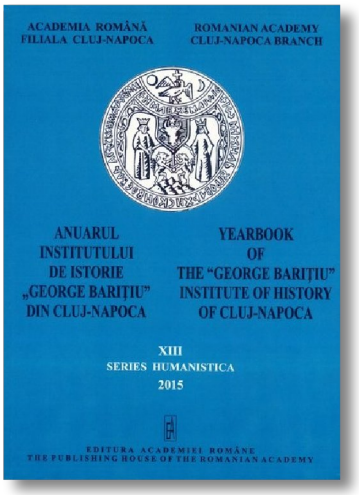

ISSN 1584-4404

Yearbook of the George Barițiu History Institute of Cluj-Napoca
Series *Humanistica*

humanistica.ro

Adult Education and Culture in the Interwar Romania: the Examples of Nicolae Iorga and Dimitrie Gusti

Ionuț-Constantin Isac

How to cite this article:
Isac, Ionuț-Constantin (2015) *Adult Education and Culture in the Interwar Romania: the Examples of Nicolae Iorga and Dimitrie Gusti*, Yearbook of the George Barițiu History Institute of Cluj-Napoca, Series Humanistica, Vol. 13, pp. 125–138. DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.22966455

© 2015: The Publishing House of the Romanian Academy.
Humanistica Yearbook is published online since 2003.
Submit your article to Humanistica Yearbook: secretariat.dcsu@acad-cj.ro

ADULT EDUCATION AND CULTURE IN THE INTERWAR ROMANIA: THE EXAMPLES OF NICOLAE IORGA AND DIMITRIE GUSTI

Ionuț-Constantin Isac

The Romanian Academy, Cluj Branch "George Barițiu"
Institute of History in Cluj-Napoca, Socio-Human Research Department

Abstract. *After the European Union 2007 enlargement, the time has come to reconsider the place of some valuable local adult education traditions in Central and Eastern Europe. Therefore, I have chosen the examples of two outstanding personalities of interwar Romania: Nicolae Iorga and Dimitrie Gusti, whose activity in the field of adult education still requires a thorough analysis for a full understanding of its historical meaning and importance. Therefore, the present paper attempts to explore the path they chose to become adult educators, and thus, accounts for key elements of their professional background, for the theoretical and practical knowledge of adult education they both had at that time, as well as for their ways to transform ideas into institutions in the above-mentioned field. As a result of the analysis of what Iorga and Gusti explicitly or implicitly asserted concerning adult education, one could find at least five distinct features, which I intend to present as clues for a future more detailed perspective of their understanding on adult education. In their views, adult education was intimately linked to the politics of culture – being in fact, an important part of the second one; adult education was conceived differently from school pedagogy; furthermore, it was thought that there are important differences between them; in interwar theorists' and practitioners' minds, there was a peculiar difference between andragogy as theory (i.e. encompassing and emphasizing the principles of adult education) and as practice of adult education; accordingly, adult education did not identify itself – as both process and result – with the bare assimilation of some disciplines, theories or formal principles, no matter how important they were seen per se; adult education did not mean the mere mechanical adoption of what had been done in other countries; on the contrary, the stake of its successful implementation was the making of the inland experience compatible with that of the outland one, by stimulating the innovation, initiative and self-responsibility. As I did on different occasions (see Isac, 2003, chapter 3.3., p. 67–86; Isac, 2004), to the end of the paper I propose a brief discussion about the meanings of this impressive cultural and educational inheritance for nowadays Romanian adult education in European context.*

Keywords: *education, andragogy, politics of culture, interwar Romania, Nicolae Iorga, Dimitrie Gusti, experience, practice.*

An. Inst. de Ist. „G. Barițiu" din Cluj-Napoca, Series Humanistica, tom. XIII, 2015, p. 125–138

MOTIVATION OF CHOOSING THE SUBJECT

Among the landmarks of the Romanian history of adult education are to be found the achievements of the world-famous historian, professor and researcher Nicolae Iorga (1871–1940)[1] and the research work of the outstanding sociologist and social philosopher Dimitrie Gusti (1880–1955)[2]. As both were members of the

