

THE INTERWAR COMMERCIAL HIGH SCHOOLS FROM BOTOȘANI COUNTY AND THEIR ROLE IN DEVELOPING THE ENTREPRENEURSHIP SPIRIT

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Abstract:

The leading commercial high schools from Botoșani county, during the interwar period, were The Boys' Commercial High School Botoșani and The Girls' Commercial High School Botoșani. The two institutions played an important role in creating and developing trade and industry in Botoșani County, preparing the necessary human resource in this area. Another role of the commercial schools was to develop entrepreneurial spirit and economic initiative, through the subjects they taught in these specialized schools. Although they were facing financial difficulties, both local authorities and teachers made efforts to fulfil a high-quality education.

Key words: commercial, high, school, Botoșani, education.

JEL classification: B10, B20, B30.

1. INTRODUCTION

After the year 1864, the Law on Public Instruction came into force, and the number of public schools, of all levels, increased. The education institutions in Botoșani County aligned with the national trend, to form new primary, secondary and high schools. There were also created pedagogical, industrial, and commercial schools. At the same time, it was enriched and diversified didactic material, and there were founded school libraries, there appeared pedagogical profile publications and professional associations of teachers. There must be noted that, near the boys' schools, girls could access education field. The result of that was that there were created commercial, pedagogical, professional, or industrial schools for girls.

The law of Chambers of Commerce and Industry was adopted in 1864 and then was modified in 1866. It aimed to increase the economic development of the country regions. Through this law, there were created the Chambers of Commerce and Industry in the main cities of the country: Bucharest, Galați, Iași, Botoșani, Brăila, Focșani, Constanța, Craiova, Pitești and Ploiești.[1] The Chambers of Commerce and Industry became the institutions which needed to identify opportunities for economic development and to communicate the Government the requirements and possibilities for economic developments, in the area, they were activating. The representatives of this institution from Botoșani involved directly in the development of commercial schools from Botoșani.

The leading commercial high schools, which were established in Botoșani County, at the beginning of the last century, were The Boys' Commercial High School Botoșani and The Girls' Commercial High School Botoșani. These two high schools played an essential role in the development of the entrepreneurial spirit and the formation of the human resource, specialized in the economic field.

2. THE BOYS' COMMERCIAL HIGH SCHOOL BOTOȘANI

The Boys' Commercial High School was formed as a consequence of the unification of The Boys' Elementary Commercial School Botoșani with The Boys' Superior Commercial School Botoșani.

The Commercial High School Botoșani consisted of two levels of education. The first cycle of education was the gymnasium, in which the students accumulated general and specialized

knowledge, lasting four years. The second cycle, high school, deepens the specialized knowledge accumulated in the gymnasium, pursuing the training of specialists in the field of trade and accounting, or preparing graduates for higher education.

The graduation diploma of The Commercial High School offered the graduate the opportunity to work in administrative institutions, but also to reduce the period of compulsory military service. Also, the graduates were exempted from paying taxes for one year in the Old Kingdom and three years in the provinces, when establishing new companies. They had the right of pre-emption when taking over liquidated enterprises from Romania. They could receive a loan from the National Bank or financial aid in necessary situations.[2]

The official transformation of The Elementary Commercial School Botoșani and The Superior Commercial School Botoșani into The Commercial High School Botoșani took place on September 1st, 1936.[3]

The high school functioned in the same buildings as the elementary and secondary schools. From the documents and correspondence carried out by the principals of the high school with the representatives of the different institutions, it turns out that the school faced financial difficulties, regarding the provision of the teaching materials and the maintenance, preventing the functioning of the institution in right conditions.

The teaching staff from this high school was formed of 16 teachers, in the school year 1937-1938. The auxiliary and non-teaching staff consisted of an accountant, two secretaries, a school doctor, a pedagogue and four janitors.[4] The teaching and administrative staff of the high school resulted from the unification of commercial elementary school with the commercial secondary school.

