

Church-owned Higher Education and the Democratization of Romania

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Abstract

The purpose of the paper is manifold. The first aim is to create a *framework for analysis* or to *map the landscape of the Romanian church-related higher education institutions*. The second is to answer the question that the existing *educational policies, societal and cultural trends* how will determine the identity, mission and functioning of these institutions. In the first part of the paper we will review the history and traditionally existing models of the church-related higher learning institutions what create an understanding for the nowadays challenges faced by them. Once we fulfill this objective, we will continue with the presentation of the educational movements after the collapse of communism, the expansion and dimension of religious education which provide basis to the classification of these institutions. Finally, we will review the legal status, the governance and financing, the training structure of the church-related higher education followed by a short account of the europeanization and internationalization of the sector.

Descriptors: higher education, private higher education, religious education, church related colleges, higher education policy, educational change, educational reform, Romania.

Historical Background of the Romanian Church-related Higher Education

The profile of the church-related higher education cannot be understand without a short overview of regional and denominational differences, which give rise to traditional

models and visions in higher education. This section of the study has two objectives. Firstly, to present the changing landscape of the “sector” on *various ideological and political environment*, and secondly to outline the *recent history of Christian Church higher learning perspective*.

The Romanian nation state can be divided – historically and recently – in two regions (Transylvania and Old-Romanian territories) with different denominational-cultural aspects and higher learning models. The Transylvanian region traditionally can be characterized by *multiculturalism, multilingualism and multiconfessionalism* (Protestants, Roman and Greek Catholics, Orthodox and from the beginning of the 20th century Evangelical churches) which was dramatically changed and stressed toward uniformization only in the 20th century (formation of the new nation state and identity; socialist homogenization and state-governed secularization).

Table 1. The population of Transylvania by nationality¹, 1910-1977 (thousands)

Year	Total population	Romanians	%	Hungarians	%	Germans	%	Others	%
1880	-	-	57,8	-	30,2	-	9,3	-	2,7
1910	5263	2830	53,8	1664	31,6	565	10,7	203	3,9
1930	5548	3207	58,3	1353	24,4	540	9,7	294	5,3
1956	6232	4081	65,5	1558	25,0	373	6,0	162	2,6
1966	6719	4559	67,9	1597	23,8	372	5,5	191	2,8
1977	7500	5331	71,0	1651	22,0	323	4,3	205	2,7
2002	7 221	-	74,6	-	19,6	-	0,73	-	1,5

Source: Flóra, 2004: 84.; Varga, 1988.

Table 2. The population of Romania by religion, 1992-2002

	2002		1992	
	Total	%	Total	%
Orthodox	18.806.428	86,7	19.802.398	86,8
Roman-Catholic	1.028.401	4,7	1.161.942	5,0
Greek-Catholics	195.481	0,9	223.327	1,0
Calvinists	698.550	3,2	802.454	3,5
Lutherans (Augustinian)	11.203	0,1	39.119	0,2
Lutherans (Synod-presbyterian)	26.194	0,1	21.221	0,1
Unitarians	66.846	0,3	76.708	0,3
Baptists	129.937	0,6	109.462	0,5
Pentecostals	330.486	1,5	220.824	1,0

¹ The national and religious borders in Transylvania are traditionally similar e.g. Romanians-Orthodox, Greek Catholics; Hungarians-Protestants (Calvinists, Unitarians, Lutherans, Roman-Catholics); Germans-Lutherans.

Seventh Day Adventists	97.041	0,4	77.546	0,3
Evangelical Christians	46.029	0,2	49.963	0,2
Evangelical	18.758	0,1	-	-
Others	201.230	Approx. 0,9	149750	Approx. 0,5
Without religion	13.834	0,1	24.314	0,1
Atheists	9.271	Under 0,1	10.331	Under 0,1
Non-declared	18.492	0,1	8.139	Under 0,1
Total population	21.698.181	100	22.810.035	100

Source: Romanian Census 1992 and 2002.