[1] We cite here some biographic details on Iorga: "Nicolae Iorga (Romanian pronunciation: [niko'la.e 'jorga]; sometimes Neculai Iorga, Nicolas Jorga, Nicolai Jorga or Nicola Jorga, born Nicu N. Iorga; January 17, 1871 – November 27, 1940) was a Romanian historian, politician, literary critic, memoirist, poet and playwright. Co-founder (in 1910) of the Democratic Nationalist Party (PND), he served as a member of Parliament, President of the Deputies' Assembly and Senate, cabinet minister and briefly (1931–32) as Prime Minister. A child prodigy, polymath and polyglot, Iorga produced an unusually large body of scholarly works, consecrating his international reputation as a Medievalist, Byzantinist, Latinist, Slavist, art historian and philosopher of history. Holding teaching positions at the University of Bucharest, the University of Paris and several other academic institutions, Iorga was founder of the International Congress of Byzantine Studies and the Institute of South-East European Studies (ISSEE). His activity also included the transformation of Vălenii de Munte town into a cultural and academic center. In parallel with his scientific contributions, Nicolae Iorga was a prominent right-of-center activist, whose political theory bridged conservatism, nationalism and agrarianism. From Marxist beginnings, he switched sides and became a maverick disciple of the Junimea movement. Iorga later became a leadership figure at Sămănătorul, the influential literary magazine with populist leanings, and militated within the Cultural League for the Unity of All Romanians, founding vocally conservative publications such as Neamul Românesc, Drum Drept, Cuget Clar and Floarea Darurilor. His support for the cause of ethnic Romanians in Austria-Hungary made him a prominent figure in the pro-Entente camp by the time of World War I, and ensured him a special political role during the interwar existence of Greater Romania. Initiator of large-scale campaigns to defend Romanian culture in front of perceived threats, Iorga sparked most controversy with his antisemitic rhetoric, and was for long an associate of the far right ideologue A. C. Cuza. He was an adversary of the dominant National Liberals, later involved with the opposition Romanian National Party. Late in his life, Iorga opposed the radically fascist Iron Guard, and, after much oscillation, came to endorse its rival King Carol II. Involved in a personal dispute with the Guard's leader Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, and indirectly contributing to his killing, Iorga was also a prominent figure in Carol's corporatist and authoritarian party, the National Renaissance Front. He remained an independent voice of opposition after the Guard inaugurated its own National Legionary dictatorship, but was ultimately assassinated by a Guardist commando". See Nicolae Iorga. (n.d.).

[2] We cite here some biographic details on Gusti: "Dimitrie Gusti (Romanian pronunciation: [di'mitri.e 'gusti]; February 13, 1880 – October 30, 1955) was a Romanian sociologist, ethnologist, historian, and voluntarist philosopher; a professor at the University of Iaşi and the University of Bucharest, he served as Romania's Minister of Education in 1932–1933. Gusti was elected a member of the Romanian Academy in 1919, and was its President between 1944 and 1946. He was a prominent member of the Peasants' Party, and later of the National Peasants' Party into which the former had merged. Born in Iaşi, he began studying Letters at the University of Iaşi before moving on to the Universität unter den Linden [in Berlin – our note., I.I.] and the University of Leipzig, where he studied and completed a doctorate in Philosophy (1904). In 1905, he began the study of Sociology, Law, and Political economy at the Universität unter den Linden. Gusti was appointed to the Department of Ancient History, Ethics and Sociology of the University of Iaşi in 1910, and was one of the main contributors to the creation of a new Romanian school of sociology. He moved to Bucharest in 1920, and began work as a professor at the University of Bucharest, in the Department of Sociology, Ethics, Politics and Aesthetics of the latter's Faculty of Letters and Philosophy.

Romanian Academy, they number themselves among the most distinguished forerunners of present-day adult education in Romania[3]. Iorga and Gusti found their way to adult education in a time of strong demands for social activity, modernization and enhancement in all regions of our country. We have to mention that the issue of modernization was very controversial in interwar Romania and caused countless political, economic, scientific and cultural debates. It began in the second half of the XIXth century and contained in its core the question about the standards of building of the national development, including the famous relationship between the internal and the external influential factors. A lot of distinguished Romanian intellectuals took active part in these debates (e.g. Ion Ghica, Mihai Eminescu, Mihail Kogălniceanu, Titu Maiorescu, Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, Eugen Lovinescu and many others), supporting the idea that European civilization must be recognized as a compulsory model for the national development; nevertheless, it must be adapted to the Romanian national specificity. In this respect, even if the theoretical model of shaping the Romanian Modern civilization claimed its origins from the European spirit, the national conditions had to prevail over foreign standards[4].

His lectures became a center of interest inside the academic community, and he attracted students with diverse backgrounds and political convictions (the far-right Mircea Vulcănescu, the communist Miron Constantinescu, the Austro-Marxist Henri H. Stahl, and the left-wing artist Lena Constante). Creator of the Bucharest School of Sociology and several Institutes, he also led, between 1925 and 1948, the intense research of Romanian villages and the publishing of its results as detailed monographs (a work in which he was notably assisted by Gheorghe Vlădescu-Răcoasa and Stahl). In 1936, together with Stahl and Victor Ion Popa, Gusti created the Village Museum in Bucharest. He left the National Peasants' Party after 1938, disagreeing with its decision to oppose the authoritarian regime of King Carol II, and collaborated with the newly-created National Renaissance Front. Consequently, he was threatened by the rise of the fascist Iron Guard (with the late 1940 establishment of the National Legionary State); following the Legionary Rebellion and the Guard's defeat, he sent a congratulatory telegram to Conducător Ion Antonescu. After the start of the Soviet occupation upon the end of World War II, Gusti was approached by the Romanian Communist Party with offers of collaboration. He was invited to attend official ceremonies inside the Soviet Union, and was a member of the Romanian Society for Friendship with the Soviet Union. He died in Bucharest, and was buried at Bellu cemetery". See Dimitrie Gusti. (n.d.).

