

Great Rituals in Romanian Universities

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Abstract: *The study focuses on academic rituals as part of the university culture in Romanian universities. It also tries to highlight the role of ceremonies and public events organized in Romanian universities as communication instruments. It is known that the European university tradition was started by the first universities in Bologna, Paris, Oxford and dates back to the Medieval times. The exchange of students, their academic travel made it possible to establish common rituals. These rituals were taken over in Romania, and in this article, I will talk about the academic rituals taking place in Romania, more specifically at the Universities of Timișoara. Some of the great rituals whose role will be emphasized in this article are: the opening of the academic year, the awarding of the honorary title, the anniversary of the universities, and others. These are some examples of these common rituals and how they can mirror the country's culture.*

Keywords: *public events, ceremonies, academic ritual, higher education, Romanian university, graduations, transition, institutional identity.*

1. Introduction

Each university has a unique and cherished culture. This culture is born from the institution's history and is steeped in tradition. This tradition in turn reinforces that history and works to incorporate newcomers into the culture by instilling defined cultural values. A

university's culture, tradition, and values are not only important, they are vital to the wellbeing of the institution because they provide stability and continuity.

The culture of a university with its established traditions and values works to maintain this delicate balance. It provides a set of informal behavioral guidelines. It sets the parameters and monitors for compliance.

The annual celebration ceremony has become an important ritual when the university installs its newly appointed professors, celebrates honorary doctors, scientific award recipients, and the initiation of the first-year students.

In order to remain viable though, the campus culture must also evolve and adapt to meet change. A university is like a living organism. At times it grows adding new programs, constructing new buildings, and hiring needed personnel. At other times it is forced to modify its focus by the development of the digital technology.

In what follows, I will formulate a conceptual framework which will help me analyze and frame my case studies.

2. Research method

The object of the research involves four state universities in Timisoara, and their different fields, using an analysis table. In this analysis, I have used bibliographic research in order to develop a model of analysis and a comparative analysis of rituals and ceremonials as a research method. I will discuss the actors who participate at the ceremonials, the frequency of ceremonials, the purpose, the rituals that take place during the ceremony and how all this helps the institution to communicate.

After carrying out the analysis of the Politehnica University of Timisoara ceremonies and rituals, I will highlight:

- The impact of rituals and ceremonies as communication tools.

- The impact of the clothing chosen by students for the festive events.
- The actors, the frequency, the purpose, and the ceremonial items.

Thus, I will perform a comparative analysis of universities ceremonies and rituals, in order to identify the most important elements, the common points, but also those points that differentiate them, to highlight the importance and usefulness of the rituals, as communication instruments in the institutional identity.

3. Results

To illustrate the research, I will present the analysis for the Politehnica University Publishing House in Timisoara:

In order to highlight the solemn and formal character that UPT has, I have attached some pictures taken during the various ceremonies.

- a) Opening of the academic year:

In the Figures 1 and 2, it can be noticed that:

- The framework in which the ceremony takes place is a solemn one;
- The space in which the event takes place is an elegant one, suitable for a ceremony;
- Clothes are casual but decent for such an event;



Fig.1



Fig.2

b) Graduation ceremony:

In the third picture (Fig.3), we can see that both teachers and graduates have an elegant, formal and traditional attitude;



Fig.3

We also have elements to complement the picture of the graduation ceremony: the symbolic diploma, the roses and the clothing that is specific to this ritual.

In the fourth image, one of the most known and expected moments that take place during the graduation ceremony can be observed: the throwing of the hats.



Fig.4

The throwing of the hats symbolizes the end of the ceremony and the joy of graduating.

As a result of the above, the analysis table is represented as such:

Events/ Generic name	Participants	Frequency	Purpose	Ceremonial items
Opening of the academic year	Teachers and students - mainly students of the first year	Annual	The opening of a new academic year; Meeting the new students	University anthem, Gaudeamus, the speech of the Rector / Dean, administrative and organizational discussions
Graduation ceremony	Teachers, graduates, their family and friends	Annual	Celebrating the end of a stage (student life)	University anthem, Gaudeamus, speeches of teachers and student leaders of the year, special attire, handing over the symbolic diplomas, throwing the hats

Table 1

Rituals are defined as ceremonial activities that help define and represent social and cultural events organized on different occasions or changes.

4. Expert sources consulted

The topic addressed in this paper is part of the institutional field, highlighting how a university can use the rituals and the ceremonies as a communication instrument. Referring to these aspects, the bibliographic sources I have used are mainly printed books, but I have also used electronic sources (online books) such as: an article about *The role of ritual traditional clothing*. I have also read an article from The Guardian presenting the *Ceremonial duties*

One of the most important books used to write this article was that of Iuhas (2012: 20) that makes reference to Pascal Lardellier "who appreciates that the ritual noun is the ensemble of texts, especially from the tradition, which order the rules of rite organization" and for this reason the book *Univers ceremonial și mass-media: nunta ca rit de trecere*, helped me to understand what a ritual is. Also an important reference was represented by Cernicova – Bucă's book. According to her, "Among the resources used to forge, maintain and promote the identity of universities are the academic rituals, although they are not the sole vectors to be taken into account for the task at hand." Therefore, university institutions that use rituals and ceremonies as a communication instrument are actually involved in a dialogue with the public, and the subjects they want to transmit are related to quality

5. Conclusion

I began this article with a reflection on the relationship between public events, ceremonies, academic rituals, and institutional identity. Several universities rituals have played a crucial role in transmitting information through the way the events are organized, how the participants chose to dress, and especially through the speeches spoken by the guests.

First, in Romania are many types of graduation, depending on the school attended. Graduates wear traditional caps and gowns in school colors, and commencements are usually held in stadiums, large halls, or amphitheatres, depending on the size of the graduating class. Also graduates receive a diploma that symbolizes the degree to indicate their academic level. Family and guests in the audience are invited to attend the ceremony, and wait until the ceremony is over to applaud and congratulate the class as a group.

Second, our analysis suggested the growing importance of speeches supported by faculty deans and / or university rectors. In principle, at universities, the rector's speeches at numerous and glamorous public

events and rituals constitute and represent a process which is analyzed by both university staff and the external environment.

Third, we tend to think of school rituals mainly in terms of graduation ceremonies. I think rituals are important, and I mean rituals with a bit of pomp and pageantry. I value rituals because they mark our passages through the academic life, a time to bring people together to reflect and to appreciate the good in their lives.

Anthropologists will say that ceremony and ritual bind communities together in all sorts of ways. That is very true. And what is fascinating is that, at a time when you might think that many would want to row back from this mode of justification of the world, the demand seems to be the other way. In Romania, an interesting phenomenon is that graduation ceremonies seem to have become more popular over time, not less.

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