The church-related higher learning institutions have been operating in *theological seminaries, academies and institutes* with primer orientation toward the training of clergy. There can be originate only *discipline-centered, specialized colleges* (vocational) for the primary school teacher training but they were runned in secondary level, and additionally a few number of academies for *professional training* (predominantly law). Those forms of church-maintained institutions - universities and liberal arts colleges – with a comprehensive training structure, that are acquainted in Western Europe and in the Anglo-Saxon system, historically do not existed in this part, however there was some fruitless attempts to establish *interdenominational universities*. (Szolár 2008)

In Transylvania the church-related higher learning institutions are traditionally conceived as a mirror image of the *ethnic-religious identity and distinctiveness*, where the promotion of these institutions are emphasized not only in theological, but on *linguistic and cultural grounds*. These experiences in value-pluralism and multiculturalism evolved viable strategies and practices of the coexistence of several church traditions and their institutions. Opposite to the Transylvanian experience, in the Old-Romanian territories we can meet up a *homogenous and uniform* environment, in terms of national (Romanian) and denominational (Eastern Orthodoxy) perspective. The Orthodox theological education functioned at secondary level, thus we cannot report their vision in higher education only after the reform of seminaries (higher level education), which begins in the 20th century, and it was extended to all institutions only after the collapse of socialism. The first universities (University of Bucuresti, University of Iasi, and Ferencz-József Royal University) in Transylvania and in the Old-Romanian territories were found in the 19. century by the state, but they were construed as secular institutions, exclusively for training of laity, without theological education. However, on the basis of the pressures drawn from the churches, and additionally the ideological interest of the state to expand

their control over the churches, some previously independent theological institutions were integrated (or in some cases affiliated) to the state-universities.

After the unification of these different historical regions in the new Romanian nation-state (after 1920) the *educational and administrative philosophy* it was changed on the basis of the French-model, which has the next recognizable features in this period:

- Highly secularized and laicized higher education system.
- Establishment of several discipline-centered and specialized institutions.
- Suppression of the church-related higher learning on theological education.
- Centralized educational governance, strong state-control over the political and ideological issues in private and public education. State-control over the doctrinal and curricular issues of the church-related higher education.
- State-monopoly over the decisions, where the churches may appear only - if altogether - in the consultant position (e.g. there are no agreements between the churches and the state relating the education). Despite of this the state decisions are compulsory for the private (church-related, independent, non-state) higher education also.

This educational policy concept it was “triumphed” and finished by the socialist dictatorship when the whole higher education systems were forcefully laicized and secularized. The atheism was state imposed and taught in such compulsory courses as “Scientific Atheism” or “Scientific Socialism”, and the *freedom of conscience* or the *religious freedom* (declared in 1568 and practiced for centuries in Transylvania) become “unknown” terms in the political-administrative thinking. These processes moved away the whole scientific and higher learning community from the religion, democracy and value-pluralism. Between 1948-1989 there remain only a few number of church-maintained theological institutes exclusively for the training of clergy in a very narrow structure for the main Christian churches (in the meantime established Evangelical and Greek Catholic churches was declared illegal).

The Dimension and Classification of Romanian Church-related Higher Education after 1989

The fall of the communist regime brought about itself the transformation of the society, the political structure and the educational policies. The secondary and higher education reforms starts immediately after the revolution where one of the main priority it was the *content and curricular change* (Bîrzea 1995, 1996) with the *reintroduction of the religious courses*. Similarly, there has been reintroduced to the Constitution the religious freedom and the right for free affirmation of the ethnic-religious identities, which makes possible the return of the Christian churches in the *public sphere and education*. However, the main promoter of the expansion of church-related higher education was the *ideological change in the higher education policies* and the previously *restrained educational expansion*. The international financial organizations pressed the Romanian governments toward the *liberalization and reintroduction of the private stake* in the higher education. This movement radically changed the whole institutional landscape, and in the aspect of church-related higher education we can report a transformation without precedent. There were establish some (*Western, Anglo-Saxon*) *institutional types* unknown antecedently in this part of the European continent e.g. church-related liberal arts colleges, Bible colleges and finally partly-comprehensive, teaching universities. The most important generator of the increasing number of institutions it was the reduced and state-controlled higher education enrollments under socialism according to the Table 3.

Table 3. Gross enrollment ratio – tertiary level – Central and Eastern Europe

Country	1985 (%)	2001 (%)
Romania	10	55,5
Bulgaria	18,9	40,1
Czechoslovakia	15,8	29,8 – Czech Republic 30,3 - Slovakia
Estonia	24,2	36,4
Hungary	15,4	59,3
Latvia	22,7	39,8
Lithuania	32,5	64,3
Macedonia	24	59,1
Poland	17,1	24,3

Source: Slantcheva 2007: 59.

The democratization occurred not only in student enrollment, but in the broadening of educational programs offered by the church institutions. The most significant difference in this respect, compared to the pre-communist period can find in the *increased engagement for training of laity* in several liberal arts and professional areas, and in few vocational program offerings. These colleges and universities for lay education function as *independent institutions*, with *private legal status* in Romanian legal terms. Their primer focus is on teaching at undergraduate level, and as higher learning communities they can be characterized as *small and medium sized* institutions.