[3] For other significant stages or "beginnings" of the popular Romanian culture's development, we mention Romanian Athenaeum Society ("Ateneul Român") and the House of Schools ("Casa Şcoalelor"). For instance, a foreign author (Noebel, 2005, p. 3) points out that "This society [i.e. the Romanian Athenaeum Society, founded in 1865 – our note, I.I.] was the first of its kind in Romania to promote popular Romanian culture through adult education and implement programs through the establishment of adult schools […] Finally, in1896, under the direction of Spiru Haret, the Minister of Education, the House of Schools (Casa Şcoalelor) was established. This institution oversaw the establishment of more formal schools in rural locations that would serve all age groups in an effort to combat reduced literacy and school attrition. This was accomplished through the support of village libraries and programs designed to enhance the connection of participants to locale within a national framework of culture (i.e. programs in animal husbandry or agriculture). Haret's ideas about the significance of cultural centers to the communities in which they operate were derived at least partially from the Danish school model and, in this respect, was one of the first true examples of community schooling in Romania".

[4] In this respect, see the thorough analysis of Schifirneț (Schifirneț, 2007, p. 102).

However, the way to achieve this goal was seen differently inside of the Romanian *intelligentsia*. A part of it supported the idea that European and universal values have to be promoted by adopting all the modern institutions as such, whilst the other part emphasized the importance of creating significant national values that can be easily recognizable and comparable to those in circulation worldwide. Simplifying the picture, there were two "camps" – on the one hand, the "Europeanists", who stressed the advantages of the "imported" civilization on the Romanian nation's development, and, on the other hand, the "nationalists", who developed their point around the supposed primordial importance of the internal national development facing challenges of the Modern European civilization (Schifirneț, 2007, p. 114).

What concerned the adult education on this debate was the fact that the new Romanian reality after the Ist World War required more better trained and educated grown-up people than ever before, able to work in a new paradigm, different from that of the formal-classic school standards: "The interwar period in Romania, writes Noebel (Noebel, 2005, p. 3), was characterized by the involvement of scholars, mostly sociologists, who sought to deepen and/ or differentiate adult education as a unique branch of knowledge". Not only the theory had to be acquired and adapted, but especially the adequate practice had to follow-up. One can see here an application or a particular case of the older XIXth century debate over the need of building a Romanian Modern civilization, by synchronizing of the autochthonous culture and civilization with the Western European ones.

Obviously, the crucial question for the present-day historian, researcher and/ or practitioner in adult education is: how did Iorga and Gusti become adult educators? On this subject-matter, there has been already published a specific article signed by Prof. Dr. Nicolae Sacaliş from the University of Bucharest (Sacaliş, 1998), which briefly describes the biographical coordinates of Iorga and Gusti, also mentioning their major achievements in the field of adult education. I must say that I absolutely agree with this article as a whole, in all of its considerations. However, on the next pages, I will try to do just two more things: 1. to insist on the historical interpretation of the key issues mentioned above; 2. to propose a more specific analysis, as specified in the title of my paper. In other words, I would try to contribute to an increase of the comprehension of the subject-matter, through emphasizing the importance of historical interpretations on adult education.

1. POLITICS OF CULTURE AND ADULT EDUCATION

To reach the point of my paper (i.e. how Iorga and Gusti became adult educators), I conjecture that the most plausible way to explore it is connected to the well-known concern, common to both Iorga and Gusti, when dealing with adult education issues: *the politics of culture* ('politica culturii'). It could be argued that, in their views, the concepts of *education* and *culture* were almost synonyms.

As politicians (especially during their assignment as ministers of education and culture), Iorga and Gusti elaborated a particular method of adult education through the building of *people's culture* ('cultura poporului'), inside of which each and every individual had to develop his/ her own *personality as a whole* with the purpose of a *social efficient activity*. Moreover, they had in mind the building of a specific *pedagogy of culture*, fit to the needs of Romanian people, as well as the elaboration of a *Romanian ethics*. In order to achieve these goals, one had to avoid the mechanical-formal imitation of what had been accomplished elsewhere and to make foreign results compatible with the contents of the national spirituality. Unfortunately, neither they nor the Romanian professional philosophers have ever accomplished this task of utmost importance. In the interwar, the reasons for the failure were mainly the shortness of the time required to fulfil such an ambitious project, and the lack of institutions able to put it into practice. After the World War II, the shortcomings brought by the communist régime, whose political ideology heavily blamed on all what had been done before, did not allow the development of those noble and welcome intentions.

