

## **ASPECTS OF ETHICAL MANAGEMENT IN TODAY'S EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES**

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### **Abstract**

*The present paper is a theoretical one. Firstly, this paper attempts to reveal to what extent the 21<sup>st</sup> century universities – with all the characteristics of this period - are concerned about ethical problems.*

*And if universities are still concerned about this issue, this paper aims to point out to what extent universities are able to create their own values and to transmit them to the others within the present context in which there is an unprecedented interdependence of social domains, a fact which generates negative effects on their autonomy.*

*There are ethical problems in all universities, domains and societies. The question is how these problems are tackled and if there is a reaction to them or not. We are particularly interested in the young people's attitude. Do young people react to these problems or do they remain indifferent to the ethical problems existing in the academic world?*

*How do young people relate to the ethical problems in a society that underwent a long period of transition, and of anomie, too? Does ethics remain, like politics, a second hand concern for most of young people in our society?*

*The present paper also deals with important aspects of ethical management in universities. If we consider some European - including Romanian - research work on this issue, we can notice that they simultaneously present the educational managers' opinions and the students' opinions on the characteristics of ethical management in present universities.*

**Keywords:** *ethics, values, autonomy, ethical management, student.*

### **1. Introduction:**

Brief analysis of the 21<sup>st</sup> century education

*Motto: Education must /.../ be a continuous process of training human beings who are fulfilled as far as their knowledge, abilities, critical spirit and the capacity to act are concerned; education must allow individual development, the openness of every individual towards environment; it must allow the individual to play a social role both at work and in community (Delors Report, 2000, p. 14).*

The mentality according to which the main goal of education is to create adapted individuals and capacities that help them face market needs, competitive, conscious and disciplined producers is obsolete and deeply wrong.

Today, everywhere, so much the more in communist countries, where we often identify profoundly individualistic forms and a tight economic and political competition (sometimes quasi illegal or completely illegal), education is meant to contribute to the formation of a new and essentially ethical humanism. Ever since 2000, The Delors<sup>1</sup> Report pointed out that the pressure put by economic and political competition has determined many of those who had a decision-make position to ignore the universities' mission, i.e. “the mission of offering each one the means that are necessary to benefit to the largest extent from an opportunity”.

This situation is identifiable especially in the former communist countries, which underwent a long transition period, a period of anomie and of denial of morality.

In these countries and not only, many agree with the idea that there are solid and “multiple reasons for focusing again on the moral and cultural dimensions of education, so that each of us could perceive the others' individuality and understand the uncertain direction that the world follows towards unity (...); this process must begin with self-knowledge, with an inner voyage whose landmarks are knowledge, reflection and self-criticism.”<sup>2</sup>

Fast kinetics, technological and communication progress, the ever increasing globalization phenomenon are new challenges for education, which warn it about a paradigmatic modification in its approach. Trying to face this challenge, we can see that more and more perspectives have appeared, which clearly and insistently put the stress on the *training and moral dimensions of today's education*, and on the need to develop a moral society. The Delors Report comes up with these perspectives. Sharing the same vision, A. Touraine underlines the huge importance played by moral values in today's society. He considers that “today's <<IT>> and <<programmed society>> –”is a society in which moral categories play a central role, the role played once by political categories, being followed by the economic ones and, before modernity, by religious thinking”.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Jaques Delors, *Comoara launtrica –Raportul către UNESCO al Comisiei Internaționale pentru Educație în secolul XXI*, Polirom, 2000, pp:69-77.

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>3</sup> A. Touraine ,1992, p.414, dupa :[http://nou2.ise.ro/wp-content/uploads/2001/08/2001\\_Raport\\_cercetare.pdf](http://nou2.ise.ro/wp-content/uploads/2001/08/2001_Raport_cercetare.pdf)).

Other perspectives, and not differently from the first ones, point out the *role of education in creating individuals adapted* to technological changes, to the IT epoch and the globalized world, etc. According to these perspectives, taking into account the characteristics of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, education should insist less on information and abilities and more on the 4 C's: , i.e.: “critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity”. The educational system will be able to prepare young people that are capable of facing today's alert rhythm of changes only by developing the “4 C's”<sup>4</sup>.

