Analele Universităţii din Oradea, Seria Geografie, Tom XIX, 2009, pag 7-16

ROMANIAN GEOGRAPHICAL HIGHER EDUCATION. DYNAMICS AND CHALLENGES

Ioan IANOŞ[1]

Abstract. ***Romanian Geographical Higher Education. Dynamics and Challenges.*** The present paper offers an example of the dramatic consequences due to a chaotic passage from the communist society to the democratic one, on the higher education system. The Romanian higher education simply exploded after 1990; the number of students increased eight times. An even higher trend was recorded by the geographical education: from 400 students to about 20 000. The causes of such an impressive increase were several elements, both objective and subjective. The first category includes the lack of teaching staff in the secondary education and of specialists in varied fields (territorial planning, tourism, cartography). Among the subjective factors, mention should be made of: multiplication of the offers in the field geography (a higher number of universities with geographical departments) and the temptation of getting more easily a diploma than in the field of engineering or exact sciences (mathematics, physics, chemistry, and biology).

Key words: geographical higher education, dynamics, trends, Romania

Introduction

The present revitalization of the Romanian geography in the general context of the higher education and scientific evolution is due both to its involvement and recognition as a science able to contribute to an exhaustive and systematic analysis of the territory and to a better substantiation of the decisions taken for a better territorial development.

Such a position has to be accompanied by an increasing responsibility of the actors in the Romanian geographical education, and of the institutions teaching geographers and able to get involved in the research. However, the greatest challenge is the very acknowledgement of the geography contribution to the sustainable spatial development. Therefore, the forthcoming response of the Romanian geographical higher education will be highly decisive either for its ascension or decline in the future. Practically, that is the very key of a geographer's being recognized or approved as a professional, given his/her proper education according to the market demands.

Several characteristics of the present legal frame

In the first five years after 1990, the Romanian higher education evolved very rapidly and chaotically (Ianos, 2004), due to the following reasons: absence of a proper legislation; very high demand versus low offer (restrictions in the number of places in state universities); emerging conditions for private universities being created, similarly to any private company; intervention of the decision-makers for repairing the abuses recorded during totalitarianism; and pressure exerted in acknowledging the diplomas and confirmation of the doctor's or university degrees in the education institutions preparing party activists. The legislation in the field has continuously improved and several general characteristics can be distinguished.

[1] University of Bucharest CICADIT, Bd. Regina Elisabeta, no 4-12, Bucharest, Romania, e-mail: ianos50@yahoo.com

Complying with the European Union recommendations on a unique space of the higher education. The Romanian geographical education is in full restructuring process since the whole Romanian education has to implement the so-called "Bologna process". The first series of the 1st cycle graduates – following the new three-cycle structure: Bachelor's (3 years), Master's (2 years), and doctoral degree (3 years) – finished school at the end of the academic year 2007–2008. The implementation started with the adoption of the Law on the structure of the academic curricula (2004) that completed the Education Law no. 85/1995. The education quality law, adopted in 2006, brought some new elements able to continue the improvement of the system for assuring the curricula quality at all levels and got rid of the elements that mixed it up.

Distortions generated by a superficial legislation promoted for the image of the national-level decision-makers. A general confusion, determined by the academic regulations promoted after 2005, partially compromised the implementation of a three-cycled education. The following elements are worth enumerating:

a) *Structuring the 1st cycle according to specializations, not to fields*. According to the Government Decision on the Bachelor's degree fields and specialization, the 1st cycle is structured on specializations – in disagreement with the general recommendations made for the implementation of the "Bologna process". Had such recommendations had only specified the Bachelor's degree fields, without restricting the academic education with imposed specializations, the curricula would have opened new vistas for the graduates, by all means. They would have received a general education in a broader field that could have enlarged the range of further specializations by vocational, research or interdisciplinary masters;
b) *A too limited range of the optional disciplines*. Irrespective of the 1st or the 2nd cycles, the students have too few options for the disciplines they are interested in and only in their field of study. The optional educational offer restricts the wish of the students in a field to acquire knowledge in another field they feel attracted to. Likewise, because of the present budgeting system, extra credits, above the minimum promotion threshold, are only allowed with great difficulty;
c) *Incoherence of the teachers' training system that does not offer a "teaching profession"*. At present, the secondary-education teachers are not trained through a unitary, continuous, and coherent system able to confirm a teaching profession. Inconsistent accumulation of credits in the 1st cycle (30 ECTS) and in the 2nd one (the remaining 30 ECTS), or after that, is highly contra-indicated for the way in which the teaching practice is made and the graduates' didactic qualities are assessed;
d) *Illogical transition, by governmental decision, to the programs of master and doctoral studies*, before having graduates of the previous cycle/cycles. The consequence of such a distortion is the first series of doctoral graduates in 2008, according to the Bologna-type provisions, although the first master graduates (the 2nd cycle according to the same system) will have obtained their diplomas in 2009 only. Just another characteristic of the Romanian advance by leaps and bounds in an attempt to demonstrate that the decision-makers are determined to start promoting reforms "even before the absolutely necessary conditions have been created!" In fact, the PhD students who had to complete the dissertations that had committed themselves to do succeeded with great efforts only. Such a rush, logically unjustified, was generated by the decisions of those education officials who wanted "to write history". Unfortunately, other state bodies as well failed in understanding the prejudice against the Bologna system that imposes a certain unitary vision along the cycles.

e) *A unitary education system, with different units of measure*. The new legal regulations, according to which the Education Law (Law no. 85/1995) was modified, created an inconsistent vision on the higher education system as a whole: there is a difference of opinion between the private universities and the state ones, respectively. Moreover, the two-headed managements, certified by law, rest with the universities. Beside the rector, a university may also have a president; unfortunately, their competences frequently overlie. Such a management, in which, more often than not, two leaders have different attitudes, can only have a negative impact on the university performances. If such a structure is met in few state universities only, in the private ones it has become the rule.

The different units of measure, met in the two types of universities (state and private), make the process of the curricula evaluation rather difficult. The agency created for assessing quality (Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in the Higher Education – ARACIS) is independent and is still growing up and gaining experience. The legal frame coordinating its activity is extremely contradictory. For instance, private universities are favored since their didactic staff may include rather aged professors (no age limit). On the other hand, the didactic staff in the state universities cannot be older than 70 (the retirement age is 65).

A short history of the geographical higher education

Following the Second World War, the geographical higher education was extremely dynamical and unambiguously focused. Until 1989 it was mainly oriented to cover the teaching staff requirements in the secondary education (Pop, 2000). In the evolution of the geographical specializations the stability and instability intervals alternated. Instability characterized the 1948–1965 period. Geography was combined either with history or with natural sciences – biology or geology. Geography had two distinct qualifications: hydrology (five-year courses, with graduates in 1958 and 1959) and physical geography (five-year courses, with graduates in1960–1969). After 1968, the geography specialization (four- and five-year courses) was initiated and it has continued up today. For a while, it coexisted with history-geography specialization (three-year courses, until 1984). The first series qualified in geography – a foreign language (English, French, German, and Russian) graduated in 1982 and the last one graduated in 2008.

The number of the students in the field increased impressively in the 1950s and 1960s, decreased suddenly after that, and recorded a constant level then: less than 100 graduates per year between 1971 and 1993. According to the territorial distribution, they were enrolled in the three great universities in the field: Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, and Iaşi.

An evolution model of the Romanian geographical education after the Second World War would identify several bifurcation knots, determined by important political decisions. Therefore, there was a first very short period, 1945–1948, when the geographical education continued the interwar tradition. The Education Reform in 1948 was an important landmark, when all the interwar university teachers were excluded to be replaced with communist activists, the greatest part of them sympathizers of the ex-Soviet Union. The quality of those teaching in university suddenly dropped, since famous professors (Simion Mehedinți, Vintilă Mihăilescu, Ion Conea, and others) were replaced by secondary school teachers from all over the country. At the same time, the curriculum was radically replaced by another, containing new courses of study (geography of the socialist countries, Soviet Union geography, political economy, Marxism-Leninism, etc.). Some others, such as cultural geography, geopolitics, human geography, etc. were removed. The physical geography courses were kept, even multiplied.

