Theory of international relations, Important issues of worldwide politics etc.

A year later, the National School of Political and Administrative Sciences was created by the governmental decision 183/1991 with the mission to serve the institutions of the state. The specializations offered by SNSPA were at the time political science, administrative science, international relations, management, sciences of mass communication. It is very interesting to note that the members of the Senate of Romania, the Chamber of Deputies, the prime minister or other ministers were allowed to decide upon the nomination of the directors of the



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specializations and the curricula of the SNSPA for the respective specializations. The Senate of SNSPA includes also members of the Government, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Justice, Finances, and Culture.

In 1995 SNSPA comprises also the Romanian Institute for Management and the former CEPECA (a center with the mission to train the elite of the Communist Party, created in 1967).

Back in 1991 the Senate of the University of Bucharest decides the creation of the francophone faculty, namely the International Faculty of Human Sciences (with courses in French language), which became the Faculty of Political and Administrative Sciences in 1995, with a very strong accent on the distance from the communist tradition. This faculty is primarily supported by AUPELF-UREF (actually the Association des Universités Francophones) and has three directions of study: political science, international relations and public policies. After the BA programs in French, Romanian and English, the faculty will organize master and PhD programs in political science, in order to offer a complete teaching of political science.

Few years later, other Faculties of Political Science were created in Romania.

For example the University *Babeș-Bolyai* in Cluj Napoca organized the Department of Political Science within the Faculty of History in 1993, which became the Faculty of Political Science in 1995, with Vasile Pușcaș as the first dean (Barbu, 2002: 229-232).

The University *Alexandru Ioan Cuza* of Iași organized a master program in political science within the Faculty of Philosophy since 1996.

Another important issue of post communist education is the creation of the private higher education institutions. As for political science,

we remind the creation of the Faculty of Political and Administrative Sciences of the University *Banatul* from Timișoara in 1997 and the Faculty of Political Science from the *Dimitrie Cantemir* University in 1998 (Barbu, 2002: 232).

The private universities (in Romanian the term used is not "private" but "particular") enclose often in their names the adjectives *European* or *international*, so that it predicts the type of studies offered, or in order to create a very powerful image in the 1990, of the myth of returning to Europe.

2.3 New disciplines. As far as we have seen, new disciplines as psychology, political science, European studies, sociology, social work, business administration, human resources, public relations commenced to be taught, first at BA level, after at master and doctorate and were encouraged by the funding offered by the World Bank, Foundation Soros or various EU programs, starting with TEMPUS and Erasmus.

Their spread is also due to the creation of the private universities. It is worth to remind that all the private universities in Romania were created via foundations, in cities with or without any academic tradition and in reaction to the fact that the promotions of the university staff were blocked since 1980 and also in order to take advantage of the *numerus clausus* from public universities in the 1990s, where the competition was very high.

The interest of students for the new disciplines is increasing, even if there is still in place a very competitive access system in order to enroll as a student. For example in the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Bucharest enrolled 22 students in 1991/1992, 124 students in the academic year 1993/1994 and 950 students in 2000/2001.

The same interest was manifested for the law studies, foreign languages, history,

sociology, journalism etc. As for the academic year 1990/1991 the students enrolled in the Faculty of Philosophy are 116; 377 for the Faculty of Sociology-Psychology-Pedagogy; 1983 students enrolled at the Faculty of Law; 234 students studied at the Faculty of Journalism, 626 students at the Faculty of Letters (*Statistical Yearbook of the University of Bucharest*, 1995). During the academic year 1993/1994 the students enrolled as it follows: 312 at the Faculty of Philosophy; 1314 at the Faculty of Sociology-Psychology-Pedagogy; 3141 at the Faculty of Law; 338 students in Journalism; 1586 at the Faculty of Letters.

In the University of Bucharest there are more proposals to create the Superior School of Journalism in 1995 or the postgraduate School of management and public policies proposed by the Faculty of Philosophy in 1997, but without any concrete follow-up.

A possible explanation for the increasing interest in studying social sciences after 1989 is the fact that during the communist regime the social sciences were completely ideologized and as a matter of consequence, the Faculties of Sociology, Journalism or Psychology were closed.

2.4 Political elites and social sciences.

The interest for social sciences explains the fact that the members of the Romanian Parliament are enrolling in BA, master or PhD degrees in social sciences during their mandate. It is more a legitimating strategy used by member of different political parties and we can observe the trend in accumulating more degrees in order to get access to teaching and management positions in the private or public universities (Udrescu, 2011). We can see this trend from the private universities point of view, as they hired political personalities in order to increase the visibility of their university.

The members of the Parliament had also have courses offered by different foundation such as: Foundation for political education (FEPAC Braşov), Foundation Jean Jaurès, European Foundation Constantin Drăgan, Foundation XX Century, Foundation for pluralism, Foundation Alfred Mozer or by the institutes created by different political parties

such as Institute for Social Studies *Ion Aurel Stoica* or the Institute for Social Studies *Ovidiu Ţincai*.

The courses focused on management and business administration, leadership and economic development, entrepreneurship, analysis of the military conflicts, political communication, conflict resolution and mediation, campaigning on local elections etc (Udrescu, 2011).

4. CONCLUSIONS

The development of the social sciences after 1989 is explained by many reasons. First at all, there is the need to build up theories about society, politics and also to create instruments to understand and analyze the profound changes during the post communist transition.

Another reason is that the past should also be valorized and the future has to be taken in consideration. There are also needs requested by the market driven economy, by the accession in the European Union and the most important, the need to educate and train the newly democratic citizens. This is also because the mission of the Romanian university, as for example, the University of Bucharest, is to educate citizens and to train civil servants, following a Napoleonic tradition of universities. This dimension could also explain the permeable relationship of the university with politics after 1989.

On the other hand, the interest for studying social sciences in post communist transition is related to the need to prepare students for such disciplines by teaching civic education, democratic education or civic culture classes in the high schools of Romania. The theoretical part is doubled by the volunteering programs offered by numerous Romanian NGO's such as Centras, Pro-Democratie, Soros Foundation, the Foundation for the Development of Civil Society (FDSC) and many others. This aspect is important and related to the programs for developing the



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civic culture and participation of young people to the social and political life.

The need for experts is another reason of the development of the social sciences in post communist regimes. This aspect could also have perverse effects in terms of Raymond Boudon, because of the mechanisms of designing the experts.

Another paradigm of analyzing the long march of the social sciences after 1989 is the knowledge/power regimes in Michel Foucault interpretation. The mission of our universities and the past tradition of educating citizens and civil servants justify this paradigm.

As a final conclusion, the education is the primary step towards a democratic regime and the interest for education (in any of its forms) represents a measure for the degree of development of a democracy.

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