The simple assimilation of the “4C's” may be enough for helping young people keep up with the world; however, nowadays, young people, like the young people of other times, aim at more than that. They are and they want to be the subjects of a new world, they are the ones who build a new and enduring world, at least we hope so. In accomplishing their mission, they need a 5<sup>th</sup> C, i.e. the ethical compasses, moral principles and values. Young people feel the need of having a moral basis and education that supports their knowledge.

The Delors Report upholds that education has for basic pillars: “Learning to know”, “Learning to do”, “Learning to be”, “Learning to be with the others”, offering a special attention to the last one.<sup>5</sup> However, one cannot have a good and pleasant life with the others if he/she does not learn to respect the moral values and norms of our society.

In conclusion, the educational act – at all levels (including the academic one) – should not be a simple transfer of knowledge, but it should also imply an assimilation of values. Education should draw our and the others' attention and make us and the others aware of the ethical mission the the act of “being together” involves us in. In other words, the mission of universities is not only to produce and transmit knowledge and landmarks, it is not only to train specialists and researchers, but it is also to create cultivated and civilized persons, persons who have a beautiful character.

Ever since 1943 Leavis has seen the univerty as “a a shelter of consciousness and humanity in the middle of the inhuman pressure and difficulties of the modern world, and a

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<sup>4</sup> Yuval Noah, Harari, 21 de lectii pentru secolul xxi, Polirom, 2018, p.262.

<sup>5</sup> Jaques Delors, op. cit.

center in which intelligence /.../ is able to apply an elaborated system of values and to dedicate itself to the problems of our civilization.<sup>6</sup>

## **2. Debates on university autonomy and the capacity of universities to produce and transmit values**

The importance of the role played by the university in producing and transmitting values, as well as in teaching the “right behavior” to the young generation, was the main topic of the Colloquium *Institutional Autonomy, Academic Freedom and Imposture in the Academia – Do Academic Core Values Safeguard Against Corruption?*, which was held in 2018 at the New Europe College in Bucharest. On the other hand, there are departures from a correct system of values and principles (bribery, extortion, favoritism, nepotism, salaries paid to “phantom” teachers, issuing false diplomas, etc.) “represent, maybe, one of the most malign acts that a society can do against itself.”<sup>7</sup>

As the principle of competition has started to prevail on social and economic thought, it is necessary for the university to maintain its position as a place where moral values and principles are cultivated, a fact which will be later seen in the common welfare, and also to remain autonomous, i.e. not to let itself be absorbed by the market mechanisms.

The capacity of universities to maintain their autonomy in relation to nowadays society, with its economic and political environment, and to produce and transmit its own values has made room to a series of discussion in specialized literature.

There are points of view<sup>8</sup> according to which universities do not appear to be institutions that are based on fundamental values, but as organizations which are limited to offer technical services, to voluntarily accept the values imposed on them by their main beneficiaries, especially by the government and the industrial sector.

Thus, ethical issues are endangered to become secondary rather than fundamental issues in modern societies, being directly linked to the main mission of the university. In

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<sup>6</sup> Leavis, F.R. (1943), *Education and the University*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

<sup>7</sup> Ana Maria Sirghi, Despre incredere si valoare in invatamantul romanesc si European, [http://www.marketwatch.ro/articol/16167/Despre\\_incredere\\_si\\_valoare\\_in\\_sistemul\\_universitar\\_romanesc\\_si\\_european/](http://www.marketwatch.ro/articol/16167/Despre_incredere_si_valoare_in_sistemul_universitar_romanesc_si_european/)

<sup>8</sup> Peter Scott, L’étique « dans » et « pour » l’enseignement supérieur, dans: L’Enseignement Supérieur en Europe Volume XXIX Numéro 4/ 2004, UNESCO-CEPES, pp:439-451).

this context, one can notice that, as to teaching, important debates, such as the ones related to the development of the curriculum, are replaced by debates on the policies and procedures that are meant to prevent or punish plagiarism among students.

