



THEOLOGICAL PENTECOSTAL INSTITUTE OF BUCHAREST

EXTERNAL INSTITUTIONAL EVALUATION REPORT

2014

Introduction

I was invited to join to the evaluation team of the institutional evaluation process of THEOLOGICAL PENTECOSTAL INSTITUTE OF BUCHAREST (ITPB) as an external evaluator for the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARACIS). The evaluation took place between Wednesday 28 May and Friday 30 May 2014. In this process as a foreign expert evaluator I was responsible for establishing an overview of the ITPB focusing on the continuous improvement of quality and development aspects with outlining the main dimensions of present and future challenges of the institution. Before the three day long visit I received the self-evaluation report of the institution. During my stay in Bucharest with the help of the colleagues of ITPB I had the possibility to insight the documentations and annexes of the evaluation process, and collect information about the institution. My report is roughly following the structure of the self evaluation report of the ITPB.

Background

The Theological Pentecostal Institute, Bucharest (ITPB) is an education institution which trains the pastors serving the Romanian Pentecostal Christian Denomination – the Romanian Apostolic Church of God. According to the census of 2011, the Romanian Pentecostal Christian Denomination has 362,314 members: almost 2% of the Romanian population is the member of the Pentecostal Christian Denomination which is the fourth largest church in Romania.

The Pentecostal Church have started to establish and run institutions of higher education in order to educate and train qualified personnel in the area of Pentecostal pastoral theology to meet the needs of the dynamically growing communities all over the

country and as well as abroad. The development of different education programs that serve the church has been an important objective of the Romanian Pentecostal Denomination ever since it was established.

Pentecostal education started after the II. World War in Romania with intensive bible classes organized in different cities of the country. These educational activities started again from the 1970s with the specific purpose of training Pentecostal pastors in Bucharest. After the political changes in the 1990s the educational activities organized by the Denomination became more and more intensive, and as result of the processes of professionalization and formalization, the Theological Pentecostal Institute was officially established in Bucharest in 1998. The Pentecostal Pastoral Theology program started in 2005, from the academic year 2005-2006. Since 2008 the ITPB is accredited as an institution of higher education.

Legal Framework, Mission and Objectives

ITPB operates as an accredited higher education institution where the Romanian Pentecostal Church is educating and training its ministers and pastors. According to the Law of Education No. 1 of 2011, ITPB and its study program is an integral part of the Romanian national system of education, and the Pentecostal pastoral theology study program offered by the Faculty of Pentecostal Theology is the only program of its kind in Romania. It is important to note that ITPB is also under the authority of the Pentecostal Christian Denomination – The Apostolic Church of God from Romania.

Pastoral/ministerial activity presupposes calling and vocation, as well as good spiritual formation and theological education. According to the self evaluation report of the institution, ITPB is focusing on to ensure a framework where the ministers (pastors, professors of religion, chaplains, theologians) of the Pentecostal Church are educated and trained, in accordance with Pentecostal doctrine and the statutes of the Romanian Pentecostal Christian Denomination, offering an academic context for theological research, demonstrating openness towards the wider society, and being concerned with

continuous education and scientific academic cooperation at local, national and international level.

To reach these aims the institution is permanently developing, adopting and implementing a relevant curriculum, employing educated colleagues with proper competencies, generating research activities, participating in international programs and partnerships, and cooperating with other higher education institutions from Romania and abroad.

The institutional Strategic Development Plan (ITPB's Strategic Development Plan for 2012-2016) is the principal reference in the development and base of decisions in connection with the operation of ITPB with outlining the objectives and processes are needed to reach the aims. The Strategic Development Plan is focusing on three significant areas of activity of the institution: education processes (teaching and learning); scientific research, consultancy and expertise; and institutional involvement in the ecclesial, social and cultural life of Romania.

The objectives and strategies that ensure quality are organized and designed in accordance with specific performance indicators, applicable to ITPB parallel with an internal self-evaluation process is done every year and external evaluation of didactic and research processes by the appointed committees of the Pentecostal Church as well as by ARACIS.

On the whole, the strategic objectives are suitable for the maintenance of the present favorable position and also provide future development with widening the present educational program with a Master program. The other development path, to relocate the institution to near Cluj-Napoca to develop ITPB into an extended Christian University is currently ongoing. The new campus will be located in Florești, Cluj, will spread over 10hectares of land with new facilities, and, - according to the plans - will meet the highest international standards.