After 1989 there we can separate *three different movements* in church-related higher education, which transform the profile of the sector:

1. *Integration*: After the political transformation it was restituted the secularized independent theological institutions to the churches, but there were founded several faculties and institutes in addition. The autonomous institutions affiliated especially to the Orthodox, Greek and Roman Catholic church has been chose to become integrated into the state-system of higher education (state universities), as theological faculties. The Protestants choose to sustain their relative autonomy from the state controlled education.
2. *New-born independent institutions*: There were founded several new independent discipline-centered (theological) and partly-comprehensive higher learning institutions, who are affiliated especially to the traditional and Evangelical Protestants. These are unfamiliar in the Romanian education system and follow the “educational logic” of the Atlantic-type establishments: residential or local initiatives; community colleges, university-colleges and teaching-intensive universities for lay and religious education of Congregational, Presbyterian and Episcopal (especially Protestant) churches.
3. *Bible college movement*: Immediately after 1989/90 there was a great “explosion” of the Bible colleges (affiliated exclusively to the Evangelical Protestants), but the enactment of the 1995/84 Education Law and the

accreditation² pressures has moved them on the margin of the educational system, because the majority of them could not receive authorization for legal functioning. However, some institutions survive this attack as they were able to make compromises in their functioning (e.g. to transform in university) and curricular aspects. Nowadays still there exist a very few number of Bible college unrecognized by the state and without degree-granting right. Some of them provide education in one or two years programming, as affiliated to foreign institutions through which they are able to provide degrees.

Taking in consideration the above mentioned aspects of educational change we can classify the church-related institutions in the next types:

1. *Theological faculties*: They are exclusively state-financed units of the public universities, whose governance in the unit level going on the basis of the legal framework elaborated by the state, where the churches has control position only on the faculty level. They provide education in undergraduate and graduate level in theology and their branch of study, especially for the training of priests, teachers of religion (didactical theology) and social workers (social theology). Their size is diverse, however generally they fit into the small size unit condition with a student body ranged from 40 to 250 people.
2. *Theological institutes and divinity schools*: They are private, church-sponsored small institutes for theological education of the priests, teachers and social workers, where the governance is formed – usually – from churchmen's and religious lay academics. They provide university level degrees, but there are graduate studies in a more narrow structure than in public universities. The recognition has two sources: (1) state accreditation by law, and (2) a. the obtaining of the state authorization for legal functioning, and b. accreditation by an international association or board of church colleges and universities (e.g. in the case of Catholics, Adventists, and Pentecostals). In other aspects they are similar to the theological faculties.

² In Romania the accreditation of higher learning institutions occur in two phases: (1) Peer-reviewed accreditation – „permission for functioning” – through an independent board. (2) Institutional accreditation by Law through approval (vote) of the Romanian Parliament.

3. *Church-related universities*: In Romania there are only two church-related university, but in the most conflictual position. The predecessor of these ethnic and religious minority institutions it was in one hand a Calvinist liberal arts college, and in the other hand a Baptist Bible College which were transformed into university status between 2000 and 2003. They function in private legal status, co-funded by the churches and from public sources (not Romanian), and governed predominantly by lay professionaly and lay believers. The focus is on teaching, with some isolated research activity, and they provide education especially in undergraduate level. The diplomas are state-accredited by law where they grant degrees in semi-professional, vocational and liberal arts education.

Table 4. The description of the main features of church-related universities

NAME	PARTIUM CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY	EMMANUEL UNIVERSITY
LOCATION	Western Romania, Oradea city	Western Romania, Oradea city
YEAR OF ESTABLISHMENT	1990	1991
TYPE OF ESTABLISHED INSTITUTION	Community liberal arts college	Bible college
PARENT CHURCH TRADITION	Calvinist	Baptist
CHANGING INSTITUTIONAL TYPE	2000 (becoming university)	2003 (becoming university)
IDENTITY	Christian, nonsectarian	Christian, nonsectarian
LEGAL STATUS	Private	Private
SPONSORING ORGANIZATION	Foundation	Foundation
TRAINING STRUCTURE	Partly-comprehensive	Partly-comprehensive
LEVEL	Undergraduate	Undergraduate
EDUCATION FOR	Laity	Laity
FINANCING	Mixed (public and church funds)	Church funds
GOVERNANCE	Mixed (secular and religious)	Mixed (secular and religious)
SIZE	Medium	Medium

It is difficult to estimate the share of the above classified church-related institutions and units in the entire higher educational system since the legal status (private) envelop the church contribution. In the basis of our calculations (Table 5.) we can present statistics for the Christian³ church-affiliated institutions only of the number of the units recorded by the Ministry of Education.