The same situation can be noticed as far as research is concerned. The ethics of research is no longer concerned with the morality of military or commercial sponsorship of the research company; it is, instead, concerned with narrow issues, such as the technical ones, e.g.: presenting incorrect practices and maintaining an accurate research methodology.

Peter Scott<sup>9</sup> noticed that, besides the mitigation of ethical bases, the lower and lower intellectual level and traditional standards, universities are often criticized for their incapacity to act independently and efficiently as critical institutions of our society. However, according to him, presenting the real situation of universities today requires a more detailed description. Distinguishing between the elite universities and the ordinary ones, according to Peter Scott, the former ones have managed to maintain a critical distance from society – according to the general opinion. They have managed to develop their own values system – which are in line with the ones of our society, but which are, however, different – which they have spread through their research work and the scholarships offered to students, and, especially, thanks to their role in forming elites. On the other hand, the development of a knowledge-based society has led to the disappearance of the borders between politics, market, science and culture.

The university – one of the most dynamic institutions in the knowledge-based society – is among the most affected ones by this erosion. Thus, its success in solving scientific and social issues has also generated a loss of its autonomy. The autonomy loss has been greater in the case of mass higher education, which is „based rather on instrumental than liberal (or academic) values”, and which is „more oriented on professionalism and less on the scientific dimension”. One can speak about a loss of its capacity to generate its own and distinct systems of values.

A more subtle and more profound analysis – according to Scott – brings into evidence the fact that the relation between higher education and the knowledge-based society is

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<sup>9</sup> Ibidem.

much more ambiguous and complex. „The higher education institutions go across (..) knowledge-based society at different levels – starting with the advanced research and technologies that are developed worldwide, and continuing with professional and technical elite training, to finish with the training of the alumni that graduate universities. If some refer to an even deeper incorporation of higher education in the knowledge-based society, others, on the contrary, uphold the independence of the higher education system - or, if not its independence, the dependence of other social or economic institutions upon the higher education system (Scott, 1999).”

Professor Lazăr Vlăsceanu<sup>10</sup> - the Faculty of Sociology and Social Assistance, the University of Bucharest – considers that we must ponder over the link that exists between university and society without underestimating the idea of value and without encouraging imposture. He also considers that traditional academic values should neither disappear nor be misinterpreted.

As to the link between the capacity of universities to produce their own system of values, opinions are optimistic, trustful and expressed with courage. In fact, some studies demonstrate that higher education could not exist without such a set of values. Thus, we can speak about the existence of a set of values that are common to higher education, i.e.:<sup>11</sup>

- the commitment to search for the truth;
- the responsibility to share knowledge;
- freedom of thought and expression;
- the thorough analysis of proofs and the use of rational arguments when trying to reach a conclusion;
- the wish to listen to other points of view and to judge them in conformity with their value;
- considering the way in which our own arguments will be perceived by the others;

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<sup>10</sup> Ana Maria Sirghi, Despre incredere si valoare in invatamantul romanesc si European, [http://www.marketwatch.ro/articol/16167/Despre\\_incredere\\_si\\_valoare\\_in\\_sistemul\\_universitar\\_romanesc\\_si\\_european/](http://www.marketwatch.ro/articol/16167/Despre_incredere_si_valoare_in_sistemul_universitar_romanesc_si_european/)

<sup>11</sup> Ian McNay, « Valeurs, principes et intégrité : normes universitaires et professionnelles dans l'enseignement supérieur au Royaume-Uni », Politiques et gestion de l'enseignement supérieur 2007/3 (n° 19), pp. 45-71: <https://www.cairn.info/revue-politiques-et-gestion-de-l-enseignement-superieur-2007-3-page-45.htm#>

- the wish to consider the ethical implications of certain results and practices.