Gusti understood the politics of culture as a mode of enhancing people's capabilities and shaping the individual behaviour; thus, the politics of culture would fill the needs of the community and those of the country. Nevertheless, he was insisting on defining its goal: i.e. the achievement of *people's culture*. This is not, he says, only a problem of *information*, but especially one of *formation*. One should understand it in terms of involving local leaders of rural areas, of supporting them with training and specialized assistance on the purpose of making them capable to work for the well-being of their community. In his view, the culture is a process and an outcome/ product as well, but the process is more important than the result, because it can generate the evolution or *the becoming* of a community, people or nation. As a *process*, culture means the making of the 'inside man', capable to work, innovate and behave as an active member of the social *milieu*. As an *outcome*, culture represents the intensity of the relationship between the human being and the cultural assets. The adult education has to give the right direction and substantially contribute to the achievement of this purpose. To do politics of culture means to help people to create and spread out cultural values proportionally to people's spiritual elevation and refinement. This has to be done systematically and on the basis of a good planning. The hazardous and isolated philanthropic deeds (e.g. spreading 'top' science and culture among peasants/ villagers) have no success and future, as they do not respond to people's needs and expectations.

Similarly, Iorga insisted on cultivating people's '*inner force*' (i.e. 'the spiritual soul'), making them ready to enhance a nation's full strength, even during the most difficult moments of its history. His view shows us rather a peculiar anthropologist than a usual historian, since he posits that not the material means (= the *civilization*) but especially the spiritual soul (= the *culture*) is what makes the difference when a nation needs responsible educated adults capable to build a house of their own or to defend their country (Iorga, 1927, p. 113): "If one wants to do politics of culture, then one

must feed the soul of a whole nation with what it belongs the most, with what can be transformed in every moment into an active force that overwhelms all difficulties".

Conceived this way, the education of adult people appears to be a very substantial and important part of the politics of culture, aiming at moral-spiritual elevation of everybody according to general and specific social requirements, of which the most important demand is that of cultivating the personal qualities that help to preserve and eventually improve the social cohesion.

2. PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND. SCHOOL PEDAGOGY AND ADULT EDUCATION

Within their views on politics of culture, neither Iorga nor Gusti identified adult education with a certain scholar specialization. They both grasped the peculiar character of adult education, which is not a trivial prolongation or extension of the school instruction. As the article of Mr. Prof. Sacaliş accounts for all of these aspects on the implicit level, we have to point out now the importance of Iorga and Gusti's professional backgrounds, which made them to pay a lot of attention to the educational needs of the grown-up Romanians.

In fact, both Iorga and Gusti were aware that, in different fields, a pre-requisite of successful activity as well as of peaceful living together inside of a community was that special kind of education meant to meet the challenges of real life, beyond and above the mere scholar demands – a sort of education that people did not have often the opportunity to acquire.

Thus, Iorga (1927) criticized the formal school education, which he found as made under a scholastic "blueprint", therefore split from real life, because of its abstract and inapplicable principles. Too much theory makes school to become the symbol of students' sequestration from life, whilst the greatest school reform would be giving them instruction without forbidding what real life means to us while "teaching" us. He thought that there would be a natural relationship between making out of school a guidebook for life and making out of life a guidebook for school, the last one being the greatest and the most important reform to do! This way, adult education comes somehow to fill in that "gap" of scholastic formal education, giving to the grown-up people an adequate manner to live usefully their lives further. Even if the school has to guide the evolution of students' life as its primary task, in the end, the lessons of real life must be learned and internalized as a first priority of the school reform projects. This is a major difference between the education of pupils and that of mature people.

Sometimes, an example or a fable is recommended in education, therefore Iorga gives us one of his own. Let us imagine, he says, a society in which people are supervised in each and every of their actions by a so-called "Big Pedagogue" endowed with a notebook for giving marks to each and every one, all the time. In the real world, not only that such kind of society would fail very quickly, but it could not even be reasonable conceived and hold responsible for something

(no matter what), since grown-up persons are by definition *independent and responsible* for their acts. They cannot be 'supervised' by somebody, and told all the time what to do and how to do it. Adult education means to stress specific features of the human personality (at a certain age) and shape them to the requirements of efficient social activity, to the benefit of everybody and all.

In his turn, during a conference at the Romanian Social Institute in Bucharest, Gusti (1927, p. 127) referred to the needs of young people's education in the villages, saying that "We need schools managed according to the most recent principles of pedagogy of culture, to the principles of pedagogy of grown-up youth, the *Andragogik*". Thus, he emphasized the importance of making a new kind of "school" (as an institution of education), which was not meant to be merely a follow-up of the "ordinary" or "standard" school (i.e. formal education), but especially complementary to it. This school, specially designed for "mature youth" had to have definite goals to achieve the *people's culture*.

