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## THE DEVA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY AND THE SCHOOLS OF ARTS AND CRAFTS BETWEEN 1924-1928

**Апстракт:** *На почетокот на XX век, потребата од романски занаетчи во Трансилванија овозможила формирање училишта за уметност и занаетчиство. Овие училишта обучуваа ученици за разни занаети кои или не постоеја или имаше недостиг од нив, но беа потребни на пазарот на трудот. Трговско-индустриската комора на Дева им обезбеди на учениците од овие стручни училишта материјална помош и стипендии. Учениците беа од различна националност и оние кои доаѓаа од сиромашни семејства добиваа облека, училишен прибор и сл. Овие училишта успеаја да создадат занаетчи што беа многу неопходни за општеството и за пазарот на трудот.*

**Клучни зборови:** *училишта, занаети, студенти, трговско-индустриска комора, економија, пазар на труд*

The precarious economic situation of the Romanians from Transylvania at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, to which was added the school policy of Magyarization and limited access of the Romanians to certain types of schools, led them to find viable solutions in order to overcome the impasse caused by the Hungarian government. The Romanians realized that only they could achieve economic, social and political progress, as they had managed to raise the Romanian culture by fighting with the pen, making it known throughout Europe.

The particularly poor economic status of the Transylvanian Romanians was the results of the backward state which had been forced on them, their access to various trades being limited to those of doctor, lawyer, notary, priest, primary school teacher,

bank clerk and mayor.<sup>1</sup> In the public administration of the state, there were few Romanians, and if one somehow managed to get into the system, he could not make a career unless he renounced his people and language, otherwise he remained an outsider who was thrown from one corner of the country to another, at the end of his career finding himself where people of other nationalities were just starting on their career paths. It should also be mentioned that the tuition was very high considering the financial possibilities of Romanians. However, many well-off Romanians made enormous financial sacrifices to keep their children in school, and it was not uncommon that by the end of their children's studies they would have lost the little wealth they had painfully acquired. And the satisfactions were not commensurate with the sacrifices; on the contrary, the hopes and dreams they had during the studies were shattered by the cruel reality in which access to a job was possible only through protection or by means of private practice. Thus, from a hope of the whole family, the graduate would turn into yet another burden for the family, an alienated person, who found no place, either among his own, whom he had surpassed, or among the "gentlemen" who did not accept him, the only escape left being emigration. Hence, the emergence and development of the phenomenon of mass emigration of the educated from Transylvania to Romania in particular, but also to other countries.

The lack of Romanian craftsmen became a significant reality of the early twentieth century, a state of affairs that required immediate action. Opinions were unanimous on how to resolve this issue, namely the establishment of schools of arts and crafts to train Romanian craftsmen. The Romanian intellectuals and the few specialists were aware of the poor professional training of the Romanian craftsmen, in small numbers anyway, considering that most of them were more like bunglers than professionals, who did not keep their word and kept postponing customers from one day to the next and did not have the diplomacy of foreign craftsmen to attract customers, nor did they have the means "to sell on layaway" like the foreigners. Besides, they had neither the foreigners' skills nor their habits.<sup>2</sup> The reason was the very big difference between the Romanian and foreign learning systems of trades. In our country, everything was done in a hurry, superficially, in a very short time, most of the students coming from poor families, who, when going to learn a trade, did not know how to write, read and count, unlike the foreigners, who went to school, sometimes even three times longer than the Romanians, and who worked as apprentices for long periods of time in order to master the secrets of the trade and to perfect themselves in its art, a trade which was usually practiced in the family from generation to generation.

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<sup>1</sup> *Bunul Econom*, „Organizațiuni economice și școale profesionale IV”, Orăștie, no. 16, 1901, 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Bunul Econom*, „Sunt destul de sprijiniți meseriașii noștri?”, Orăștie, no. 12, 1901, 4-5.