Management and Organizational Structure

ITPB operates within the legal framework, according to the principles defined in its Charter and on the basis of self-defined regulations. ITPB's autonomy as an institution of higher education is guaranteed under the current legislation, as established and regulated through the Romanian Constitution and the Law of Education. ITPB, as an autonomous, independent institution with nonprofit character has the freedom of defining its structure, leadership, administration, and operation.

The academic and administrative structures of ITPB are similar to the structures of other institutions from the national higher education network, although ITPB is a relatively small institution where operates only one faculty, running a study program with a limited number of students, primarily to satisfy the needs of the Romanian Pentecostal Church.

According to the information and written documents the academic and the administrative leadership of ITPB have the appropriate competencies to do their work correctly. The managerial structures of the institution have a transparent, logical structure and it is suited for the correct management of the organization. The operation of the institution rely on a system of regulations, procedures and tools covering the whole set of university life parallel with the permanent evaluation of the educational program, the teaching staff and the other personnel of the institution.

ITPB's Senate is the ultimate authority within the institution. It consists of 11 members: 8 members from the teaching staff and 3 students, representing over 25% of the Senate. Subordinate to the Senate, there are two committees: the Ethics Committee, which is focusing on the observing of the Christian ethical and academic norms; and the Quality Evaluation and Assurance Committee (CEAC) that monitors the quality of all educational processes in ITPB. ITPB's Administrative Board is ensuring that all Senate decisions are implemented and provides leadership for ongoing activities. At the meetings of the Administrative Board the representatives of the leadership of the Pentecostal Christian Denomination of Romania are also invited to participate.

Material Base

Headquarters of the institution is located at Bd. Uverturii 210-220, Bucharest, Romania. The patrimony is a donation of the founders, the Romanian Pentecostal Christian Denomination as well as the patrimony acquired subsequently. ITPB's campus consists of buildings and land available to the ITPB learning community as a place where all processes of education, administrative processes and research takes place, where living and study spaces as well as the cafeteria of the institution are provided, and where other cultural and recreational activities are carried out. The learning space - classrooms, seminar rooms, auditorium, library - is optimal for all the needed didactic and research activities.

ITPB has its own publishing house (Plērōmahas). ITPB's library consists of 25,000 volumes in various languages. Most of these resources are in English and Romanian. Out of the total, over 75% of these are the works of a particular Protestant theology orientation and Pentecostal doctrinal specificity. From 2013 an electronic cataloguing and holdings system was introduced that is connected to the Liberty 5 platform. The library has a monthly acquisitions budget. Since 2012, the allocated budget is 3,000 RON per month. This money is primarily used to purchase books.

The equipment and installations in connection with the educational process is seems to be an important priority and supply the demands of students quite well and the present processes, due to the relatively stable financial conditions, seem to be promising. On the whole, the university meets the standards but it is important to continue the work to invest permanently to maintain its present favorable infrastructure. I think that these elements are in a good level, and meet the demands of the students.

Human Resources

According to the self evaluation documentation of the institution and personal field experiences the scientific potential and quality of human resources of ITPB is on a good

level. The relatively young teaching staff in the institution is seems to have proper competencies, qualifications and academic degrees, which certainly results a good level of performance in education processes. University has now a highly qualified staff. Beyond the professional competences it is important to remark that the language skills of the staff (including not just the titular teaching staff but even the administrative and other employees) are good.

According to the present situation it could be realistic to start a Master program based on the present human resources although it is important to note that certain development is needed in this field to implement the planned program. It is also possible to organize professional higher education training programs with continuing the already existing initiatives which can follow the Bachelor or later the Master's degree with a certificate at the end, but without leading to an another degree.

The institution also could offer nonformal courses for adults based on the existing human resources. This type of education is not a new one as it can be found in the profile of the Romanian Pentecostal Christian Denomination and as well as the ITPB for a long time.

Students

ITPB certificates/diplomas give the holder the right to practice in Pentecostal churches both in Romania and abroad. The diploma supplement lists the compulsory, non-compulsory and, where applicable, the optional courses completed by the students.