3. ADULT EDUCATION AND CULTURE – THEORY AND PRACTICE

One can easily notice that Iorga and Gusti never made such sharp distinctions (i.e. like that between theory and practice) explicitly, as they were not pure theorists and did not need explicit definitions in order to construe systematically around them. However, a remarkable asset that they had in common was their common knowledge on the contemporary theoretical and practical gains in the field of adult education, which allowed them to take actions pragmatically. Corroborated to their great personal energy, high competence in different fields of activity and a strong will to succeed, the circumstance of uniting their efforts made Iorga and Gusti the most convincing leaders of change in grown-up people education. Their vision was high, strong, and complex, as in the spirit of their time they conceived what we name "adult education" in a broader sense, meaning a vast movement of education or people's enlightenment (e.g. the "*popular enlightenment*"), originated in the famous classical Grundtvig's *folkeøplysning* (Paloş, Sava and Ungureanu, 2007, p. 16). Indeed, Gusti invoked in his speeches each of these crucial moments of the European history of adult education (i.e. the movement of the folk universities in Germany – *Volkshochschulbewegung*, the cultural movement of "Masaryk Academy" in Czechoslovakia or the Austrian community centres in Vienna – *Volksheim*), insisting on the fact that the knowledge of their experience is a must for Romania.

The influence of such cultural establishments and events for a people's culture, action and becoming could be invaluable. In this respect, Gusti (1927, p. 122, 123) gives the example of the XIXth century Denmark: a country depleted of its assets, devastated by war, hungry and despairs, deeply broke down into a no-escape economic and moral depression. "Grundtvig's school made that wonder: it eased Denmark's escape from its tremendous economic and moral depression in which it hardly struggled, up to the reaching of its present-day privileged situation,

when Danish peasantry amazes us by practical liveliness and a personal culture, full of spiritual prospects and a warmful soul".

The specialists have repeatedly noticed that too much theory leads to lanes of mistake, often found far beyond practice, particularly when a mighty bureaucracy interferes in-between. Nevertheless, Iorga and Gusti lived such experience when dealing with previous misaddressed politics of culture. In general, it seems to be an unwritten law of education, which says that the more theory is proclaimed in words – maybe with the best intentions, one cannot suspect it – the less the expected effects have a chance to occur. This kind of centralized politics has unhappy consequences, because it does not aim to fulfil individuals' and society' s spiritual needs, recognizable at the "bottom", but, on the contrary, it attempts to impose on people's existence many "top-made" inefficient external imperatives. Too many bureaucrats, announcement letters, meetings, reports etc. are the "outfits" of formal culture, which can do everything but to guarantee a successful politics of culture.

Still, when does one have the proof that the principles of adult education (i.e. of the politics of culture, after Iorga and Gusti) are successful? Iorga believes that this is best shown during the great social movements (e.g. revolutions, wars, great battles) as the sign of an inner force coming from the depth of the people's soul, activating its most intrinsic convictions and feelings. To sustain this point of view, he gives the examples of Great Britain and Japan. The British citizens knew that their society is well made-up and strong, for those men and women were capable to resist even against the most difficult proofs of history. They have a sense of the whole historical development of their country, which helped them overcome difficult moments (e.g. World War I, general strike) and to go further, towards a better future. This appreciation can be extrapolated to Japan, where people successfully entered the Modernity thanks to their great ancient medieval soul – a permanent asset that they will keep for themselves forever. One can generalize the former idea and say that this "soul" helped them to step over the disasters of the World War II and to become one of the most industrious and respected nations on the planet. In Iorga's view, a certain community, people, nation etc. is in absolutely need to cultivate this force coming from within, in the absence of which nothing can be done for peace, prosperity, and long-term development.

In this respect, there is a kind of "low profile" education and culture – which usually goes undetected and is neglected by governmental bureaucrats –, able to give the best results once it expresses directly the soul of the people. Only when somebody (meaning here an adult person, but there would be no age restriction) does intimately understand an idea or a principle on the basis of the *personal lived experience*, one could speak about a successful act of education inaugurated by that idea or principle. For instance, instead of everyday academic speeches about the "national idea", which may create constrains and bad feelings, Iorga sustained that it would be better to deepen young people into the national reality until they become used to develop those feelings as elaborations from their inside beings, not as something imposed on them from outside.

4. ADULT EDUCATION VS. FORMAL EDUCATION

When putting adult education and politics of culture in practice, there is a temptation of replacing the really required activity with lectures on the subject-matter or with applications of certain formal discipline(s) such as classic pedagogy, methodology, didactics etc. Obviously, it is much easier to do so and, of course, totally mistaken. Moreover, if bureaucracy and centralism intervenes, one must expect a deadly split between intentions and results.

What, then, could bring specialization to adult education? Why a specialist in sciences of education is not automatically fit for such purposes? A good specialist in a certain discipline/ subject could be, by all means, helpful for adult education, though not by preaching theoretically a set of dogmatic propositions. For instance, Iorga (1927, p. 117, 118) has emphasized that: "… one would not do it [i.e. the politics of culture – n.ns. I.I.] with people dedicated to the specialized culture, but with those that have inside them the whole culture of their people. Not with historians, philosophers or philologists would one do such thing, *but with people who keep in their minds whatever it needs from philosophy, history, philology, in order to become complete Romanians*". The deep individual spirituality from within, "the great soul" – a concept to whom Iorga pays a lot of attention and that might look a little bit strange to the present-day reader –, is not something measurable/ computable according to the scientific standards. On the contrary, it is a mysterious element, however recognizable by anyone when accounting for an explanation of the memorable historical events, of those tremendous bursts that change the human life forever.