A research work <sup>12</sup> accomplished in Great Britain in 2007 reveals the young people's opinion as to the difficulties that universities encounter in manifesting their autonomy, in expressing academic values in relation to the traditional ones. This work points out fundamental aspects for understanding the ethical problems with which higher education confronts in its attempt to create and deliver values in our society. Of the key statements included in the questionnaire (with which British students partially or agreed or agreed on the whole), I have selected the ones that seem to be actual for the Romanian academic environment, i.e.:

- Higher education has lost its role of being a critical consciousness within society;
- The fear to “speak the truth to those who have power” due to the limits imposed by a culture of brutality and culpability;
- The pleasure of studying has diminished because attention is focused on developing the skills that alumni will need as labour force at the workplace;
- The integrity of research work has been doubted: through pressure imposed for publishing a paper prematurely or through commercial pressure or through pressure imposed by the sponsor's expectations (e.g. for project orders);
- Pressure imposed by performance indices has generated a certain lenient attitude at exams for maintaining high admission rates and for maintaining a high number of students;
- Less effort is made for developing an ethical consciousness and a feeling of civic and individual responsibility among students;
- The university concentrates more and more on the system and less on the people; thus, the human and passionate dimension that higher institutions used to manifest is lost;
- Competition seen as an ethical value has diminished cooperation among the academic staff;
- If higher education must serve the public welfare, then the latter is redefined as being economic competitiveness and wealth.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibidem.

- Defining and understanding what a mistake/a professional error is are understood today differently by the academic world, so that behavior which previously was unacceptable is now tolerated. This is seen among students, too (or especially) and also among academic staff (to a less extent, however).
- Nowadays, the students' behavior and expectations are more pragmatic; they are content to obtain a diploma/qualification.

In conclusion, students appreciate that the role of the universities as creators and suppliers of values in society has diminished. They doubt the integrity of research work and the capacity of the university to manifest its role of a critical consciousness within our society. They consider that the university is less implied in developing ethical consciousness and civic responsibility among students. Students think that the level of performance and their aspirations, as well as the pleasure of studying, have diminished considerably.

### **3. Aspects regarding ethical management in universities.**

Today, ethical exigence has become an integrating part of any institution's image, so much the more of an academic one. Actually, functioning on the basis of ethical values and principles is not just a premise, but also an essential condition for a university in its attempt to accomplish its mission and objectives.

Repeatedly breaking ethical values and norms leads to malfunctioning and seriously hinders academic activity. In order to avoid such a situation, drawing up an ethical code in the university – as it sometimes happens with some of our universities – is not enough. It is necessary to disseminate it within the organization, to make sure that it is observed and to solve the potential ethical problems that might occur; in other words, an ethical code serves to imply ethical management. We agree with D. Menzel, according to whom, “ethical management does not imply the control and sanctioning of the personnel's behavior, or pondering over the ethical issues at workplace. It is rather the whole set of actions that are developed by the managers in order to stimulate ethical consciousness and sensibility that

would finally protrude all the aspects of the organizational activities. It is, briefly speaking, promoting and maintaining a strong ethical culture at the workplace.”<sup>13</sup>

Ethical management – according to this author – can be approached in four ways: the first approach is based on *conformity (compliance)*, i.e. defining and imposing ethical rules within the organization; the second is the strategy of *including in the cost*, which consists of approaching all unethical actions as a cost factor that has to be deduced, mitigated or eliminated; the third strategy is *learning*, which lays stress on the ethical training processes and on the assimilation of ethical dispositions; the fourth strategy is the one of creating a *moral organizational culture*, which seems to be the most promising of all since it implies all the other ones.

In fact, things are more complicated than theory makes them see. Managers often face up with difficulties related to the possibility of clearly and concretely defining and measuring the morality of an organization. How can we describe an organization that is renowned for integrity? What are the principles according to which a moral organization functions?

