

The ethical vulnerabilities of doctoral studies

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Abstract: The organization of doctoral studies is one of the significant hallmarks of knowledge production, the formation of scientific discourse and the advancement of the creative process. This lecture is about the ethical vulnerabilities of the configuration of these studies from the perspective of the institution, the supervisor and the PhD student. I will consider the ethics of research, the supervisor-student relation and the philosophy evaluating scientific work. The situation of doctoral studies in the field of Performing Arts-Theatre differs from one institution to another, but what should not differ is the conceptual clarity through which the student is encouraged, guided, evaluated so that the final result is meaningful, produces an advance of knowledge and, why not, proposes something applicable in the practical sphere. In this lecture I will examine the ethical vulnerabilities that arise from the effects of legislation or from the imperfect, incorrect way in which doctoral studies are conducted.

Keywords: vulnerabilities; ethics; research; evaluation; supervision.

1. Introduction

This conference, which is important because it addresses an issue that continues to pose challenges in academic communities, comes at a strange time: the Higher Education Act has only just been issued and our universities are in the process of updating their fundamental documents: the University Charter and the Code of Ethics. The law provides for documents to be completed without a deadline having been given. Among them there is one that is also relevant for our Conference: “Framework regulation on doctoral studies”. Another concerns the Framework Code of University Ethics and Deontology approved by government decision. Both do not yet exist.

This setback, the start of the new academic year and the legal requirement to bring university documents up to date following the appearance of the two governmental decisions, as well as holding the university elections now, has and will of course have consequences. The ethical construction of the university system in our country needs legislative clarity, the opportunity for change and

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structured thinking in order to limit the existing vulnerabilities, as well as those that may be caused by new technologies, in the production and transmission of knowledge and the way in which students assess the reception of what is transmitted to them.

The theme of the conference brings three key words to the fore: research, supervision and evaluation from an ethical perspective of Doctoral Studies. Each keyword is, in international academic practice, well anchored in an organizational ethical culture, but also in programs that foster ethical behavior of doctoral students. On the other hand, let me say from the start, these concern equally the colleagues who have taken on the task of scientific supervision of the doctoral program. From the point of view of this ethical culture, the vocational field in general, and the Performing Arts-Theatre in particular, present vulnerabilities that the legal framework can restrict, but not eliminate. We shall see further why. We shall further see why it is not enough.

I will proceed by taking each key word – research, scientific supervision, evaluation – as a “key” to decipher what can make us vulnerable in doctoral supervision. I will also try to pass each key word through the grid: institution, scientific supervisor, doctoral student.

Let us keep in mind that many people are indifferent to morality, in the sense given by the Stoic philosophers to the concept of *adiaphoron*², or – as today's philosophers claim – morally blind, in the sense discussed by Zygmunt Bauman and Leonidas Donskis³ or morally disengaged, in the sense given by Albert Bandura⁴. In the same way, let us try to see why a real culture of academic integrity is more and more necessary in the Romanian academia in general.

Sometimes, we do not actively have the meaning of words. Or their etymology. Let us take the word **research**. It comes from the Latin *circare* meaning “to circle, to circle around something or someone”. Old French used it first, through *recerche*, and from there it entered English to give the recognized term *research*., as early as the 16th century. Its use in early European modernity means “to examine carefully”, with a wide application of this meaning also entering legal practice, in criminal investigation, for example. Another meaning has given *circle* and other derivatives. Let us keep in mind that *research* activity is the basis of the evolution of knowledge, its transmission and reception in

² “*Adiaphoron*” is thus defined in Merriam-Webster:

„1: Stoic philosophy: a matter having no moral merit or demerit; 2: a religious ceremonial or ritual observance that is held to be an affair of the individual conscience because it is neither forbidden nor enjoined by the scriptures.” (consulted on 27.09.2023).

³ Z. Bauman, L. Donskis (2013), *Moral Blindness*, Polity Press, Cambridge.