Thus, it comes out that specialization is only the first step towards a successful adult education. And it may occur that, sometimes, a specialist in a certain field would not qualify herself/himself at all to be recommended for adult education. The invisible experience of the "cultural soul" can sometimes reveal itself as more substantial than the clearly perceptible scientific substance, sophisticated but sterile if not properly administered (i.e. at the level and for the need of people's understanding). We see here the subtlety and wholeness of Iorga's and Gusti's point on the politics of culture, even if indebted to some post-Romantic representations.

The problem of specialized literature concerned Gusti in all of his sociological empirical researches. He noticed that in the villages, libraries were supplied with a lot of specialized books in different domains, regardless to the real life of peasants. Of course, those books were useless to them. At the time, there was nothing else than a dangerous illusion of central authorities that, this way, the inhabitants of the villages could draw a real benefit from administration's good will to "cultivate" them. Gusti (1927, p. 126) ironically remarked that "With such kind of libraries the culture cannot be spread out in the villages. As the true culture could barely get citizenship in the village through a few conferences, given from time to time by somebody who, no matter how interesting could speak, appears in and disappears out of the village, like a shooting star". Therefore, the first and the hardest job for a sociologist, adult

educator, politician of culture, administrator etc. was *to obtain an adequate knowledge of the Romanian rural world*. Only then, and after that, one can decide in full awareness and responsibly about how should the peasants be helped to get themselves a better life. From all of these appreciations, sparks the idea – true for both academia and "real file" – that simple *information* does not automatically imply *formation*. A good specialist is not made just by books, articles and conferences; he/ she must invest a lot of energy, will, imagination and hard work, nonetheless to acquire experience and practice in order to become a reliable professional adult educator. The lecture of a book or the listening of a conference makes a desirable change in social interactions only if it meets somebody's (or a community's) intimate expectance and motivation. Gusti's conviction was that that the people's culture is not an equalizing culture, a sort of dull "culture for all", but a culture that differentiates people and helps them to develop their inside beings. Doing plain theory, one cannot attain this goal, because theory is not supposed to fulfil such needs only by itself.

5. INSTITUTIONS OF ADULT EDUCATION. FOREIGN EXPERIENCE VS. LOCAL DEMANDS

Being fully aware of and knowing very well the specific adult education movements throughout interwar Europe (for instance, the *Volkshochschulbewegung* in Germany; *'Masaryk Academy'* in Czechoslovakia; the Austrian *Volksheim* with their *Arbeitsgemeinschaft* project), Iorga and Gusti pleaded for the needs of a new kind of education in Romania, applicable through innovative learning-practice institutions and ruled by the principles of the modern *'Andragogik'* (*'Andragogy'*) – this is the word that Gusti uses exactly in original German in his writings, probably because he believed it to be the most adequate to describe a specific educational reality. This new education in Romania had to substantiate itself into institutions and activities able to respond to the educational needs of local inhabitants. As a specialization does not guarantee the success of adult education or politics of culture, a mechanical take-over of what has been done in foreign countries could easily compromise this aim as well. That is why Iorga and Gusti founded specific Romanian cultural and educational institutions.

The institutional achievements of Iorga and Gusti in the field of adult education are completely enumerated in the aforementioned article of Mr. Prof. Sacaliș. They knew they were the beginners of a previously inexistent tradition. Therefore, one must point out that their ways of transforming ideas into institutions were different from the Western ones but, nevertheless, complementary.

For instance, Iorga has set up the Folk University in Vălenii de Munte (district of Prahova), where every summer he gave series of open lectures. Noebel (2005,) reminds us that "Iorga invited a host of scholarly and public personalities to this popular summer lecture series and, in so doing, paved the way for extension of

the rural, community school model to a broader audience" (p.3). Complementary, Gusti dedicated himself (together with his students and fellows) to the sociological empirical research all-over the country. "Gusti was fascinated with the folk-school model associated with Romanian villages and felt that it served as a blueprint for other educational endeavours. He was particularly impressed with the organization of the non-formal, systemic and multi-purpose learning activities around village libraries. He insisted, however, that all activities within these centres, however, to be based on empirical data, including needs assessment, measuring educational outcomes against educational expectations of participants. In addition, he organized pedagogical training groups that brought teachers to these village libraries from a variety of other disciplines" (Noebel, 2005, p. 4).