It is known that the Romanian press from Transylvania was considered the forum from which the nation's problems were disseminated and debated. The issue of economic organizations and vocational schools did not remain outside the public interest either, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* of April 3, 1901 publishing a material referring precisely to this issue. The progress in the economic and social fields was noticed, the modern conquests like "widening the people's education, the banks and the credit and savings societies, the cultural societies, the temperance societies, etc. ..." being considered absolutely necessary, but not sufficient.<sup>3</sup> The main effect of the emergence and development of the banking system was to combat and eliminate usury from villages, but the solution was "specialization and putting the inanimate forces of nature in the service of and for the satisfaction of human needs," which at the time was considered the general trend in agriculture as well as in trade and industry".<sup>4</sup> But these institutions were criticized for not having brought the necessary capital in agriculture, capital that would have allowed the Romanian peasants to exploit the land more efficiently and rationally, which would have raised productivity, the living standard of the Romanian peasants and the national wealth.<sup>5</sup> On the one hand, the banks did not show enough interest in the agricultural sector; on the other hand, the demand for capital was insufficient, mostly due to the conservatism of the Romanian peasants, as well as due to the insufficient information of the people in this respect. Consumer societies (from Blaj, Sibiu etc.) were set up in order to spread small-scale trade from towns and villages among Romanians, and the Trade Assemblies, whose aim was to spread trades among Romanians, were somewhat minimized, as it was thought that their efforts could not have spectacular results in the face of the big-factory industry.

Despite all these impediments, the Romanian society progressed, albeit slowly. There was an incipient specialization by products, in agriculture depending on the area, an incipient trade in products between peasants, as well as the development of new sectors, such as the breeding of purebred cattle or the cultivation of varietal fruit. These advances were worth encouraging and therefore it was suggested that Romanian agents be specialized to collect all these products from small and large producers, sort and ship them to major shopping centers from Romania and abroad to get the best possible prices.<sup>6</sup> The existence of such Romanian companies that would be engaged in the exploitation of the national production was seen as absolutely necessary.

The Romanians, who worked mostly as manual laborers, jobs from which they could not possibly evolve and become capitalists, were also prevented from becoming economically independent and entrepreneurs at their own risk by their lack of practi-

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<sup>3</sup> *Gazeta Transilvaniei*, „Organizațiunile economice și școle profesionale I”, Brașov, no. 64, 1901, 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>5</sup> *Bunul Econom*, „Organizațiunile economice și școle profesionale II”, Orăștie, no. 13, 1901, 1-2.

<sup>6</sup> *Bunul Econom*, „Organizațiunile economice și școle profesionale III”, Orăștie, no. 15, 1901, 1.

cal education regarding the needs of industry and trade. Therefore, it was necessary to set up vocational schools to fill this gap. This type of school was absolutely necessary for the Romanian society. There were projects to have them supported financially by richer churches, neighboring communes, banks, credit and savings organizations.<sup>7</sup> It was proposed that most lower vocational schools be established for profitability, so that after a few years of operation they could support themselves financially. Each school should have attracted and influenced the local production on the one hand, and should have acted as a mediator between producers and consumers on the other. Knowing the real situation well, the schools were to train students in the trades that were missing or there was a shortage thereof, but that were necessary on the labor market.

Romania also faced a shortage of Romanian craftsmen, which is why it was decided to establish 40 vocational schools starting with September 1, 1901.<sup>8</sup> In this sense, the Assembly of Romanian Craftsmen from Orăștie received a circular letter from the Inspectorate of Industrial Education within the Romanian Ministry of Cults requesting craftsmen-instructors for the schools to be established. These schools were to train students in the following trades: 1). wicker, rush, straw, reed and wood ribbon (woodchip) weavers; 2). rope makers; 3). carpenters, wheelwrights; 4). blacksmiths who also knew farriery; 5). coopers 6). tinsmiths; 7). potters-ceramists; 8). hatters; 9). furriers; 10). strap/harness makers; 11). brush makers.<sup>9</sup>

Admitted candidates benefited from a number of advantages, including their employment by the Ministry of Public Instruction with a 5-year contract that could be renewed, "but with the right for the Ministry, in case they were not satisfied with the ability, skill, activity and conduct of the employed instructors, to terminate the contract within the first 2 years".<sup>10</sup> The hired instructors appointed by the Ministry were to receive a monthly salary between 100 - 150 lei, depending on the school, the fixed salary being supplemented by the share in the benefits resulting from the sale of the objects made in workshops to which they were entitled, according to the March 31 Law 1899, art. 37 and art. 49. Moreover, the instructors were also provided with housing insofar as the school buildings allowed it.<sup>11</sup>

Applications for employment in these schools were also accepted from Saxon craftsmen if for some trades there were no Romanian applicants. The need for these vocational schools was felt all the more acutely as Romanians were aware of the economic progress and the new requirements for training good specialists. The craftsmen

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<sup>7</sup> *Idem*, „Organizațiunile economice și școale profesionale V”, Orăștie, nr. 17, 1901, 1-2.