The first important opening in the new structure appeared much later, in the mid 1960s, when the Soviet Union geography and Marxism-Leninism courses were eliminated; the latter was replaced by scientific socialism. At the end of the 1960s, a course in geography of the population and human settlements was introduced. The subsequent evolution was rather linear for almost 20 years, until the end of the totalitarian regime. Starting with the 1990–1991 academic year, the curricula were significantly changed, and some of the disciplines removed in 1948 were introduced again: social geography, cultural geography, geopolitics, urban geography, etc.

University autonomy allowed the geographical departments in Romania to organize their curricula according to their teachers' wish of change, to the professors' competence to implement a genuine reform both in selecting and promoting the staff and in the education process and scientific research. A rapid change took place in the geography departments of the Universities in Cluj-Napoca and Iaşi that reconsidered human geography, rather marginalized during communism. Other universities went on with their "tradition" of physical geography that was better staffed and became more dominant in the curricula.

After 1990, two stages could be individualized in the Romanian higher education (Rotariu, T. et all., 1997): a) a reparatory one, with two well defined targets – to rehabilitate social sciences and to largely promote all the teachers to higher positions; b) a renewal one in an attempt to align the teaching process with the European one. Geography experienced both stages: both a certain rehabilitation of human geography, seen as a social science (a bourgeoisie science during communism), and a renewal effort. The process has been also prompted by the increasingly frequent contacts of the Romanian geographers with the specialty milieus in the developed countries that also emphasize how important the human geography studies are. This explains the equilibration of the two geographical fields in the profile universities of Cluj-Napoca and Iaşi, the promotion, from the very beginning, of a balanced structure in the new geographical departments in other university centers (Timişoara, Craiova, or Constanța), and even a slight change in the most conservative one in the geographical field, that in Bucharest.

Dynamics of the number of students and university teachers in the geographical field

In the last academic year of the totalitarian regime (1989–1990), there were about 400 geographical students at a national level since only 100 used to be admitted each year. These figures were unchanged during the 1974–1990 period, thus creating a shortage of several thousands specialty teachers. In villages mainly, their place was taken by secondary-school graduates, hence the very poor quality of the primary-school graduates. However, the things were better in the secondary school where geography was taught at a high level indeed. On the one hand, that explained the great number of graduates who wanted to study geography (there were 20–25 students/available place), and the very good grades got by the first rejected candidates. However, mentioned should be made that higher education during communism was generally reserved to a select few. The extremely small number of places granted by the state for each field led to an extremely tough competition among candidates (Damian and Ianos, 2002).

The number of geographical students kept increasing and reached an impressive number in 2006–2007: 19 440 (Table no. 1). "Impressive" is just the word because Romania has more geographical students than other countries with a higher number of inhabitants (Ianos et al., 2005). The USA, for instance, with 13 times more inhabitants than Romania, has about ¼ less geographical students.

Table 1. Dynamics of the numbers of students and graduates in the geographical field

Year	Number of students		Number of graduates
	Total number of students	of which: day education	
1989-1990	386	281	98
1990-1991	512	375	97
1991-1992	838	663	102
1992-1993	1589	1189	123
1993-1994	1682	1460	53
1994-1995	1878	1674	330
1995-1996	3659	2624	618
1996-1997	4417	3072	645
1997-1998	4853	4107	691
1998-1999	5396	4472	753
1999-2000	7009	6098	851
2000-2001	8212	6987	1182
2001-2002	9447	8063	1522
2002-2003	10326	8744	1820
2003-2004	13297	10528	1921
2004-2005	13585	11421	1967
2005-2006	15900	12950	2030
2006-2007	19443	13793	2555
2007-2008	18313	13501	?