Table 5. The church-related higher education institutional typology in Romania (%)

<i>Denomination</i>	<i>Theological faculty at one public university</i>	<i>Independent theological institutes and divinity schools</i>	<i>Independent church-related university</i>
ORTHODOX	100	-	-
ROMAN-CATHOLICS	42,8	57,1	-
GREEK-CATHOLICS	100	-	-
PROTESTANTS	33,3	33,3	33,3
EVANGELICALS	20	60	20

However, the non-accredited Bible colleges, church-affiliated specialized colleges and divinity schools (e.g. the Divinity School from Gyulafehérvár which is affiliated and accredited outside Romania by the Pontifical Lateran University) are not recorded by the Ministry of Education or other Romanian organizations. In addition, at several times they are declared under liquidation by the central education governance while these colleges and schools are continuously functioning.

Legal Status, Governance and Financing

The operation of the church-related institutions is ruling by two interconnected and contradictory law: (1) the *Law of Cults from 2006 nr. 489.*, and (2) the *Law of Education from 1995 nr. 84*, which provide legal framework for the interpretation of the relationship between the state and the churches, and central education governance and religious educational institutions. The *ecclesiastical laws* in this context have limited influence on institutions because the state provides compulsory regulatory enactments for the church-related (private, independent) higher education also. In order to understand this special and uncommon relationship between the state and churches – in post-socialist countries also – we must present some historical perspectives in the matter.

³ There are no information on other religions higher learning perspective.

In Romania from the years of the nation-state formation (beginning of the 20th century) the two legal statuses can be distinguished: *public* and *private*. The confessional schools has been received the private status, since there do not exist such division as in some Western countries where the church-maintained institutions formed special category in the legal framework. The *secularization* and *impropriation* of the institutions by the state has been starting in this period and not by the socialist regime. The consequence of these politics has principally affected the Transylvanian region, and its multicultural and multiconfessional education system. First and foremost it was attacked the specialized colleges of the churches identified with Hungarian minority (e.g. Roman-Catholics and Protestants) which has been secularized and impropriated in the period of 1920-1935 (those remained controlled by the churches kept private status), but no longer remained unharmed the secondary and primary school system as well. In a congress the Romanian teacher's organization manifest the next standpoint in 1922: "...*the confessional schools represent cultural and political tendencies which are foreign from the strengthening and consolidation of our nation.*" (Molnár 1999, 39 p.). This opinion is build upon the historical experiences brought from the Old-Romanian territories where the Orthodox Church does not maintain schools. In spite of of this, the educational policy concept regarding the confessional schools was constructed on this basis and on French educational model.

An important legal basis can be the *special agreements* between different churches and the state. However, there has been not signed bilateral Concordat's well-known in other Central-Eastern Europe (e.g. Slovakia, Hungary) in exception of one between the Holly See and Romania (1927), which has been denounced unilaterally in 1950 by the communist administration, and never restarted. The centralized and unilateral viewpoint of the church-state rapport it is visible in the *consultant-position* of churches in these frameworks. Additionally, these compulsory regulations are based on the claims of Orthodox Church tradition and regardless to other church organizations which could be very different from the above mentioned one (e.g. Catholics). One area of divergence is the education, where the Orthodox Church perspective is inadequate to set up the relationship between the state and other traditions. Since they have not provide traditionally religious education for lay persons and the theological education was

organized in secondary level, and recently their theological faculties function in secular universities, therefore the Orthodox Church has no interest to set up principles and assert influence in these special issues over the state⁴. The other traditions are religious minorities and are powerless without the intervention of the majority church.

In regard to the governance and financing of the church-related higher education there can be recognized various practices where can be make a clear difference between the theological faculties, theological institutes and divinity schools, and church-related universities. This distinction can be comprehended as two opposed points of one continuum between completely state- and entirely church controlled institutions.