⁴ A. Bandura (2015), *Moral Disengagement: How People Do Harm and Live with Themselves*, Worth Publishers, England.

scholarly circles. Without research you cannot interact with reality in order to develop knowledge. On the other hand, this activity has for centuries included a moral component which, time and again, creates unresolvable dilemmas. For example, scientific research leading to a product whose use, such as the fission of the atom and the use of this discovery in the manufacture of bombs, indicates a vulnerability to which science cannot offer a single moral argument. Or laboratory research leading to the launch of a drug which is later discovered to have dangerous effects.

2. The Institution is the first grid through which we want to check for sources of ethical vulnerability in terms of the three keywords: Research, Scientific Supervision and Evaluation. Institutionally, the university is required to submit to the central authority a *Research Plan*, based on the research plans of its substructures: departments or, possibly, faculties. Here we have four situations: first, Theatre is an academic domain at specific faculty level, see UNATC Bucharest, UNAGE Iași and UAT Tîrgu Mureș. Secondly, Theatre is an institutional field at the level of a non-exclusively theatrical faculty, see the Faculty of Music and Theater at the UVT Timișoara, the Faculty of Theatre and Film at the UBB Cluj-Napoca, the Faculty of Arts at “Ovidius” in Constanța. Third, Theatre is an institutional field at the level of an exclusively theatrical department, see the Department of Theatrical Arts at ULB Sibiu, the Department of Acting, in Romanian and German, at UV Timișoara, the Department of Acting at Hyperion. Fourth-Theatre, in fact Acting, is a study program within a department, see “Dunărea de Jos” University of Galati.

On the other hand, also institutionally, Research is administered by specific structures, most commonly at the level of doctoral schools or institutes. These structures operate and impose mandatory rules on Research that are also derived from higher normative acts.

Thirdly, an important clue is the managerial program with which a candidate wins the office of rector. Put aside the words and try to see if the facts presented are really achievable facts in a coherent program.

A vulnerability with ethical consequences concerns, especially where there are no exclusive theatre faculties, precisely this *specificity*: often, department or degree program directors navigate with difficulty to be in tune with the structure immediately above them: the non-exclusively theatre department or the non-exclusively theatre faculty. Institutionally, Research, especially in the case of non-exclusively theatrical organizational structures, presents an uneven picture of scholarly publications. The performing arts have fewer venues, journals, and publishers than the socio-humanities field. And when Research is allowed, at doctoral level, for example, only in the form of a scientific PhD, things get complicated. Those in charge produce documents that have to be reported, then checked by ARACIS when the time comes for evaluation, and they will have to

align them with the institutional target. Not once, the reality is that of the document, of the scores and not of the stated goals.

Take the case of Poland, for example, where the ratio of scientific PhD/artistic PhD (or *professional* PhD as we call it) and the ratio of written publications/artistic creations was conceived and evolved from the perspective of integrating artistic creation into the university institutional frameworks of Research up to and including doctoral level. They even insisted that the percentage of published research and artistic research should not exceed 50%. After 2009, the academic theatre departments were “encouraged to make their artistic practices more scientifically frameable by producing written results published in scientific journals.”⁵ What has been observed, over the last three years, is that the number of books published has decreased while the number of scientific articles published has increased.

On the other hand, the ways of evaluating research activity in the vocational field are also aligned to criteria that are designed especially for the *other types of universities*, not for vocational ones. Thus, *the publication of scientific articles, book chapters or books* is scored much higher than the evaluation of the outcome of a *workshop*, for example. But are there criteria for evaluating such workshop-type research? In other fields, in political science and in the socio-humanities in general, where the foundation is the *text* and not the *living creation*, these criteria are institutionally much clearer.⁶ An institutional ethical vulnerability arises here with regard to the competition file for a teaching position, where the actual checking of items declared as artistic creation or articles declared as scientific is rarely done.

What modes of Inquiry are fostered by drama schools? What is actually to be researched in drama school? What is studied in the classroom? These are questions that point to different placements in context: if you have a Chekhovian character to study in class, does that imply some kind of research? But if you participate in a workshop where the theme is bodily expression, is it the same thing? Obviously not.