Source: Romanian Statistical Yearbook, 1991,…2008.

Such a figure was reached following three major events, characterized by clear fractures or milder transitions. **The first event took place in 1990,** when the number of places in all the three great universities having geographical departments before 1989 – Bucharest, Iaşi, and Cluj-Napoca – increased all of a sudden; **the second,** following 1998 when, by changing the Education Law, the state universities were allowed to charge tuition fees; and **the third,** after 2002, when part of the private universities were accredited. The first consequence of the totalitarian regime being toppled was the re-establishment of the geographical departments dissolved in 1975–1980 in other universities than the three traditional ones: The West University in Timişoara, University of Suceava, University of Oradea, and University of Craiova. The Education Law was modified in 1998 under the pressure of the huge financial problems met by the Romanian universities. There where even cases when the universities had no resources to pay the salaries of the professorial staff. At the same time, the private universities, although officially permitted, were not accredited and therefore the education quality could not be guaranteed. The pressure of a great number of young people who wanted access to academic education forced the Government, and then the Legislative body, to envisage the possibility of recruiting fee-paying students, within the university enrollment capacity, for each of the specializations existing in the structure of the state universities.

That last measure, together with the universities being financed by institutional contracts with the profile ministries, revivified the universities economically. It was then that a decentralization process started alongside an increase of the university responsibility in administering its funds. A higher autonomy, exaggerated sometimes, created a gap between the funds administering freedom, the whole didactic/research process, and the responsibility of the decision-makers. The effects: favoritism manifested in appointing the university teachers, a mediocrity atmosphere, and frequent law infringements.

Starting with 2002, gradually and by separated laws, 19 private universities were accredited, and then in 2005, other 10. The accreditation increased the number of geographical students as well. Only five of them have geographical academic education: “Spiru Haret” and “Hyperion” Universities, both in Bucharest, “Vasile Goldiş” University

in Arad (Baia Mare branch), "Dimitrie Cantemir" Christian University in Bucharest (Sibiu branch), and "Dimitrie Cantemir" University in Târgu Mureş.

Dynamics and distribution of the university centers with geographical academic education

As already mentioned above, the territorial structure of the Romanian geographical education was extremely simple before 1989; there were only three university centers, the greatest in Romania: Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, and Iaşi. They were also the venues of the three greatest Romanian geographical schools. Immediately following the removal of totalitarianism, some other smaller universities with higher education institutes before 1975 – specialized in training geography and history teachers for the countryside – re-created their geography departments. Therefore in the 1990/1991 academic year, new geographical higher education centers appeared, thus covering wide geographical areas: Timişoara for the Banat, Suceava for Bukovina, Oradea for Crişana, and Craiova for Oltenia (Fig. 2).

At the same time, the first private institutes of geographical higher education were opened in two private universities: "Spiru Haret" University in Bucharest and "Dimitrie Cantemir" Christian University, the Sibiu branch.

Starting with 1992, new state universities were established, following Government decisions; they included, from the very beginning – academic year 1992/1993 – geographical departments: Valahia University in Târgovişte. Gradually, some other geographical departments were created, both in state universities (Constanţa and Galaţi) and in private ones ("Vasile Goldiş" West University in Arad, with branches in Baia Mare and Arad; "Hyperion" University in Bucharest, "Dimitrie Cantemir" University in Târgu Mureş).

Thus, the number of universities having geographical academic education increased from three to 14, being grouped in 12 university centers – closer to the potential clients by a more equitable territorial distribution.

The structure of these universities, according to the number of students and ownership, indicates a greater weight with the state universities. The same dominant structure is also characteristic of the teachers – the gap is definitely in favor of the state universities.

Analysis of the teachers' age structure shows a high average in the case of the private universities, where the professors retire at rather old ages (when the Senate of the respective university finds it proper). In state universities, the age average is rather acceptable. A decade ago, the age average in the latter was very high, but after the retirement (according to law) of the main contingent of professors, aged 65–70, the age average is less than 45.