1. *Theological faculties*: are governed adequately to the state and university principles.
2. *Church-related universities*: the two university (Congregational and Episcopal) obligatory set up their institutional Charta in synchrony with the framework provided by the Ministry of Education. However, there are some possibilities for the churches to influence the governance through the policy of university autonomy. As a result they establish governing boards (e.g. Advisory Board) for the enforcement of their authority over the compulsory structures formed from lay and professional leaders.
3. *Theological institutes and divinity schools*: they organize the governance in one hand in a very similar way as the secular institutions, and in the other adequately to their ecclesiastical orders. The governance varies accordingly to the legal status, permission of functioning and accreditation by law. Those institutions who do not solicit authorizations (e.g. some Catholic and Evangelical Protestant higher learning institutions) run their governance adequately to their ecclesiastical laws. The most different are the Catholic establishments which differs accordingly the founding church hierarchy (if existed) and type of institution. There are:
 - a. Theological institutes and divinity schools established and controlled by the (1) Holy See and (2) Diocese.

⁴ In the Parliament's Educational Commission and accrediting agencies there are not representative of the churches or other person who can deal with special demand of the church-maintained schools.

- b. The theological faculties integrated into the state-system of higher education function accordingly to the *Sapientiae Christianae*, while the independent institutions in respect to the *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*.

The financing of church-related higher education are in complete harmony with their status hence they are entirely privately-funded or church-sponsored institutions where the only exceptions - as a result of their public status – are the theological faculties.

Training and Curriculum Structure

In order to assess the training and curriculum structure of Romanian church-related higher education we must make once more institutional and denominational distinction between the studied units. The profiles of institutions are of two types in relation to the content and objective: (1) discipline-centered and (2) partly-comprehensiv, which is reflected in scholarship contents also. The denominational differences are weak; however there are some visible and substantial variations on respect to the sponsoring or founding church.

(1) *The discipline-centered training structures.* This category is formed by the theological faculties, institutes and divinity schools which offer professional and academic education in particular for the inside requests of the churches, as long as they train priests and in few cases teachers and social workers. In addition there are in master level at metropolitan public universities “religious studies” programs (e.g. University of Bucuresti), and numerous other master and doctoral initiatives based on the interrelation of religion and culture, state and the churches (historical perspective). Nevertheless, the training structures of these institutions are highly traditional and focused on denominational theologies than in interdisciplinary perspectives. The research institutes and the scholarship follow similar way in their interest and focus of study. The division of theological studies into Bible, church history, systematic and practical theology is very similar in Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox institutions. The Evangelical Protestants there are the visible exception with the high engagement to the practical faith-disciplines and less focus on dogmatic theology or history; this characteristic is deeply rooted in their

vision on higher education and their denominational tradition. Moreover, this dissimilarity has its source in the recent appearance of Evangelical churches in Romania: on one hand in the beginning of the 20th century (e.g. Baptist, Adventists) and on the other after the fall of communism. Consequently, these churches are highly committed to the mission and evangelization which suppose *practical focus* at the heart of faith-disciplines. Other existing curricular distinctiveness is visible at Catholic institutions with a strong engagement to the church heritage on theological, neo-scholastic and humanist education. The study period varies (e.g. the undergraduate studies are organized in 3+2 or in traditional 5 years without receiving MA degree) on the ground of the integration to the European Higher Education Area and soliciting of the state-accreditation.

(2) *The partly-comprehensive training structures.* The two church-related university grant undergraduate (3 year study program) degrees in professional, vocational and liberal arts areas. Their programs include education in languages and literature, social work, sociology, business and economics, visual arts and music, philosophy, and didactical theology. The curriculum design at the outset it was governed by the Christian principles and distinct Christian worldview. However, with the introduction of the accreditation and quality-control systems there was a strong pressure to abandon these principles and to set up the content accordingly to the public universities and central requirements. This type of central control over the private education has their roots not only in recent historical developments, but in the logic of the Continental and French referential models. In contrary to the Anglo-Saxon heritage, there the public sector it was defined superior (public interest) and the private education received residual functions (private interest). Furthermore, the churches were suppressed from the education in the process of growing expansion of national education systems, and their claim for universalism and unity. (Neave 2007)

Europeanization and Internationalization of Church-related Higher Education

The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) has been witnessed in-depth and multidimensional changes what occurred without any account by the elaborators and implementers to the church-related and religious higher education. On the other hand in

some Central-Eastern European countries (e.g. Hungary) has been carried out researches on the higher education of ethnic and religious minorities and their place in the formation of EHEA. In author's point of view, the viability of the church-related institutions depends on the capability to *integrate into the national higher education system* because the Bologna-process can help them in their development; if they cannot integrate thus they are jeopardized by the marginalization. (Kozma 2008) The integration may be conceived in terms of loyalty to the goals of national system of education, and the acceptance of state-control mechanisms (e.g. accreditation, quality-control) over the Christian perspective in education.