<sup>8</sup> *Idem*, „Se caută meseriași români”, Orăștie, no. 34, 1901, 1-3.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*.

had to know “a little practical calculation, to know exactly the measures of all kinds, to have knowledge of geometry, to know how to measure the surface and volume of bodies, things that occur in every-day practical life”.<sup>12</sup>

The vocational schools were organized according to the March 31 Law 1899, as modified by the 9 July 1901 Decree No. 2727 and the 25 April 1908 Decree No. 1328, published in the Official Gazette No. 161 of 29 August 1901 and No. 22 of 29 April 1908.<sup>13</sup>

In Hunedoara county, starting with 1924/1925, several schools of arts and crafts were established, which, for their immediate needs, requested material aid from the Chamber of Industry and Commerce from Deva. For example, according to the letter no. 1883/2/1925, the Aiud School of Arts and Crafts received from the Deva Chamber of Industry and Commerce four scholarships worth 3,000 lei for poor and deserving students.<sup>14</sup> This school, led at that time by the principal E. Theodoru, had a duration of 5 years, the classes being taught daily between 2 pm and 6 pm, and between 7 am and 12 the students carried out their work in workshops. They studied arithmetic, geometry, technology, industrial drawing, ornamental drawing, physics, reading and composition, geography, history, French, mechanics and machine parts, electrical engineering, chemistry and calligraphy.<sup>15</sup> When it was founded in 1924, the school had only 15 students and just one carpentry department, but starting with October 1, 1925, the mechanical locksmith's and tailor's department was established, with 40 students, amounting to a total of 65 students, most of whom came from poor families of Romanian peasants or were war orphans.<sup>16</sup>

The school operated in a small building provided by Aiud City Hall and in four other small buildings, had a canteen where 25 students ate daily, as well as a small dormitory for ten scholarship holders (the scholarship was 3,000 lei per year), of whom five received state scholarships, two needed no financial aid, and three received scholarships from banks that had granted aid to the war orphans.<sup>17</sup>

If in 1924 the school was allocated a budget of 270,000 lei, in 1925 it was increased to 490,000 lei, plus 300,000 lei for the teachers' salaries.

Alba de Jos County had two schools of arts and crafts, in Aiud and Zlatna, which had only a stonecutter's trade department.

The Deva Chamber of Commerce was involved in several actions of these schools, trying to help them in every possible way. For example, it delegated a commission

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<sup>12</sup> *Bunul econom*, „Se caută meseriași români”, Orăștie, no. 34, 1901, 1-3.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>14</sup> *DJAN Hunedoara*, Fond Camera de Comerț și Industrie Deva, dosar no. 88/F.A. 106, nr. inv. 24/1925, f. 1.

<sup>15</sup> *Idem*, dosar no. 2172/2/1925, f. 56-57.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*.

consisting of the teacher Mihaly, the engineer Segesdy and the principal N. Rășcanu to draw up a project for a “Home” for apprentices in the city of Deva. The report prepared by the commission proposed providing “at least humane” conditions for young apprentices who lived “in the deepest neglect as can be seen”, taking as an example the homes for apprentices from Timișoara, Bucharest, etc., which had proved to be a real success. Factories, owners, the city or the county would have supported the project. And in order for such an investment to be effective, the home was expected to include a dining room, a kitchen, a bathroom, dormitories, a reading hall, and provide education for at least 100 students.<sup>18</sup> The courses were to take place from Monday to Friday, in the evening between from 8 pm to 10 pm, the subjects studied being arithmetic, geometry, technology, industrial economics, technical drawing, machine parts and accounting. The teachers were paid a salary of “150 lei per hour per week.” The students-journeymen had the obligation to attend at least two of the main courses and a secondary one. Technical drawing was compulsory, with monthly written tests. The final exam would be taken at the end of May, and the students who passed it would receive a training certificate.