We know that there are two types of PhD programs here: scientific and professional. While the scientific one is somewhat better regulated in terms of standards, the latter is less so. The scientific doctorate in the field of Performing Arts-Theatre often follows the practice of generalist universities: it is research on a subject from the perspective of a bibliography. Very rarely scientific

⁵ K. Lewandowska, E. Kulczycki (2021), “Academic research evaluation in artistic disciplines: the case of Poland”, in *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, Routledge, retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2021.1893651> (consulted on 15.10.2023).

⁶ G. Vîiu, A. Miroiu (2013), *Evaluarea cercetării universitare din România. Abordări metodologice alternative* [Evaluation of University Research in Romania. Alternative Methodological Approaches in “Journal of Science Policy and Scientometrics”] - new series vol. 2, no. 2, June 2013, pp. 89-107.

doctoral theses in this field propose a... thesis, mention the research method and the corpus considered. In general, referring to my colleagues who come from Theatre studies, Directing, Choreography or Scenography, the evidence, but also my own experience shows that their training in research methods is often deficient. With the possible exception of some colleagues coming from Theatre studies, another problem that emerges is *academic writing*. Doctoral students have not been trained in this type of culture like students of the socio-humanities. Hence a vulnerability in the *quality* of these theses, which calls into question the quality of scientific supervision.

Another element, a source of ethical vulnerability in our case, is the *quality of the scientific supervision* from the perspective of the existing regulatory framework. In our country, the quality of scientific supervisor was granted, up to a certain point, by direct appointment by the ministry. Later came the habilitation examination, which means the completion of a written thesis and its oral presentation before a committee. *Rarely, the very ability to scientifically supervise a PhD is also examined*. The habilitation, as a title, is in fact awarded on the basis of professional activity, most often creative work.

Finally, the institutional *evaluation* of the doctoral program by the respective university structure must also be taken into account. In addition to the evaluation carried out by the advising committee, there are also the reports of the public defence committee. How professionally are these two activities carried out? PhD theses are often at least 200 pages long. Often they do not produce a thesis. Not once are they conscripted from other books and publications. Committees rarely assess what the law requires, which is *originality*. Of course, no law is perfect and our laws in Education even less so. How do you evaluate originality in scientific research in the field of Performing Arts-Theatre? How many of us have come across criteria that define it in scientific research in theatre? Ethical vulnerability arises in this case when, for various reasons such as likeability-unlikability, etc., the committees easily give the “very good” or “excellent” rating. I have rarely seen “good”. And even more rarely, “satisfactory”. In other areas you can find them, however. The consequence is that the abundance of high grades standardizes the value of theses like the applause at the end of any performance, regardless of its value. Precisely because value has not been assessed.

I said at one point that⁷

in some countries, such as Germany or the United Kingdom, an intermediate cycle is agreed between a master's degree and a PhD or between a bachelor's degree and a PhD. It's a year during which the person

⁷ Retrieved from <https://www.euronews.ro/articole/norme-de-etica-ale-doctoratelor-in-strainatate-universitatile-din-strainatate-s>.

who wants to become a doctoral student goes through an intensive program of work so that one can be sure that the person who enters the doctoral school is really capable of carrying out research.

We, unfortunately, only very rarely test this capability.

I would like to add another element concerning the curricular design of doctoral studies in similar institutions in the West. In Columbia, for example, not only is interdisciplinary research strongly encouraged, but joint work with doctoral students from other fields is also favored. Leaving aside the financial package that supports all this, which, unfortunately, is very meagre here. The disappearance of our universities as institutions from international rankings is also partly due to their chronic underfunding.

3. The Scientific Supervisor is the second grid through which we check how Research, Scientific Supervision and Evaluation are perceived from an ethical perspective. The obligations provided by the legislative framework in this respect are not many. The law says that the scientific supervisor is the author of the study program in consultation with the doctoral student. In practice it can happen - as I know from the cases, we examine at IRAFPA - that the professor wants to impose his or her own research interests by conditioning the doctoral student. Or blackmailing him/her. Cases of such misconduct are not rare. Laws 206/2004, Law 199/2023 or the Annex to the Code of Doctoral Studies are poor in terms of substance, as regards the quality of doctoral supervisors. This creates a *gray area* in the relationship between the supervisor and the PhD student.