For the academic year 2013-2014 there are 166 students enrolled for the study program Pentecostal pastoral theology, out of which 77 are resident and 89 nonresidents. In order to satisfy the student needs in ITPB's campus, there is a continuous improvement of services for the students. One of the most significant parts of this effort is that services for students are financed through donations and scholarships coming from individuals and organizations from Romania and abroad as well as from ITPB funds. The

institution also ensures the accommodation for the students and also offers reduced rates in the cafeteria of ITPB (50% of the cost for lunch for all residential students).

Scholarships given by ITPB play an important role in motivating students to achieve higher educational performances. Such scholarships are awarded to 4 students each year. The amount awarded to each student is equal to the established tuition fee for the respective year. For students coming from a low-income background, ITPB seeks funds to help cover the costs of their studies. Beginning with the current academic year, the leadership board of the Pentecostal Christian Denomination has included in their budget a specification: a minimum of 100,000 RON per year is allocated for covering such scholarships.

In order to meet the needs of the students, ITPB implements a practice of student mentorship. Such mentorship addresses administrative, educational, social and spiritual issues as the teaching staff of the institution is available for consultations pertaining to the subject taught, teachers personalize the teaching process when a student expresses the need, and also each group of students is coordinated by a member of the teaching staff.

Due to the fact that 9 out of 14 teaching staff members are also pastors, students may freely choose a spiritual adviser in order to receive the spiritual support they need, and, when it is needed, a pastoral council also could help to satisfy the counseling needs of students (optional course choice, pastoral ministry coordination, etc.).

ITPB runs its own student dorm, which includes all the necessary facilities to host 100% the students studying in the residential program. In 2011 the dorm and the cafeteria were fully renewed. Students living in the dorm also have facilities for recreational activities: computer labs, fitness room, and open-air play-field.

The pastoral practicing component is well organized, monitored and done in cooperation with Pentecostal churches in the country. After finishing their studies, most of the

students have the possibility to work as a pastor or a minister of one of the 3.000 Pentecostal communities of the country, or abroad. The employment ratio of ITPB's graduates is 95% which is certainly a very high rate comparing with other higher education institutions.

The public information can be found on the website of the institution, which is one of the most important parts of the communication with the external environment including correct information about the main aspects of the education process in Romanian language. Although there are certain information can be reached in English it would be important to develop a quite well operating English language homepage to widening the reachable quantity and quality of information, which would be very important in the near future when ITPB is going to start the Erasmus mobility. ITPB has just obtained the Erasmus Charter this year and it would be very promising if the institution starts to convert the already existing connections to Erasmus contracts as soon as it is possible.

During my visit I had the possibility to meet with some students of ITPB and I found them very open minded, energetic and intelligent. They seem to be very loyal to their institution and pay a lot of attention to their studies. I have also experienced that the students I met speak very good English.

Financial Resources

As an institution with a nonprofit character, the university is self-financing, establishing funds for activity from the annual school tuition taxes, the funding given by the Pentecostal Christian Denomination - The Apostolic Church of God from Romania, and donations/sponsorship from individuals and organizations from Romania and abroad.

According to the self evaluation report of the institution and the consultations with the staff the financial activities – incomes and expenses - are well-balanced. It is important to point out that in the last few years the incomes of the institution show an 80% growth. This increase is resulting from the intensive growth of donations (from the country and

from abroad - almost 50% of growth) and sponsorships (4 times more, between 2010 and 2013) and the rising state subventions for wages (35% growth in the last 4 years), and from student fees which have been doubled in the last 4 years. These changes certainly originate in the growing numbers of students, the traditionally good connections of the institution and the good competencies for fundraising (from the country and from abroad) of the management of the ITPB.

The results allow the institution to save reserves, realize interests, spending more for the continuous development (investments, utilities, food, etc.) and also for the raising of the wages (37% growth in 3 years). According to the data, parallel with using the surplus for the above mentioned processes in certain dimensions there are significant reductions like a 7% reduction in external services, or 45% reduction in maintenance expenses in the last 3 years.

On the whole, these processes show a very conscious and responsible management of the existing and potential financial resources. From this year is also very promising that the funding is given by the Pentecostal Christian Denomination - The Apostolic Church of God from Romania every year is certainly higher than the previous periods which permit a well-balanced budget and permanent financial stability on a longer run.