The Deva Chamber of Commerce and Industry was to delegate one of its members to oversee the courses and for administration. The Chamber would bear the costs incurred by school supplies, lighting, heating and cleaning of the school premises.<sup>19</sup>

The Chamber of Commerce also believed that, given the increased number of arts and crafts schools in the county, they should be limited according to their possibilities, namely:<sup>20</sup> providing teachers and instructors specialized for the type of these vocational schools, providing these schools with the necessary materials for laboratories, machine tools, teaching materials, etc. for the teaching program to take place in the best conditions, and the recruitment of the best students to become instructors in the school.

The “I. Panaitescu” School of Arts and Crafts from Deva, founded in 1922, had Mr. N. Rășcanu as principal in 1925, and the principal of the School of Apprentices was the teacher E. Mihály; in 1925, 170 apprentices were enrolled in Deva.<sup>21</sup>

The school program included 5 hours a day of practical work in workshops under the guidance of instructors and 3 hours of theoretical courses, in which the following subjects were studied: technology, technical and ornamental drawing, arithmetic, geometry, accounting, Romanian language, history, geography, physics, chemistry, mechanics, French, music, religion, calligraphy and gymnastics.<sup>22</sup> The school had sev-

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<sup>18</sup> *DJAN Hunedoara, Fond Camera de Comerț și Industrie Deva, dosar nr. 2172/2/1925, f. 3.*

<sup>19</sup> *DJAN Hunedoara, Fond Camera de Comerț și Industrie Deva, dosar no. 2172/2/1925, f. 3.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem, f. 11.*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem, f. 8.*

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem, f. 53.*

eral departments – “art locksmith’s trade and mechanical locksmith’s trade, tinsmith’s trade, electricity, artistic and scaffolding carpentry, sculpture.” The students included 55 boarders and 16 external, and the teachers were “qualified and specialized”; among the instructors were some graduates of the school. The school’s inventory included the following: furniture worth 100,000 lei, works and buildings worth 1,600,000 lei, materials worth 100,000 lei, machines worth 500,000 lei and tools worth 250,000 lei.<sup>23</sup> In the school year 1924/1925, the school boasted an income budget of 1,166,107 lei and expenses of 1,030,081.80 lei.<sup>24</sup>

The School of Arts and Crafts from Orăștie was founded on October 1, 1924 and was led by the principal C. Alecsandrescu.<sup>25</sup> In 1925, the school had 6 workshops and a total of 76 students, of whom 26 in the second grade, 50 in the first grade, and 60 boarders. The teaching staff consisted of 13 teachers, among whom 6 were instructors for workshops, all graduates from a school of arts and crafts, some even graduates from a higher-level school and with an experience of 5 to 11 years in large factories.<sup>26</sup> The teachers were high school graduates and had taken courses in the subjects they were teaching.

The theoretical courses were the following: reading-composition (knowledge of the Romanian language, history, geography, hygiene, civic education, industrial legislation), religion, arithmetic, accounting, geometry and geometric drawing, specialized drawing and estimates, ornamental drawing, technology, music, French, chemistry, physics, calligraphy, mechanics and machine parts, engines, electrical engineering, and were taught from Monday to Friday between 1 pm and 6 pm; practical work in workshops was in the morning, from 8 am to 11 am; and on Saturdays, the students attended classes between 8 am and 1 pm, the afternoon being reserved for cleaning the home.

The school’s project for the future provided for obtaining the amount of 600,000 lei for the completion of repairs to the school premises and 150,000 lei for the installation of a hydraulic turbine of 100 HP, the necessary power for the machine tools in the workshops, the installation of a wheat and corn mill to bring an income for the maintenance of the boarding school, a home for apprentices, additional teaching and administrative staff, the establishment of 5 more workshops with all the necessary endowments, the acquisition of more equipment and tools.<sup>27</sup>

Besides the money received from the Ministry of Instruction, the school received a number of donations and grants as follows: 4,000 lei – a grant for clothing

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 58-59.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>27</sup> DJAN Hunedoara, Fond Camera de Comerț și Industrie Deva, dosar nr. 2172/2/1925, f. 58-59.

and books, 200,000 lei for repairs to the building donated by the commune of Orăștie, a grant of land of 5 acres of tillable land, 3,000 lei for clothing the poor students, 10,000 lei for food.