A first essential aspect is accepting the candidate on the basis of the research project and the oral defense. In the field of Theatre, preliminary acceptance often takes less account of the value of the project than of the personality of the candidate and/or the curricular needs. We need X or Y because we are insufficiently covered in subject Z. Because many university structures in the field of theatre only accept scientific doctorates, research is often based on books and articles, less often on performance practice, and when this happens it is not very clear how the research method is used. How many of the PhD theses in Theatre and Performing Arts have produced research whose results are replicable, for example? Replicability is one of the essential conditions for integrity in scientific research.

An important vector of *academic integrity*, the scientific supervisor has not only contractual obligations towards the doctoral student, but also *moral obligations*. The French professor and researcher Pierre-Jean Benghozi lists the abuses that are/can be committed by the supervisor: lack of responsibility by leaving the doctoral candidate virtually alone, lack of guidance on managing the research project, lack of follow-up on the quality of the thesis and the research methods used, lack of support or advice in the different stages of completing the

thesis, from papers presented at conferences to recommendations on methodologies, readings, etc., forcing the doctoral student to carry out tasks that are not related to the thesis, discouraging attempts at innovation proposed by the doctoral student, harassment, including sexual harassment, appropriation, theft of the doctoral student's work⁸. The professor knows that “there is no formal criterion by which the quality and integrity of scientific research can be perfectly measured.” (*op. cit.* p. 89) and therefore personal responsibility becomes, and must be supported by specific university programs on integrity, the most visible part of academic autonomy and academic freedom.

Another aspect that may cause ethical irregularities in the working relationship is this: the supervisor's horizon of knowledge, extended over the years, has, however, its limitations. Especially if, as is often the case, the supervisor no longer studies new literature. The doctoral student can explore new territory, which clearly requires guidance from the supervisor through recurrent dialogue on methodology, the direction of the research, validation of the thesis, etc. I have often had to “train myself” together with the doctoral student on works that I did not know, but with the advantage of being able to conceptually frame them within a broader framework of knowledge (the advantage of age and continuous effort!). But I have seen colleagues who either leave PhD students to “fend for themselves”, or are rigid in the coordinating relationship, or, in critical cases, even envious, which leads to serious ethical lapses. Here too, it has rarely happened that the doctoral student asks for the supervisor to be changed, in which case the analysis of the incident is often superficial or, if it is serious, should be followed by action within the doctoral school. A regulation, a rule, a law are not immutable, they can be changed if reality requires it and if the institution is wise to adopt them.

The quality of the Research is, to a not inconsiderable extent, related to the quality of the Scientific Supervision. Here, the supervisor should make clear from the outset, and follow up, an important aspect of academic writing: *the accurate indication of sources*. Much has been written and published on this. This essential operation for academic deontology is also accompanied by the condition of choice or imposition. What is the mode, *style of referencing and citation* that you choose? Choice also indicates belonging to a type of academic culture, effective knowledge of the use of authors and their works published up to you. Once the choice has been made, in full awareness of the rules of the academic culture to which you belong, once practiced, it will become a reflex and will then save you unnecessary effort. It is also useful to be familiar with

⁸ J.-P. Benghozi, *Quels modèles d'intégrité pour les écoles doctorales?* [What models of integrity for doctoral schools?] in M. Bergadaà; P. Peixoto (2021) (coord.) *L'urgence de l'intégrité académique* [The urgent need for academic integrity], EMS, p. 92.

styles other than those of your own academic culture: there are publishers and journals that *require* a certain style of citation.

The term *Bibliography*, still used intensively in our country, does not clarify the distinction between Citation and Reference. Drawing up the List of References at the end of the paper is a complex operation that also denotes the way in which the Author constructed the plan of the paper, distinctly inscribed his objectives and credited the significant works for his theme. Footnotes, which are often bibliographic indications, are less often used by us for other clarifications than those of the sources. The correct indication of sources is a clue to the operational ethical standard of the Author. Of their way of reporting and valuing both their own academic and research environment, as well as their colleagues from other academic communities.