Geographical curricula

Physical geography-dominated traditions. The Romanian geography inherited a structure highly dominated by physical geography. The totalitarian regime was always very reticent on the development of human geography that could have revealed numerous distortions of the "harmonious development policy" implemented all over Romania, for example. Likewise, too many geographers specialized in human geography could have determined a transition from the geography of population, settlements, land use, and industry (tacitly agreed upon, by the a posteriori involvement in the development processes) to the social, political, electoral, cultural, etc. geography. Since the works in these fields were risky for the then regime, such inoffensive geographical branches as those dealing with the analysis of the space natural components were promoted.

The mentioned structures were inherited in democracy and therefore it was expected for the physical geography representatives in traditional centers to promote a

policy for supporting it, mainly in the strongly conservative universities. If the universities in Cluj-Napoca and Iaşi were more dynamical, achieving a balance between the two geographical branches, the Bucharest University has continued being centered on physical geography.

In the new geographical departments of other Romanian universities, the geographical studies curriculum provided a balanced ratio between the two branches from the very beginning, thus explaining the spectacular leap they made; for instance, the departments of the universities in Timişoara and Oradea, mainly.

The Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in the Higher Education recommended, following extended debate of the specialists in geography, that the curricula structure should start from the work force dynamics. This shows a relative saturation of the market with secondary education teachers, but still an important demand in such fields as tourism and tourist activities, urbanism and territorial development, territorial statistics, hydrology, meteorology, cartography, and GIS. Therefore, a new philosophy should be formulated for the curricula. The majority of faculties or profile departments start structuring their 1st cycle curricula from the specialization of the teacher; thus, the graduate often accumulates incoherent, useless, or even contradictory knowledge. However, there is a new trend, rather obvious, in which the decision-makers in the field start from the competences, volume, and structure of the knowledge a 1st cycle graduate should have, to continue the 2nd cycle, and to get integrated into the work-force market, respectively.

General structure of the curricula. The general structure of the curricula follows the structure of the academic year, with two semesters – six weeks each (the latter one is usually 2–4 weeks shorter). The average number of the classes/week is 22–26, ranging as a function of the geographical school orientation and specializations. According to law, the ratio between the classes and applied activities is 1:1, with a slight deviation of ± 20% depending on the specialization.

The curricula are structured at two levels: one takes into account the specialization/field ratio; the other, the contribution of the included disciplines and training the graduates' competences and abilities. In the former case, the structure includes fundamental disciplines (the tough core of the field geography), specialization disciplines (students' orientation to various specializations), and complementary disciplines; the last ones include disciplines in varied fields meant to ensure the graduates' more rapid integration into the work-force market. In the latter case, the disciplines are grouped into three categories within the above-mentioned triad: compulsory disciplines (considered essential for a 1st cycle graduate in the field), optional (that enable the student to choose a certain specialization), and facultative – trying to encourage the student's predilection for a certain field or set of disciplines.

The ARACIS specific standards for the 1st cycle in the field geography consider 14 basic disciplines, covering almost equally the sub-fields physical geography and human geography. The specialization disciplines range between 7 – for cartography – and 17 – tourism geography. The other specializations include the following: hydrology and meteorology – 11, territorial planning – 13, and geography – 15 disciplines. There are 4 complementary disciplines (general geography, quaternary, GIS and remote detection, demography), plus the foreign languages and physical training.

According to the specific of the geographical school, each department and faculty can introduce some other disciplines considered relevant to the graduates' training, in view of the regional or local needs, as well. The specialization disciplines recommended for the field geography and grouped around specializations are suggestions only, and have produced a qualitative discontinuity in relation to the descriptive tradition of the Romanian geography exclusively focused on training geography teachers in the totalitarian regime.