One can grasp that Iorga and Gusti both had in mind the education addressed to rural communities and aimed for the training of local leaders – the most able individuals to exert a positive influence on their neighbours while doing agricultural works or the daily activities inside of their households. Men and women should have felt that they share a common historic destiny, common life-values and cultural values, not through an artificial equalization but through the consciousness of their belonging to a nation that everybody serves with his/ her strength, intelligence and work, bringing something different than others. Therefore, Gusti (Gusti, 1927, p. 130) said that "True politics […] is neither the lust for power nor the mere technique [of governance – n.ns., I.I.]; it is the achieving of the national ideal in social realizations; it is the insertion/ implementation of this ideal in political life through documents and institutions; it is the orientation that the state understands to give to a nation's life through technical means, according to a conception of progress and culture".

In Iorga's and Gusti's views, an efficient politics of culture (as well as, we could say, of adult education) must observe the following principles:

- "elevated" culture cannot be separated from people's culture;
- culture must be let to live in freedom, spontaneously and according to the nation's specific features;
- the governmental institutions responsible for the organization of national culture must have a large autonomy;
- such institutions are designed to ensure proper conditions for the culture, by discovering, stimulating and organizing the cooperation of all the cultural organizations of the country.

6. CONCLUSION: LESSONS FOR TODAY

In the interwar Romania, the activity of Iorga and Gusti on adult education and politics of culture (as they have conceived it) received great acknowledgement. Even in the recent years, they are often seen as venerable models for the most important cultural achievements in the whole Romanian history before 1945.

Unfortunately, their endeavour to innovate adult education has been completely neglected after the instauration of the communist political power in 1945. It is also true that, beside the interference of politics in the educational and cultural work, the adult education in the interwar Romania did not have enough time to succeed in reaching an original theoretical paradigm (i.e. a Romanian 'andragogy'); thus, for a half-century, all of these remarkable efforts remained without the expected outcome (Noebel, 2005, p. 4)[5]. Noebel (2005, p. 6–7) writes that there were at least 3 reasons for which Romanian Communism ignored the true importance of the adult education:

- the ideological indoctrination;
- the low-level of need for vocational and professional development correlated to the over-estimation of classic-formal education;
- the huge force of the static-inertial official educational system implemented in 1945: "In short, adult education remained a largely cultural project, stunted in its growth as a viable educational science and leveraged as yet another mechanism for the expression of Communist goals and aspirations". On the suspicions about adult education institutions longtime affiliation with the Communist Party's ideological trend, their staff's lack of professional development as well as the absence of an academic discipline from which to train personnel in adult education, reaching the serious lack of adult educators' credibility due to their public perception of being less qualified than other specialists (e.g. those working on didactics or pre-school education).

It is now the mission of those specialists who set up again the Romanian system of adult education after the 1989 Revolution – the most part of the job being done with the help of the National Romanian Adult Education Association and the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association, the local Bureau in Bucharest – to reconsider the valuable Romanian traditions and to renew them according to the *acquis* of the European Union. We believe that some results already acquired in this direction deserve to be mentioned and appreciated.

The first remark is that, despite the promising progress recorded in the field of adult education in Romania – especially on the line of professional training –, the national system of education remains rather rigid, therefore less permeable to innovation and change. Sava (2002, pp. 383–389, 2003, p. 9) and Isac (2001, pp. 177–182) pointed out that lifelong learning and adult education (i.e. andragogy)

[5] "It is unfortunate, however, despite Gusti's initial efforts at formalizing the field, adult education remained a collection of disparate, though ideologically similar efforts aimed at providing alternative methods for a largely analphabet rural population to achieve some level of 'Romanianness'. The application of what seemed to be a good working model in the form of the community schools was, in 1945, simply too nascent and too unevenly extended to other contexts for the field, such as it was, to withstand the onslaught of socialist indoctrination".

as distinct fields of scientific research and specific educational practice, have not been priorities for the Romanian post-revolutionary politics.

The second remark concerns the evolution of adult education in post-1989 Romania. Sava and Matache (2003, p. 13–16) identify and characterize 3 main stages of post-totalitarian Romanian adult education, whose knowledge is important for those who want to politically and professionally contribute to its future:

1. 1990–1993 – *A stage of strong decrease of the interest for adult education*, due to the social general confusion as well as to the strong increase of the interest for politics and economics. In those years, Romanian society looked like "[…] this field of education seemed to be forgotten; because the lack of interest for adult education, almost a half of the institutions of adult education belonging to the Ministry of Culture have been closed";

2. 1993–1997 – *A stage of reconstruction step by step and searching for a development strategy*. The educational offer diversified itself in the general context of liberalization of the educational market. The National Romanian Adult Education Association ('Asociația Națională a Universităților Populare' or ANUP, in Romanian) was created in 1993; it has national coverage. "In those circumstances, there was developed in Romania a market of professional in-service training; a great number of educational purveyors, public and private, came out; they endeavoured to adapt their offer to the formation needs of the adult people";

3. 1998-present-day – *A stage of development*, in which were created many important institutions, bureaus and organizations; also, some important national and international events dedicated to the issues of adult education (such as conferences, colloquiums and symposia) took place all-over the country; they enriched the scientific and cultural Romanian landscape. Adult education became a subject of academic studies in universities at level of licence, master degree and doctoral degree. A need for theoretical and methodological advances (for instance, an official definition of adult education, a distinction between adult education and lifelong/ lifewide learning and so on) there is, still, felt.