The best-known citation and referencing styles are APA and MLA. APA (American Psychological Association) style encompasses most of the standard situations in which the citation/referencing is done. Emphasis is on author's name, year of publication. Citation appears in the text in two forms: parenthetical: (Albu 2012: 23) or narrative: Albu (2012: 23) wrote about the philosophy of detachment. References build the bibliography and provide the list at the end of the paper with the full identification data of the cited work: Albu, I. (2012), *Despre detaşare*. Iaşi: Polirom.

The supervision activity also concerns how research is evaluated. It is a process that is actually carried out throughout the doctoral program. There are, however, two special moments: one concerns checking the thesis with the plagiarism check software when the supervisor receives the Similarity Report, the second concerns the actual paper to be presented at the public defence. Concerning the first moment: some supervisors are less or not at all familiar with this software, their performance depending on how much the university has financially allocated, with the characteristics of the similarity report. Because of this, they can make mistakes that put pressure on the PhD student. At some of our universities, there are special sessions to train colleagues in using this software. I have not heard of this happening systematically in the vocational field. On the other hand, and this relates to the wisdom of academic management, the use of tools to counter plagiarism should not create a psychosis. Yale's president, Peter Salovey, said in an interview in the Yale Daily News fifteen years ago, "If you create a culture that expects the worst from students and emphasize that attitude through a climate of vigilance, then they will act in ways that confirm those expectations by inventing clever ways to act dishonorably and avoid detection. This is not a race to the abyss that I wish to encourage."⁹ I have

⁹ Batane Tshepo (2010), *Turning to Turnitin to Fight Plagiarism among University Students*, in "Journal of Educational Technology & Society", 13(2), 1-12, retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/jeductechsoci.13.2.1> (consulted on 19.10.2023).

often argued, too, that it is better to build an academic culture based on integrity than to delegate plagiarism discovery to software. This requires the training of integrity “sages” as I called them in an article.¹⁰

The second moment of the evaluation is the supervisor's own report on the thesis and the doctoral program. I have heard very few such reports that actually refer to the doctoral program itself, to the way the supervision was conducted and how the doctoral student has been guided, how the doctoral student has developed his or her research. Of course, most supervisors give the highest marks at the end. As if a “good” grade were something to be ashamed of. In research, as we know, there are levels of performance. They must be properly assessed by the supervisor and the doctoral committee.

I will not elaborate on the topic of doctoral school evaluation. It is complicated, it was and still is the subject of steps forward and steps back. The insistence on “quality”, which has become an obsession through quality management, often produces saturation. What is quality? The philosophy of quality assessment, as advocated by ARACIS, rests on three pillars: Criterion, Standard, Performance Indicator. What do they mean, how do they act in the vocational field? Little has been achieved here and this brings back into question the specificity of the field and the academic frame.

4. The doctoral candidate

Before being a doctoral candidate, we talk about a candidate. Who is, from the outset, a subject of the legal framework. He/she concludes, that is, the doctoral study contract with the university/doctoral school. In general, we have two situations in the academic world: people who want to do research with a view to develop an academic career, and people who pursue doctoral studies to obtain a PhD after which their research future comes to an immediate halt. In the last category one recognizes, of course, mainly public figures of dignitaries. How does the doctoral school receive the latter? And why?

The candidate should be aware of the regulations of the doctoral school he or she is entering before submitting the application. Here, the regulations per vocational field may differ. The regulations of the FTT Cluj-Napoca, for example, contain several useful clarifications and emphasize the idea of the “authority” of the supervisor, of the school in relation to the doctoral candidate.¹¹ The UNATC's package of documents is more comprehensive as regards the doctoral level and the stipulation of the Arts Based Research principle is very visible even though the form of PhD degree admitted in the institution is the

¹⁰ M. Popescu (2021), *Former les sages de l'intégrité* [Training the sages of integrity] in Bergadaà, M.; Peixoto, P. *op. cit.*, pp. 379-392.