In keeping with the ARACIS recommendations, a curriculum structure includes compulsory disciplines and practical activities with a total of 150 credits (minimum standards – 83%) or 120 credits (reference standards – 70%); **the rest of 30, 60 credits, respectively,** are taken from the **optional segment,** at the student's free choice. Although the optional disciplines are rather difficult to organize, they should assess the didactic and scientific results of the university teachers, the possibility of doing postgraduate studies in master's degree programs, and the requirements in the work-force market, as well. The number of students in the optional study groups should comply with the norms in force; the selection will be made according to the results got in the previous year or to some other differentiating criteria (the results in some other disciplines related to the main one, for example). The student's genuine possibility to choose one of the suggested variants, so that 30, or 60, respectively credits could be get according to his/her wish, is an important aspect indeed in evaluating the curriculum structure.

The general structure of a curriculum includes the following types of disciplines:

a. ***fundamental*** (50–60%), defining the field of study attended by each student, which will be structured around compulsory, optional, and facultative disciplines;
b. ***specialization*** (25–30%), mentioning the compulsory, optional, and facultative disciplines; these disciplines orient the student to the professional or/and scientific aspects proper to the Bachelor's degree;
c. ***complementary*** (10–25%), mainly from the fields belonging to exact and natural sciences, grouped in compulsory, optional, and facultative disciplines.

The curricula include distinctly, with associated credit points, the students' ***practical activity.*** It takes place compactly or modularly, for 2–3 weeks, starting with the second year of the Bachelor's degree studies. At the same time, considering the specific of the disciplines requiring ***field activities,*** they are either included in the practical activity or in the practical works of some disciplines; in the latter case, the student will be exempt from the usual activities in classes or laboratories for a period equivalent to the time spent during the respective field activities. The curriculum distinctly contains the ***preparation of the degree paper,*** with a corresponding number of credits, but no more than 15.

The 2nd cycle, represented by the master's studies programs, includes about 50% of the 1st cycle graduates. Generally, three types of such programs could be individualized: research, interdisciplinary, and vocational. The first category, the widest one, attempts to detail research in geography (more thorough studies in geography), in tourism geography (the most frequent ones center on tourism and regional development or on tourist management), in territorial planning (management of urban and rural localities, strategies of territorial development), in environment geography (management of the coast areas, dynamics of the sub-air space, changes in the environment and development), etc. The second category is met accidentally, and the third one is not clearly defined yet because the present legislation acknowledges only sport and art masters to be vocational. In fact, there are very many masters with no scientific or interdisciplinary character (those training execution specialists: hydrologists, meteorologists, cartographers, GIS specialists, etc.).

The curricula structure for the master's programs has a common core of disciplines – resuming some of those taught when the Bachelor's degree lasted 4–5 years and left aside when the 3-year cycle was initiated, and some new ones, specific to each master's study program.

The 3rd cycle functions within the doctoral schools, established in 2005, only in the universities that have, by Minister's order, the right to organize doctoral education in the field geography. There exist five doctoral schools in Romania: University of Bucharest, "Babes-Bolyai" University in Cluj-Napoca, "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University in Iaşi, University of Oradea, and later, the West University in Timişoara. The first year is dedicated to completing

the specialty knowledge and initiating in research, and the following two to further research for preparing the doctoral dissertation focused on a specific subject. There are day-doctoral courses that last 3 years and extra-mural ones, 4 years.

Response of the Romanian geographical education to the society needs

The geographical departments or faculties seem to be mainly focused on training teachers for the pre-university education; however, the **majority of the graduates work in other fields than education.** Such orientation of the "graduates' production" to other fields than education makes geography a very attractive field, thus explaining the students' option to it.

On the one hand, the geography attractiveness is explained by the range of its specializations, and, on the other, by the existence of a market still needing specialists in such fields as: territorial planning, tourism, meteorology, hydrology, cartography, cadastral survey, etc.

In 2001, a Government Decision stipulated the following specializations in the field geography: tourism geography, territorial planning, meteorology-hydrology, cartography, environment geography, and geography. According to these specializations, in 2005, the job classification in Romania added the following occupations: territorial analyst, for graduates in territorial planning; tourism analyst, for tourism geography; and environment analyst for environment geography. At the same time, according to a new Government decision, the environment geography specialization was taken over by the environment science field. The term "field" is rather inappropriate since there are several environment sciences, not just one. Therefore, the field should have been called environment sciences.