International Visibility, Collaboration

For national and international visibility and recognition on scientific, educational and other fields a higher education institution has to develop connections with its academic and social-economic environment. In case of ITPB these connections seem to be in order as national and international collaboration has been in focus from the beginning, although some of these connections are not formalized until this time.

In consideration of the institution prestige, it would be important in the future to organize more conferences and workshops which could be very important for the national and international visibility of the institution and beside the 'outsider' lecturers and participants

it gives possibility for the students and teachers from ITPB to present the results of their research activities.

Beginning with academic year 2010-2011 a series of annual lectures was established in ITPB. These lectures are given by internationally renowned theologians and ecclesial personalities who have brought a significant contribution to theological education and the mission of the Church in the world. Themes addressed in these lectures offer snapshots of recent developments in Christian theology in general and Pentecostal theology and spirituality in particular. Also, it is the aim of the lectures to show the contemporary challenges facing theological educational institutions and their specific contribution to equipping, edifying, and strengthening the Church to fulfill its mission in the world. These lectures are also offering holistic, integrative models of Christian involvement in the contemporary society from a biblical perspective.

ITPB was awarded the Erasmus+ Charter for 2014-2020, opening up the possibility for student and teaching staff mobility, research cooperation and institutional partnerships. Although the institution has entered to the ERASMUS program just this year, it is recommended to enter into bilateral contracts (formalizing the already existing connections) as soon as it is possible and motivate students and staff members taking part in these new mobility activities.

Research work is also carried out in ITPB and the results of research are published in the journal *Plërōma*. There is also a research center called "Bible and Society" operates within ITPB. Every member of the teaching staff is involved in a specific area of research, according to their specialization: Old and New Testament, Church History, Systematic Theology, Dogmatic Theology, and Practical Theology.

The openness of ITPB towards the ecclesial and socio-cultural environment is evidenced by the involvement of students in activities of spiritual/ecclesial nature, social nature (e.g. volunteer work for organizations that work with disadvantaged children, involvement in actions of assisting and recuperating drug-addicts, involvement in

projects aiming to assist persons and communities affected by poverty), and cultural nature (forums and competitions of Christian poetry, production of classical and religious music, etc.).

The Day of ITPB is celebrated every year on the first Sunday of the month of October. The event is held in one of the Pentecostal Churches from Bucharest and it consists of a special religious ceremony.

Conclusion

My report is based on what I have experienced; what I have seen, what I have read and have heard before and during my visit. I hope that some of my comments will help the university management in the process of permanent improvement. On the whole the Theological Pentecostal Institute of Bucharest meets the educational and professional standards. I recommend the high level of confidence rate for the institution with emphasizing the following:

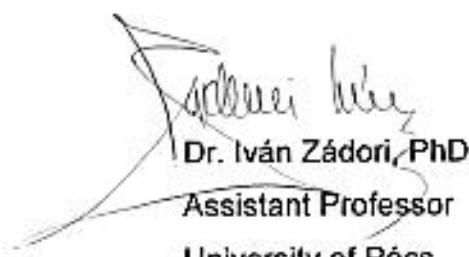
- I suggest formalizing the existing international connections and starting to enter to the Erasmus program as soon as possible with encouraging students and staff members taking part in exchange and mobility programs and use ERASMUS to strengthening scientific profile;
- The Institute should maintain the present level of material base and continue to invest in the infrastructure and facilities when own resources, and any other funds allow;
- It could be also important to start postgraduate educational programs if there is human resource capacity and demand for this type of short term educational programs;
- According to the courses of the present educational program it would be very useful to widening the optional courses with general 'secular' knowledge and competencies (i.e. introduction to psychology, sociology, economic competences, cultural studies, and cultural management). I think a good pastor should have and

could use these competencies to understand the working mechanisms of the 'outside' world and would help to take care with certain challenges of the given community. If the leaders of the institution start a process like this, it is possible that this could result some interference with the Denomination but on the other hand these competencies would help to the graduated students either they become pastors; ministers or they start their life on another fields;

- Strengthening the research activity and international collaboration/mobility.

Finally I would like to thank to the Rector of the Theological Pentecostal Institute of Bucharest all the staff of the institution for the pleasant atmosphere and the support during my stay in Bucharest. Last but not least, I would like to thank to the ARACIS for giving me the opportunity to participate in this evaluation process in Romania.

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