The Romanian integration (2005) in one hand to the EHEA and in the other to the European Union (2007) set up several challenges for the higher learning institutions affiliated to the Christian churches. First and foremost the Bologna-process is conceptualized by the educational governments as a national reform of higher education with primer objectives of the reinforcement of the national identity, and secondly, as an essential reintegration of the country to Europe. Therefore the reform process serves as an instrument to press the institutions towards acceptance of new waves of uniformity, homogenization and secularization. (Szolár 2008) In the next passages we will take a short look over the challenges started by the national interpretation of the Bologna-process.

The Romanian and church-affiliated higher education institutions has functioned in *dual system* prior to the reform. This landscape has deeply changed and unified since the college type of education has been disappeared (the church-related institutions for professional lay education were predominantly colleges). As a result of the reform, some of the colleges were transformed into universities. However, these institutions have preserved the teaching-intensive and community type education, but to this type of functioning the educational policies elaborated for universities do not fit. One recent development in this concern is the introduction of the teaching-intensive terminology in concepts for higher education policy. Those colleges (e.g. Bible colleges) who cannot transform their education to university-level has been marginalized and illegitimated by the central governances. The result of this practice is one national system of education which is monopolized by the university-paradigm.

In consideration to the above mentioned issues we can continue our review with other significant aspect of the reform: the *implementation of two-cycle structures*. This nature of change in higher education can be introduced without difficulties at university-level institutions; therefore this was an important generator of the above mentioned homogenization. The church-related universities, institutes and divinity schools have responded in different ways to the top-down claim for harmonization, accordingly to their educational traditions, legal status and the situation of state-recognition. The institutions that have not integrated into the EHEA sustain their own academic structure, where the most significant difference compared to those incorporated is in study-program periods (e.g. the undergraduate studies range from 4 to 6 years). This category of institutions is consisted of the non-accredited and - in few cases - unauthorized theological institutes and divinity schools. However, we need to mention that the state legitimation is only one side of the problem, because the possibility for these institutions to preserve their traditional structure is embedded in their status, as accredited and authorized not in national, but in international level (e.g. church-related college and university associations, or accredited partner institutions outside Romania). In addition, this international and European relationship provides opportunity for the faculty staff to gain degrees at foreign church-affiliated universities, and not at local public one, as the home institution grant degrees only in undergraduate level (the recognition of the non-accredited diplomas by other institutions which provide education at doctoral level is very difficult). In contrary to this, the state-authorized and accredited institutions form part of the national system of higher education and as a result their degrees are recognized in the whole system. Consequently, the students and faculty members do not face problems in the continuation of their studies at higher levels.

The *mobility of the students and faculty members* is other aspect of the current reform that needs to be addressed. The international mobility between church-affiliated institutions has long tradition in Romania: the higher education system it was construed on the basis of these experiences. Several different Western-European and ultimately Atlantic educational conceptions were borrowed and implemented in Romania. The influence of Western peregrinations can be revealed by the institutional case studies and the study of cultural aspects of higher education. The today developments in this matter

are similar to the historical experiences in the respect of church-affiliated higher education. However, this mobility in the age of public universities occurs especially inside of this academic culture where the exceptions are in one hand the theological faculties and in the other the private accredited institutions. The EHEA benefits especially the theological faculties of public universities what develops educational relationships not only for the student mobility, but for the international research networks. The mobility in other types, but accredited institutions means relationships predominantly at denominational level and identical programming since the credit transfer system it was implemented.

Summary

The Romanian political transformation creates the possibility for the churches to re-establish their higher education institutions. The re-appearance of the Church-affiliated institutions has an essential role in the rebuilding process of religious society and identity, through the formation of religiously cultivated intellectual elites and the development of a national higher education system based on pluralism. The higher education policies of post-socialist Romania stress these institutions toward a *new wave of secularization and nationalization*. The institutions with different denominational origins face distinct challenges, what is visible concerning their organizational models, legal and financing issues, academic culture, training and curriculum system. The Romanian denominational (Protestants and Evangelicals) and ethnic minorities (Hungarians) are the main promoters of autonomous religious and church-related colleges and universities, which can be conceived as institutional reflection of their identity. However, the national educational policies, the university-paradigm, the financial constraints and the secular aspect of European higher education still challenge the alternative institutions. These constraints press the institutions to abandon their mission for promotion of specific academic culture, institutional and individual identity.

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