¹¹ V. <http://doctorat.ttv.ubbcluj.ro/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/Regulamentul-Şcolii-Doctorale-de-Teatru-şi-Film.pdf> (consulted on 19.10.2023).

scientific PhD.¹² The legislative insufficiency makes the professional PhD not favored.

Of course, the relationship between the scientific supervisor and the doctoral student is a sensitive one. The supervisor is often inclined to impose their scholarly authority and less to encourage and support the doctoral student's adventure in supposedly original research. There are some aspects involved in this relationship that are or can be a source of ethical vulnerability, of lack of integrity.

The first is the mode of supervision and the doctoral student's acceptance of this mode. With the advance of the new AI technology, the already famous ChatGPT, suspicions concerning originality and authorship increase. In an important article, Michelle Bergadaà and Martine Peters insist on the idea that PhD students should not be considered potential “delinquents” of knowledge, but researchers confident of support from the scientific supervisor. The authors present the deficiencies arising in the making of the thesis that concern the two actors, the supervisor and the doctoral student, through six stages¹³: the first concerns strategic reflection and management in context (time, effort, state); the second phase: the strategy of avoidance - the PhD students look for existing models, identify key concepts, then look them up on the internet and even copy what they find, all because this gives them a sense of pride regarding their academic status, a matter of self-image, out of opportunism that gives the illusion of performance and self-sufficiency; the third phase consists of browsing the internet without realizing, even if they have great digital skills, that using the discovered texts as such takes them away from the purpose of the research; here it must be said that the help of university librarians is important; the fourth phase concerns the collection of the texts found without emphasizing the technique of argumentation regarding the sources used (I often ask the question: why did you use this author and not another? Or: did you read the entire work you extracted this quote from?); the fifth phase is the editing of the text, we don't call it the drafting where, often, the pressure of the thesis submission deadline wreaks havoc: the doctoral students, and even the supervisors, disregard the polishing of the text, i.e. elegant drafting in Romanian or a foreign language; the sixth phase is the delivery of the thesis to be subjected to the anti-plagiarism checker: here several events take place and I will detail them.

¹² Retrieved from https://unatc.ro/devunatc/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Raport_evaluate_teatru.pdf (consulted on 19.10.2023).

¹³ M. Bergadaà; M. Peters, *The Professor: A Conduit for Integrity in the Dissertation Process*. M. Bergadaà, P. Peixoto, (eds.). *Academic Integrity. A Call to Research and Action. Globethics Research Ethics 2.*, 2023, pp. 565-576 (free access on www.globethics.net/publications). The volume is the English version of the French original, see no. 8 (*L'urgence de l'intégrité académique*).

The first concerns the Similarity Report which often troubles supervisors who are not well trained in the use of these anti-plagiarism software. I explained in an extensive article from 2020 what such a report is and how it should be read and interpreted.¹⁴ TurnItIn also explains¹⁵, but so do some of our universities, such as UBB, for example. Or the website Sistemantiplagiat.ro.¹⁶ The need for specific training concerns, in fact, the entire academic community and institutions should permanently invest in such programs, a need augmented by the psychosis created by ChatGPT.

The second concerns the content. The PhD student is engaged in research whose content justifies the objectives of the project and which must be valued. He/she must be able to explain to the supervisor the choice of concepts, method, working hypothesis so that both are sure, especially when the moment of public defense comes, that the PhD student is not only the author of the research but also knowledgeable of its theoretical or/and practical horizon.

The third concerns the level and mode of communication between the two actors. As often a bad management of time and extra-academic obligations puts pressure on everyone, the advisor and the PhD student have to maintain a continuity of the research effort: if I notice that my PhD student “disappears” for a month, two or more, I reach out, I write him/her to see what happened. As you know, our dedication to research is challenged by jobs and other projects. It is rare for a PhD student in Theatre to do only research. Funding offered by the doctoral scholarship is simply not enough. What do you do with an actor, director, scenographer or choreographer who also wants to do their job while doing research? Constant communication can avoid slippages or even dead ends.