However, due to the 3-cycle structure of the Romanian education, a part of the above-mentioned occupations are only valid after a master's graduation. Rapid updating is a must so that the graduates in the field geography will not be hindered in looking for jobs.

An extremely fruitful field is territorial planning. In Romanian, the meaning of territorial planning is different from English where no such specific term for "organizing" the territory exists. Following discussion among geographers and urbanists (specialists in the territorial organization included) the relation between the two concepts was clearly individualized. Territorial planning was defined as including all the specific operations preceding the elaboration and implementation of the territory organization plan at different levels. All these versions are finalized by working up local, regional, or national development strategies out of which the decision-makers will select one. That version will then be the guide used by the team responsible for drawing up the territory organization plan, according to the decision-makers' option and turning to good account part of the materials lying at the strategy basis. In this way, the urbanist will be able to better concentrate on building the territorial organization plan or the urbanism plan.

The Romanian urbanists are flexible and aware that the spatial development involves interdisciplinary cooperation among several fields. Therefore, according to a Government decision, some other specialists have the right to sign urbanism and territory organization documentations, following certain procedures. Thus, a geography graduate is allowed to be geographer-urbanist, provided that one of the two routes is followed:

- after graduating the 1st cycle they go on studying and prepare a master in the field of territorial organization; a minimum work portfolio is also required;
- if they prove that have worked in designing/research teams, together with urbanists, in at least 5 territory organization or urbanism plans and if they have at least 6 years' standing.

This is an opportunity since the demand for urbanism plans is very high in all the 3300 Romanian communes and towns; likewise, the various plans of territory organization attract more and more students to territorial planning specialization.

Conclusions

Therefore, the system of occupations and the concrete possibility of working in the field of territorial planning plus other opportunities offered by the job requirements of some central institutions in need of broad-minded specialists in the spatial development (statistics, regional development – both central and at lower levels) explain the greater number of geographical students in Romania than in the USA. The main questions raised by this situation are the following: May the exaggerated number of students influence negatively the quality of the geographical education? Do not the geographical departments lose their credibility, disregarding quality because of an excessive affluence of students? Does the present budgeting system allow the transition to a rigorous selection of the inputs? Does the professor turn into a mere clerk because of the insufficient time allocated to the research?

The answers to these sets of questions could be the topic of a future paper or of a debate because they depend on the way the higher education reform is going to progress in Romania. At present, several bills are under discussions; they try to make some changes, but the models suggested seem to be, in part at least, inadequate for the reception capacity of the actors in the Romanian society and in the higher education.

REFERENCES

Damian, R., Ianos, I. (2004), *Romania Country Report*, Black Sea Uuniversities Network, Tangarog University.

Ianos, I. (2004), *Invatamantul superior european si romanesc spre societatea bazata pe cunoaştere*, Buletinul Societatii Romane de Geografie, 2004, p.3-24.

Ianos, I., Braghină, Cr., Sarodoev I. (2003-2004), *Geographical considerations on the Higher Education in Romania*, RRG, tom 47-48, p.57-82.

Ianos, I, Braghină, Cr., Peptenatu, D., Zamfir, D., Cepoiu, L., Pintilii, R. (2009), *Geographical analysis of the higher education infrastructure in Romania*, Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai, Geographia, XXIII, 1, 3-26.

Pop, Gr. (2000), *Invatamantul superior geografic din Romania in ultimul deceniu al mileniului al II-lea*, Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai, Geographia, XIV, 2, 3-26.

Rotariu, T., Dan M., Pah, I., Veres, E. (1997), *Invatamantul superior intre inertie si schimbare*, in Nicolau, A (ed.), Câmpul universitar si actorii sai, Collegium Polirom, Iasi (p.173-187).

Vlăsceanu, L. (2008), *University and reflexive modernity*, Transylvania University Press, Brasov.