The third remark is the following: we believe that, maybe, the most important lesson that Iorga and Gusti transmitted to us, those who are living in the present, is the knowledge and will of becoming successful "adult educators" . Briefly, their message says that those who want to dedicate themselves to adult education in Romania (perhaps in other countries, too), especially the officials who are appointed to take decisions in education, must keep in their minds that *education and culture are intimately linked*. Both have to be a permanent preoccupation for a country's government. As Gusti said, the problem of culture refers even to economy's turnover: if moral-spiritual values are missing from the people's being, there it would be no economic efficiency at all. Then, somebody who wants and has to deal with adult education has to learn her/ himself how to overcome the self-content when being a specialist in a certain field. Besides, these persons have to take always into account the specific local needs of the adult population, not identifying or confusing national demands with those of foreign countries.

Last, but not least, I think that there is a special imperative of *morality* (i.e. of a particular *ethos*) that Iorga and Gusti passed on to us as a valuable legacy in the field of culture and adult education. It is important as well *to know* and *to apply* decently pieces of knowledge in a certain field; but, much more important, is *to live* and *to assume* boldly their interplay in a creative and responsible manner, in order to make out of them an *ideal model* for the present ones and for those who will come afterwards.

REFERENCES

Dimitrie Gusti. (n.d.). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved March 10, 2013, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dimitrie_Gusti.

Gusti, D. 1997). Conference at the Romanian Social Institute in Bucharest. In N. Sacaliş, *Politica culturală şi politica educaţională – la noi şi în lume [Politics of Culture and Politics of Education – in Romania and abroad]* (pp. 119–131). Bucharest: National Romanian Adult Education Association, Folk University "Ioan I. Dalles" (Original conference given on June 10, 1927).

Iorga, N. (1997). Conference at the Romanian Social Institute in Bucharest. In N. Sacaliş, *Politica culturală şi politica educaţională – la noi şi în lume [Politics of Culture and Politics of Education – in Romania and abroad]* (pp. 105–118). Bucharest: National Romanian Adult Education Association, Folk University "Ioan I. Dalles" (Original conference given on November 20, 1927).

Isac, I. (2001). Cercetarea în educaţia adulţilor din România [Research in Romanian Adult Education]. In S. Sava (Ed.), *Educaţia adulţilor în România – Politici educaţionale, culturale şi sociale [Adult Education in Romania – Educational, Cultural and Social Politics]*, Volumul primei Conferinţe naţionale de educaţia adulţilor [Proceedings of the first National Conference on Adult Education], Timişoara: Editura „Alanahul Banatului".

Isac, I. (2003). *În căutarea modelului paideic [In search for the Paideic Model]*, Cluj-Napoca: Editura „Casa Cărţii de Ştiinţă".

Isac, I. (2004). From Free Market Economy to Human Development. An Ethical Approach for Lifelong Learning in Romania. *Lifelong Learning in Europe*, *9*(4), 260–263.

Nicolae Iorga. (n.d.). In *Wikipedia*. Retrieved March 10, 2013, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nicolae_Iorga#Iorga.27s_reputation_for_genius.Noebel, E. (2005, 10 September). *The Field of Adult Education in Romania*, manuscript.

Paloş, R., Sava, S., Ungureanu, D. (2007). *Educaţia adulţilor. Baze teoretice şi repere practice [Adult Education. Theoretical Foundations and Practical Marks]*, Iaşi: Polirom.

Sacaliş, N. (1998). Nicolae Iorga and Dimitrie Gusti: Two Pioneers of Adult Education in Romania. In M. Friedenthal-Haase (Ed.), *Personality and Biography: Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference on the History of Adult Education*, Vol. II, *Biographies of Adult Educators from Five Continents* (pp. 705–710). Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Sava, S. (2002). Adult education in Romania in the last ten years – requirements and realities. In F. Poggeler, B. Nemeth (Eds.), *Ethics, Ideals and Ideologies in the History of Adult Education*, Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.

Sava, S., Matache, M. (2003). *Portret al educaţiei adulţilor în România [Portrait of Adult Education in Romania]*. Bucharest: IREA (Institutul Român de Educaţie a Adulţilor).

Schifirneţ, C. (2007). Modelul explicativ al evoluţiei societăţii româneşti moderne [The Explanatory Model of Modern Romanian Society's Evolution]. In M. Mamulea (Ed.), *Studii de istorie a filosofiei româneşti [Studies on the History of Romanian Philosophy]* (pp. 101–132). Bucharest: Romanian Academy Publishing House.