The teachers who taught at The Boys' Commercial High School Botoșani had training in the speciality corresponding to the position they were employed in, being graduates of some prestigious universities. We mention Professor Avram Manaș, who was a graduate of the Commercial Academy in Bucharest and a graduate of the Pedagogical Seminar, also in Bucharest.[5] Another teacher of the High School, who taught drawing and calligraphy, was the painter Victor Gallin, being a graduate of the Belle Arte School in Iași.[6] Also, the teacher Lucia Bulandra was a graduate of the Faculty of Letters from Iași and was teaching in the English-German department.[7]

Another notable personality of the high school was the historian Tiberiu Crudu. He was a teacher and principal of the "Mihai Eminescu" Pedagogical School Botoșani, being transferred, in 1938, to constitute a teaching job at "Laurian" High School Botoșani and Commercial High School Botoșani.[8]

Regarding the evolution of the number of high school students, we note that there were 71 students enrolled in the school year 1939-1940. From the 71 students, only 62 passed, and nine students were left-back.[9]

In the school year 1942-1943, the number of enrolled students reaches 351. At the end of the school year, 40 pupils were left-back.[10] It is very interesting to observe the ethnic evolution of the students enrolled in this high school. Thus, if by the 1940s the majority of the pupils were of Jewish origin, in the school year 1942-1943, no pupil of the school had declared their Jewish origin.[11] This was caused by the anti-Semitic policy of the Romanian state, promoted under the leadership of General Ion Antonescu.

In March 1944, the school administration was confronted with some particular problems, caused by the evolution of hostilities, during the Second World War. In this context, the high school was evacuated and moved to Cermei Commune, in Arad County.[12] The following year, the management of the high school and the teachers returned to Botoșani and resumed their courses.

After returning from Cermei, the number of students suffered a significant increase, reaching to 269 students, in the school year 1944-1945. From the 269 students enrolled at the beginning of the school year, 13 students did not complete their studies, being declared corrigents or withdrawn from school.[13]

A presentation of the evolution in the number of students enrolled in the Boys' Commercial High School Botoșani is made in the Table no. 1.

Table no. 1. The evolution of the number of students from the Boy's Commercial High School Botoșani during the interwar period

High School	School year	Number of pupils
The Boys' Commercial High School Botoșani	1939-1940	71
	1942-1943	351
	1944-1945	269

Source: Endnotes [9], [10], [13].

3. THE GIRLS' COMMERCIAL HIGH SCHOOL BOTOȘANI

The Girls' Commercial High School Botoșani was established in 1936, as a result of the unification of The Girls' Elementary Commercial School Botoșani with The Girls' Superior Commercial School Botoșani.

The newly formed institution has faced some financial difficulties, from the beginning, caused by some debts inherited from the Girls' Superior Commercial School. The new principal, in the person of Mrs Eugenia Petrovan, managed to save the economical education of girls, by paying, in 1936, the entire debt of the school, of 100,000 lei.[14] In an annual report, signed by the principal Eugenia Petrovan, she mentions that the payment of the school's debts was made through great efforts. She also stated that, under her leadership, were also paid some debts to the Casa Școalelor [School House], as well as some payments to the Ministry. Those debts had not been paid since 1930.[15] Eugenia Petrovan also managed to re-establish the lower cycle of economical education for girls.

The teaching staff was composed of 15 teachers in 1939, and the principal of the high school was Eugenia Petrovan. [16]

The building where the school operated was owned by the Eforia Națională [National Eforia] and was rented by the Chamber of Commerce Botoșani and Botoșani City Hall, for an annual rent of 40,000 lei, paid in equal instalments. The building had eight rooms for classes, four for chancellery, library, laboratory. Two unused rooms needed necessary repairs. The school building had previously been repaired by the owner and was in good condition to cover the needs of the school.[17]

The disciplines taught in the high school aimed at the preparation of specialists who were to work in the commercial branch of the city and Botoșani county. Thus, the students were studying foreign languages (French, English), Romanian language, Natural sciences, Geography, History, Law, Mathematics and specialized sciences (Commodities, Commercial Sciences, Economic Sciences).