The fourth concerns the human side of the relationship: sometimes personal life events become too difficult, and this - as it happened to me - can make the PhD student let you know that they are no longer continuing. If you believe in the value of his research project, you must convince him/her that it is worth continuing. I did this and my PhD student managed a very good, even original, thesis.

The fifth refers to the seriousness, the responsibility of the doctoral school: the doctoral student must have the support of the members of the guidance committee materialized in receiving comments on the text. In practice, I know that this happens less often. But if the PhD student delays the delivery a lot, he/she will bear - some even find it convenient - the consequences of the lack of such support.

¹⁴ M. Popescu, *The similarity Report* I, II, 2020. See <https://carfia.unibuc.ro/raportul-de-similitudine-i/>, <https://carfia.unibuc.ro/raportul-de-similitudine-ii/>

¹⁵ <https://help.turnitin.com/ro/feedback-studio/studenti/vizualizarea-raportului-de-similitudine.htm> (consulted on 20.10.2023).

¹⁶ <https://itb.ro/wp-content/uploads/Documente/interpretare-raport-antiplagiat.pdf> (consulted on 20.10.2023).

The sixth and last concerns public defence. Not once does it proceed formally. The doctoral school does the minimum required by law to publicize this endorsement. The participation of others, though allowed, is not encouraged beyond the circle of colleagues or family. If I also add the fact that doctoral schools in this field seldom encourage co-tutorship, not to mention a joint PhD program with a university from another country, or the participation of external referees beyond those friendly relations established over time, we have the image of a lack of transparency and openness against the idea of confrontation of ideas. Another aspect of public support refers to the ability of the PhD student to make this support from the perspective of public speaking and the use of slides, for example. They are too little trained in public speaking or in making attractive slides and avoid loading them with text or images whose stylistics is deficient. More than once, fitting in the allotted time is difficult precisely because there is no prior preparation. I advise students from all study cycles to do one or two rehearsals when they have to present a written work in public (at the exam, at the defence). When I hear, even senior academics, at conferences, asking: “Do I still have time” or “I have no idea how much time I have left”, I realize something is wrong.

5. Conclusion

Now is the moment for me to observe the allotted time and get closer to the end. To recap: I tried to evaluate and present some ethical vulnerabilities or lack of integrity regarding the doctoral level of theatre studies by observing the concepts that support the theme of this Conference, that is: Research, Supervision, Evaluation from the perspective of three grids: the Institution, the Scientific Supervisor and the Doctoral Student. Based also on my own experience as professor in the field of Theatre Studies and Public Communication, scientific supervisor in Theatre, as a specialist in Ethics and Academic Integrity following the experience as president of the Ethics Commission of the University of Bucharest and founder of CARFIA, but also on cases of academic misconduct that I know of and where I intervened as a member of IRAFPA, I tried to cover a sensitive topic, often subject to legislation and regulations that were not and are not always clear, or forward-looking and had the gift of bureaucratizing suspicion rather than encouraging a real culture of academic ethics and integrity in Romania. But let's look at this challenging area from a broader perspective.

The Bologna decision of 1999, with its subsequent consequences, which affected, because it was quickly signed by Romania, artistic education forced to apply the 3-2-3 system, has developed comparative inconsistencies within the common European space of higher education. As the editors of an interesting

volume on this topic argue¹⁷: While Bologna explicitly put forward values such as collaboration, exchange, interconnection and mobility, the values that more countries adhered to were those of competition, excellence and “marketing.”

The arts higher education system in our country can, should bring up to date, especially in this tsunami/aftermath caused by AI, the operational strategies regarding the reconciliation of scientific caliber, artistic practice and didactic tools with the increasingly acute need to resize the experience regarding the relationship with society, with the audiences existing today. “Why study Theatre?” is the question that actually illuminates the paths of this experience. We can confidently answer this question if we stand on the simple values of Integrity: honesty, fairness, responsibility, trust and the courage to affirm these values. I think it's worth it.

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