C. MacNamara considers that<sup>14</sup> an organization is moral if it respects at least the following four principles: a. It naturally interacts with various beneficiaries and its basic rules make the beneficiaries' welfare be perceived as part of the organizational welfare; b. The members of the organization are extremely sensitive to the topic of impartiality: their basic rules stipulate that the others' interests matter as much as one's own interests; swindling and exploiting clients is their nightmare; c. Responsibility is regarded as being rather individual than collective; one cannot hide behind the organization; its members must be individuals that assume personal responsibility for their organizational actions; d. They regard their activities as objectives; an objective is an operating mode that is very much cherished by the members of the organization and that links them to the external environment.

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<sup>13</sup> D. Menzel, *Ethics Management for Public Administrators*, Sharpe, London, 2007, p.10.

<sup>14</sup> C. MacNamara, *Complete Guide to Ethics Management*, 1997-2008.

As it is the case with any organization, universities must define and assess their moral environment and identify the virtues that confirm its existence. According to Kaptein<sup>15</sup>, the existence of the following seven organizational virtues assures us that a university is moral:

- Clarity: the extent to which the university moral exigence in relation to the behavior of its members are expressed clearly, without ambiguities, as a set of rules or behavior directions within the ethical policies and procedures, as well as within informal discussions.
- Consistency: the degree to which university moral exigence in relation to its members' behavior is coherent and lacks contradictions and it complies with moral norms comprised in its moral policies and procedures.
- Accomplishment: the university sets up the moral behavior exigence that may be realistically attained by its members (if they have the necessary resources and authority to accomplish the responsibilities that have been assigned to them).
- Support: the university encourages its members to adopt an ethical behavior (respecting moral norms brings benefits to its members in their daily activities);
- Visibility: the university ensures the monitoring of immoral behavior, so that they could be identified and made known to the ones that can react against them;
- Critical attitude: the university ensures the formal and informal means whereby its members may openly discuss about the ethical issues and dilemmas that they face;
- Sanctioning: the university sanctions the breach of moral rules and rewards its members' moral behavior; sanctioning and rewards must be proportional to the seriousness of the breaches committed by its members, respectively with the merit of observing ethical rules.

An instrument devised to measure the “ethical climate” of an organization is the ethical audit. This consists of examining the ethical state of an organization in order to see whether it is necessary to adopt changes in its ethical policies. Organizations can be companies, especially the transnational ones (which often face up the conflict of values

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Muel Kaptein, developing and testing a Measure for the Ethical Culture of Organizations, apud.: Valentin Mureșan, Mihaela Constantinescu, *De ce avem nevoie de etică și integritate în mediul academic?* In *Etică și integritate academică*, ed. Universitatii din Bucuresti, 2018, pp:45-47.

belonging to different cultures), public administration institutions, ethical committees, programs of scientific research or social action projects that require financing within a competitive context etc.

Ethical audit identifies *the moral profile* of an organization, the factors that affect its reputation and the image that it has in the eyes of its partners and the public consumers. It is also the process whereby we measure the internal and external coherence of an organization's basic moral values. Ethical audit attempts to determine whether moral values and standards are applied, whether they are observed or not, whether the ethical objectives of an organization are met (internal control) and, on the other hand, whether the organization behaves responsibly and transparently with its partners, considering, when the case may be, cultural and value differences that may appear especially if partners are located in different countries (external control).

G. Rossouw and L. van Vuuren appreciate that “organizations undergo an evolution process, in the sense of enhancing the complexity of their ethical performance management”.<sup>16</sup> The authors identify five stages of ethical management evolution, starting with the level at which the ethical dimension is totally denied and ending with its total integration in the set of organizational activities. Briefly speaking, these stages are:

- The stage of *immorality*, of totally ignoring the ethical dimension of an organization. At this level, one can identify slogans like: “the most adapted one survives” (competition cannot be made with gloves), “we live in a world of wolves” (competition is blind), “educated guys stand in row” (ethical behavior is despised), “all that matters is rating (profit)”, etc.;
- The *reactive stage in which* managers realize that something must be done for avoiding the risks of an unethical behavior, whereas ethical competence totally lacks. The organizations that have reached this level “pretend to be ethical but their management does not comply with their set of ethical standards”. They formally adopted ethical codes but don't do anything with them.