With the reorganization of the commercial school from 1936, the number of students from Commercial High School increased. Thus, in the registration files of the school year 1936-1937, there were 71 students, organized into four classes (First grade - 33 students, second grade - 21 students, seventh grade - 11 students, eighth grade - 6 students). From the 71 students, only 43 promoted in June, seven students were left-back and 18 withdrawn from courses.[18]

The number of pupils increases in the following school year, reaching 104 pupils (first grade - 38 students, second grade - 26 students, fifth grade - 20 students and eighth grade with 12 students). From the 104 students, 59 students promoted in June, eight students were left-back, and 14 were withdrawn from courses.[19]

Regarding the nationality of the students registered in the Commercial High School Botoșani, in the school year 1937-1938, we notice that out of the 104 enrolled, 49 students were of Romanian nationality, and 55 students were of Jewish nationality.[20]

A significant increase in the number of students enrolled in the Girls' Commercial High School of Botoșani is registered in the school year 1941-1942 when the number of students reaches 209. The 209 students were divided as follows: 53 students in the first class, 50 students in the second grade, 35 students in the third grade, 22 students in the fourth grade, 17 students in the fifth grade, 27 students in the sixth grade and five students in the eighth grade. At the end of June, 146

students promoted, 50 students were corrigent, 13 students were left-back, and one student was withdrawn from studies.[21]

During the hostilities caused by the outbreak of the Second World War, the high school was evacuated in 1944 and then moved to the town of Cermei, Arad county.[22] After March 17, 1945,[23] the high school resumed its activity in the city of Botoșani, as a result of returning from the Arad. After this date, most of the teachers who had taught in high school before the World War II returned to the chair.

After the war, the school population of the high school grows again, reaching 343 students, in the school year 1945-1946, divided as follows: 40 students in the first grade, 33 students in the second grade, 36 students in the third grade A, 39 students in third grade B, 38 students in fourth grade A, 36 students in fourth grade B, 31 students in fifth grade, 49 students in sixth grade, 21 students in seventh grade and 20 students in the eighth grade. At the end of the school year, 1945-1946, in June, 228 students graduated, 104 students were declared corrigent, six students were left-back, and five students were withdrawn.[24]

Table no. 2. The evolution of the number of students from the Girls's Commercial High School Botoșani during the interwar period

High School	School year	Number of pupils
The Girls' Commercial High School Botoșani	1936-1937	71
	1937-1938	104
	1941-1942	209
	1945-1946	343

Source: Endnotes [18], [20], [21], [24].

The table from above presents the evolution of the number of students enrolled in the Girls' Commercial High School Botoșani.

After 1948, the authorities reorganized the state commercial education, and political interference became more and more pronounced. Communist pressures to subordinate education have materialized by checking teachers and purifying the system of those considered undesirable through education, attitude, social origin and past.

4. CONCLUSIONS

By the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, special efforts have been made for the extension and development of education in Romania. The most important accomplishment of the period is represented by the reform made by the adoption of the Law of Public Instruction of 1864.

The periods of the ministry of the great man of school, that was Spiru Haret, also had its effects in Botoșani, by the fact that there were prestigious schools in which the teachers and students made joint efforts to ensure a high level of the educational process.

In the period 1859-1948, the evolution of the education system took place following the need for economic and social development of the society. The numerous amendments to the laws in the field of public education aimed at general education of the masses and their illumination through culture.

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Botoșani had an essential role in the development of the commercial schools from Botoșani, by providing financial and specialized support. The representatives of this institution were aiming at the development of the commercial education and implicitly the economic growth of the county and the region.

Also, the economic schools had an important role to play in the development of the entrepreneurial spirit, manifested by setting up new individual or big companies.