The school had in its possession materials worth 38,576 lei and tools worth 15,000 lei, a library with 300 books, several collections of various minerals, and teaching materials.<sup>28</sup>

A newer school was that of the State Iron Works of Hunedoara, founded on October 1, 1925. The manager of the works and mines in that year was Dan Penețean, and the engineer Em. Popescu was consultant for the school. The admission conditions were the following: minimum age, 13, previous studies of at least 4 primary classes and Romanian nationality. The admission required an examination in the subjects taught in primary school, with priority given to the works' apprentices.<sup>29</sup> Fifty-four student-apprentices attended the school.

The activity of the apprenticeship school took place according to the following schedule: 8 am – 12, theoretical courses, generally held by the factory's engineers, and between 1 pm – 5 pm, practical work in the factory workshops. The theoretical subjects studied were Romanian, history, geography, arithmetic, geometry, hygiene, physics, chemistry, constructions, carpentry, foundry, modeling, mechanics, electricity, furnaces, machines and industrial drawing.<sup>30</sup> The students did not pay any fees, and the living costs were borne entirely by the factory.

In addition to the arts and crafts schools, commercial schools were also established. One of these schools, established in 1926 by the Deva Chamber of Industry and Commerce, was the "I. Vulcan" Practical School of Commerce from Deva. Like the other commercial schools, it was established in order to meet the needs of Hunedoara county commerce. The need for these schools was recognized even by the state, which issued a special regulation granting graduates privileges such as reduced military service to 1 year.<sup>31</sup> The school curriculum was designed in such a way that future graduates would be able to run their businesses in the best conditions.

The following subjects were taught: commercial arithmetic, Romanian language and correspondence, German language and correspondence, economic geography, goods, study of commerce, accounting, and calligraphy. E. Rusiecki, secretary general of the Deva Chamber, was the principal of the school. It seems that after just one year of functioning, through the efforts of the teaching staff, the school achieved the best results.

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibidem*, f. 63-64.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>31</sup> *DJAN Hunedoara, Fond Camera de Comerț și Industrie Deva*, dosar no. 34/1925, f. 3-4.

In 1928, a picture of the apprentices from Deva, by trade and nationality, gives us a broad overview of the trades required on the labor market. Thus, there were 95 Romanians who specialized as shoemakers, barbers, belt/harness makers, tailors, blacksmiths, mechanical fitters, butchers, seamstresses, stone carvers, wheelwrights, stove fitters, carpenters, printers, tinsmiths, tanners, masons and painters, a total of 115 Hungarians, who unlike the Romanians also specialized as watchmakers, waiters, joiners, coopers, dentists, photographers, upholsterers, weavers, gingerbread makers, hatters, workers who prepared intestines for sausages and comb makers, and 19 Jews, who in addition to the above trades also specialized as wood lathe operators and printers.<sup>32</sup>

The importance of the arts and crafts, apprentices or commercial schools lies in the fact that they made considerable efforts to meet the demands of the labor market, the theoretical and practical courses aiming to provide the graduates with the necessary information, technical and specialized knowledge. In a relatively short time, they specialized in various trades that were required on the labor market. In addition, through the subjects studied during the schooling years, they also acquired elements of general knowledge, which contributed to shaping their personality and moral-human quality. Not to be neglected was the aid given to the students who came from poor families, which allowed them access to learning a trade that would ensure their future livelihoods. From a social point of view, these schools managed to form a body of craftsmen absolutely necessary to society, with a social education in consensus with the course of society, maintaining “a constant connection between leaders and the led, i.e. between different social classes”.<sup>33</sup> And this is because the job of the craftsman and of the worker is as important as the school that trains them.

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<sup>32</sup> *DJAN Hunedoara, Fond Camera de Comerț și Industrie Deva*, dosar no. 18/1928, f. 3.

<sup>33</sup> *DJAN Hunedoara, Fond Camera de Comerț și Industrie Deva*, dosar no. 24/1925, f. 63-64.

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