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<sup>16</sup> G. J. Rossouw, L. J. van Vuuren, "Modes of Managing Morality: A Descriptive Model of Strategies for Managing Ethics", *Journal of Business Ethics*, 46: 389-402, 2003.

- The stage of *ethical compliance* implies the aware involvement of organizations in monitoring and managing their own ethical performance. In other words, “the ethical code does not have only the purpose of giving comfort to its beneficiaries, but also the purpose of becoming the standard/landmark that a company considers for measuring its ethical performance” (G. Rossouw and L. van Vuuren, 2003). The Code is also applied through disciplinary measurements and penalties that are imposed by the administration. The managerial goal is to prevent unethical behavior and to eliminate costs connected to such behavior, i.e. those behaviors that affect organizational reputation, e.g. scandals or frauds;
- The stage of *ethical integrity* is the one which ensures the internal assimilation of ethical values and standards. It requires special managerial competence – i.e. “forming and implying values” in an organization. The aim of this stage is not only profit, but also the enhancing of ethical performance level, however, not so much by sanctioning unethical behavior, but rather by encouraging ethical behavior.

Organizations become aware that “ethical performance is strategically important and it is an asset when it comes to competition”, whereas managerial strategy “facilitates the internal assimilation of ethical standards by all its members of the organization”; (G. Rossouw and L. van Vuuren);

- The highest level is the one of *total compliance*, which is characterized by the integration of ethics for the purpose, mission and goals of an organization. Ethics is regarded as part of an organization, without which the latter cannot accomplish its goal and mission”. Ethical behavior is regarded as being strategically important, while unethical behavior is only seen as a threat for business success and also as an undermining of its reason of being. Ethical management is meant to reinforce morality as an *essential dimension* of culture and as an organization's goal. (G. Rossouw and L. van Vuuren, 2003).

Now that we have referred to the 5 stages of ethical management evolution in the universities, we wonder what stage(s) Romanian universities have reached so far. One

answer is given by V. Muresan<sup>17</sup> , who in 2009 made a research work based on a questionnaire related to ethical management in Romanian universities and companies.

Without pretending to be an exhaustive presentation, the study that this author wrote brings into evidence essential aspects regarding ethical management in Romanian universities, which still prevail today to a large extent. Thus, this study points out the awareness – of all interviewed subjects – of the importance that moral issues has for universities. Subjects are aware of the fact that observing ethical standards is good for the organization, as they are also aware of the fact that the university is morally obliged to its students. Most of those interviewed think that – in the academic world – there is a pro-ethic organizational culture. Unfortunately, the study also shows that this conviction does not correspond to reality. Here are some of the conclusions that the draws and that question the true existence of an ethical organizational culture in universities:

- All universities drew up an ethical code, however not because this was regarded as an internal need, but rather as an answer to a Minister's order. Many of these codes have an amateur level and are not drawn up by specialists.
- In order to put into practice the ethical codes, ethical committees have been set up in all universities; however, most of them focused on settling down litigation and not on applying and developing the ethical code (for example, by means of ethical training).
- Ethical training is either not done or it is insufficiently done – although this type of training is an important instrument for implementing the ethical code.
- Most universities lack a green phone number for recording the personnel's feedback as to ethical management.
- There are no moral consultants and neither counseling activities.
- There are no ethical audit activities.
- Ethical debates on moral university issues either lack or are not encouraged.
- Ethical criteria are not included in the promotion score sheet.

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<sup>17</sup> Valentin Muresan, Managementul eticii în organizații, Ed. Universitatii din Bucuresti, 2009,pp:64-68.

In conclusion, according to V. Muresan, “the development of moral critical, autonomous thought or the assimilation of ethical decision methods are not clear objectives of our universities; the exercise of public moral debates is also lacking, as the integration of moral criteria in university management is lacking.( ...). Romanian universities find themselves at the conformity stage in the happiest case, of course with differences from one university to another. This stage in the evolution of ethical management has rather a declarative value (....)”<sup>18</sup>

A more recent research<sup>19</sup> comes up with results that we are going to present in the next part of our paper and that on the whole include the same coordinates.