Another feature of the activity of the economic schools from Botoșani is the applicability of the educational activity, materialized by the practical training of the future graduates, within the Schools of Application. They had the role of doing internships in order to train the graduates.

The growing number of students registered in the two schools revealed the fact that the population of Botoșani was interested to educate children in the fields of economy and commerce.

The activity of the commercial schools from Botoșani was an essential factor, which determined the economic and commercial development of the county at the beginning of the 19th century, and especially during the interwar period.

We can also say that the Jewish community played a decisive role in the development of the Botoșani and Dorohoi counties, due to its interest in the commercial and technical education system.

ENDNOTES

- [1] Ion I. Ignătescu, *Învățământul comercial din Botoșani [Commercial education from Botoșani]*, Botoșani, Editura Întreprinderea Poligrafică Bacău, 1989, p. 13.
- [2] *Arhivele Naționale ale României Serviciul Botoșani [Botoșani Office of the National Archives of Romania] (hereinafter: ANRSBt), Fond Școala Comercială Elementară de Băieți Botoșani, [The Boys' Commercial High School Botoșani Fund], (hereinafter: FLCBBt), d. [File] 62/1935-1936, f. [Page] 120.*
- [3] ANRSBt., FLCBBt, d. 113/1936-1937, f. 16.
- [4] A. N. R. S. Bt., F. L. C. B. Bt., Ds. 116/1937-1938, f. 131.
- [5] A. N. R. S. Bt., F. L. C. B. Bt., Ds. 116/1937-1938, f. 259.
- [6] A. N. R. S. Bt., F. L. C. B. Bt., Ds. 120/1937-1939, f. 8.
- [7] A. N. R. S. Bt., F. L. C. B. Bt., Ds. 116/1937-1938, f. 259.
- [8] A. N. R. S. Bt., F. L. C. B. Bt., Ds. 120/1937-1939, f. 267.
- [9] A. N. R. S. Bt., F. L. C. B. Bt., Ds. 10/1939-1940, ff. 1-71.
- [10] A. N. R. S. Bt., F. L. C. B. Bt., Ds. 15/1942-1943, ff. 1-351.
- [11] Ibidem.
- [12] A. N. R. S. Bt., F. L. C. B. Bt., Ds. 161/1944, f. 92.
- [13] A. N. R. S. Bt., F. L. C. B. Bt., Ds. 20/1944-1945, ff. 1-269.
- [14] A. N. R. S. Bt., Liceul Comercial de Fete Botoșani, [The Girls' Commercial High School Botoșani Fund], (here in after: F. L. C. F. Bt.), Ds. 135/1939, f. 114.
- [15] A. N. R. S. Bt., F. L. C. F. Bt., Ds. 51/1938, f. 27.
- [16] A. N. R. S. Bt., F. L. C. F. Bt., Ds. 135/1939, f. 67.
- [17] A. N. R. S. Bt., F. L. C. F. Bt., Ds. 51/1938, f. 27.
- [18] A. N. R. S. Bt., F. L. C. F. Bt., Ds. 1/1936-1937, ff. 1-71.
- [19] A. N. R. S. Bt., F. L. C. F. Bt., Ds. 2/1937-1938, ff. 1-104.
- [20] A. N. R. S. Bt., F. L. C. F. Bt., Ds. 51/1938, f. 28.
- [21] A. N. R. S. Bt., F. L. C. F. Bt., Ds. 8/1941-1942, f. 1-199; Ds. 8/1941-1942, ff. 1-10.
- [22] A. N. R. S. Bt., F. L. C. F. Bt., Ds. 83/1944, f. 278.
- [23] A. N. R. S. Bt., F. L. C. F. Bt., Ds. 97/1945, f. 30.
- [24] A. N. R. S. Bt., F. L. C. F. Bt., Ds. 15/1945-1946, ff. 1-200; Ds. 15/1945-1946, ff. 1-143.

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