On the one hand, they reveal the existence of a positive perception on the part of managers as to their role and as to the academics' role in creating, developing and maintaining a solid ethical atmosphere in universities.

Other important problems were related to bribe, receiving gifts, nepotism in employment, evaluation of students and the language used by professors or secretaries, each of these issues showing that these aspects are seen by managers as rare phenomena. In other words, while managers tend to exclusively capitalize the positive aspects of an ethical environment, students tend to focus on the negative ones.

The research points out that there are ethical codes and committees in all universities, but, at the same time, ethical codes are poorly communicated through training sessions, debates, the support of specialists etc.

“The research revealed that managers in higher education system from Romania believe in their role as ethical models, but they are not really aware of the possibilities offered by a solid implementation of ethics management. They do not know very well the instruments they can use for raising the ethical level of their institutions (...).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>19</sup> Silvia Puiu, Radu Florin Ogarca, Ethics Management in Higher education System of Romania, in *Procedia Economics and Finance*, nr.23, 2015, pp: 599-603.

<sup>20</sup> Ibidem.

#### **4. Conclusions**

Contemporary society, characterized by kinetic acceleration, intensified globalization, an unprecedented progress in communication technology etc., challenges the educational system to reshape its mission and goals. The educational act – no matter the level of education we refer to – should not only aim at transferring knowledge, but also at teaching and at morally training people. Education should not only train young people that adapt themselves to the present and sometimes puzzling economic, political and social situation. Beyond transferring knowledge and developing abilities that are necessary for practicing a profession, for adapting to change, universities also have the mission to produce and transmit to the younger generation moral landmarks, values and principles. The university should not only train specialists and researchers; it should also form cultivated and civilized persons that have a good character and that are able to understand the ethical meaning of „being together”.

The university's role of accomplishing this noble mission depends on its capacity to preserve a certain degree of autonomy in relation with the other social domains. The principle of competition dominates today the social and economic thought; however, the university should not let itself subdued to the market mechanism and should not willingly accept the values that its beneficiaries (the government and the industry) impose. To preserve its position of an institution in which moral values and principles are cultivated, the university must preserve a certain degree of independence in society.

The relationship between higher education and the present knowledge-based society is complex, and to a certain degree, ambiguous. That is why it is difficult to establish to what extent can universities preserve their autonomy. However, we believe in the universities' capacity to preserve their autonomy, which is necessary for them to accomplish their goals. Without denying the influence of the other social areas on the university, we believe that the universities also influence them because they are an active subject in economic, social and political life.

We also consider that universities should continuously accomplish their role of a critical consciousness in society and that they should produce and distribute moral values and effects in society, no matter the difficulties that they might encounter; consequently,

ethical management strategies should be implemented in universities in general, and, so much the more, in the former communist countries, which underwent a long period of anomie and transition. This is also the case of Romania.

In this respect, research works reveal, on the one hand, a positive perception on the part of managers as to their role and the academic staff's role in creating, developing and maintaining a solid and ethical atmosphere in universities. According to managers, the observance of ethical standards is of good use for organizations; similarly, universities have the moral obligation to respect their students. In their opinion, one can speak of an organizational culture that is favorable to ethics in the Romanian academic environment because there are ethical codes and committees in all Romanian universities. Still, managers do not take into account the low level reached by our universities in communicating ethical codes by means of training sessions, debates and the use of specialists in ethics.

On the other hand, Romanian students have a more critical attitude because they bring into evidence certain drawbacks and shortcomings of the ethical university environment in our country and they underline the necessity of intensifying the implementation of ethical management with all the aspects that this implies.

If managers bring into evidence the role of ethical codes and committees in the universities, the students are more inclined to point out faulty behavior that they have experienced in the academic world, e.g.: incorrect scoring, the violation of the right to confidentiality, plagiarism, small gifts, the erroneous professor-student relationship (arrogant attitude, harassment, etc.).

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