

Budget Allocations and Pre-university Educational Policies Promoted by the Romanian Government in the First Decade of the Interwar Period

Alexandru MITRU¹,
Loredana-Andreea PĂUN
(PARNIC)²
Mihai-Claudiu NASTASE^{3*}

¹“Valahia” University-
I.O.S.U.D./S.D.S.I., Targoviste,
Romania, alexandrumitru@yahoo.com

* Corresponding Author

²“Valahia” University-
I.O.S.U.D./S.D.S.I., Targoviste,
Romania, andreea.parnic@yahoo.com

³“Valahia” University-
I.O.S.U.D./S.D.S.I., Targoviste,
Romania, nastase_mc@yahoo.com

Abstract: In this research, the authors are investigating the way how the governmental authorities in Romania approached in the first decade of the interwar period the problem of reforming the pre-university education system.

Its reorganization was very important for two basic reasons: it had to ensure the national unitary character of the state and, at the same time, it had to have a decisional influence for the development direction of the new state: conservative-traditionalist (peasant) or progressive (industrialized).

The principles that stood at the base of the educational policy in Romania during the discussed period, debated and analyzed by the politicians of that time, by the decision-makers, teachers, parents, specialists etc., is an important concern in today's society, given the urgent need to achieve a profound change in today's Romanian pre-university education system. The importance of the study resides from the wish to stretch those Romanian educational traditions necessary to project and implement of a curricula reform today, which should correspond both to the expectations of students, parents and the economic and social needs of contemporary society.

Investing in the education system was a matter of national priority because the school was considered a tool for building the Romanian nation in the new geopolitical context. There have been massive investments in expanding the school infrastructure in terms of primary and secondary education, but also in increasing the number of teachers. In 1922 the share of public education expenditures in the state budget expenditures was 10.1%, and in 1928 it rose to 13.4%.

Keywords: *education, government policy, pre-university school, educational reform, interwar period.*

How to cite: Mitru, A., Păun (Parnic), L. -A., & Năstase, M. -C. (2020). Budget Allocations and Pre-university Educational Policies Promoted by the Romanian Government in the First Decade of the Interwar Period. In M. W. Staniewski, V. Vasile, & A. Grigorescu (vol. ed.), *Lumen Proceedings: Vol. 14. International Conference Innovative Business Management & Global Entrepreneurship (IBMAGE 2020)* (pp. 450-466). Iasi, Romania: LUMEN Publishing House.

<https://doi.org/10.18662/lumproc/ibmage2020/33>



1. Introduction

At the end of the First World War, the Romanian society was facing a new challenge in terms of how the new state should be organized. The legislative measures proposed by the political parties for the integration of the new provinces had as main objective the creation of the organizational framework that would determine the consolidation of the edifice created on December 1st, 1918. Regarding the organization of the education system, the government authorities started from the premise that only by promoting a quality education, to which all citizens of the new state should have access, it was possible to develop that national empathy capable of contributing essentially to the development of Romania in its new borders.

2. Problem Statement

The organization of the pre-university education system in the interwar period is a complex and insufficiently studied subject. In very few cases have researchers stopped to analyze in depth the public policies promoted in the field of education or the pedagogical theories enunciated in the academic environment between the two world wars. Materials on the development of education have been published for some localities or regions, as well as general works on this subject, but there is a lack of research on the evolution of ideas and principles on the development of educational policies.

3. Research Questions/Aims of the research

The problem of the evolution of public policies in the educational field in the interwar period has a disertable character considering the possibility of development and diversification of this research. Within the contemporary Romanian society, the need for a profound reform regarding the pre-university education system is imperatively felt. This reform must be carried out on the basis of clear and innovative educational policies related to the need to train the young generation in close connection with the new coordinates of economic development, administrative organization, socio-political and cultural activities.

We cannot talk about progress in the field of pre-university education without knowing the tradition of the Romanian school and the stages of development it has gone through. Given this situation, we considered it necessary to carry out an in-depth analysis of the ideas and principles expressed by the political class in the first decade of the interwar

period regarding the educational programs implemented in the field of pre-university education. Analyzing the transformations made in the pre-university education system during the studied period, we have the possibility to understand the defining features of the mechanisms for achieving literacy and skills training necessary for the young generation prepared to strengthen the institutional framework of interwar Romania. All these transformations, these educational reforms, are all the more interesting considering that nowadays the Romanian society requests to the pre-university education system the formation of some practical competences to the young generation, which should ensure an efficient professional training.

4. Research Methods

In this material we have analyzed the educational policies promoted by public authorities as reflected in the programmatic documents and in the public debates. We tried to capture the evolution of political discourse regarding the need to develop the education system or the changes in the ideological positions of government authorities or political leaders with influence in interwar political life. This approach was done using in the analysis, primary sources of documentation: archive documents, programs of political parties, published in document collections or in the press of the time, ideologies and doctrines of political parties, presented in publications of the time and educational policies elaborated by those who held important positions in the Ministry of Public Instruction in the interwar period. Regarding the methodological approach during the research, we used qualitative research as a study method. My approach was directed to an in-depth analysis of political programs, articles published in the press, parliamentary speeches and documents and studies published in the interwar period by those directly involved in establishing the educational policies of government political forces. We took into account the perspective of those who drafted the programmatic documents, the social, cultural, political and economic context in which they were published and the fact that they were written, in many cases, for propaganda or electoral purposes. We used discourse analysis to set the terminology used by politicians and to identify changes in educational policy support. The transformations that took place in the interwar society also changed the options of the specialists regarding the organization of public education, and the political parties adapted their political programs permanently.

5. Findings

Romania's economic development – the raise of the industrial volume, the agricultural commerce necessities - brought about, even before the war was over, the consideration of reorganizing education on all levels.

In the government led by Alexandru Marghiloman (5th March – 23rd October 1918), Professor Simion Mehedinți held the office of Minister of Public Instruction. Being concerned with the state of the education system at this complicated time during the war, and wishing for the 1918-1919 school year to take place as best as possible, Simion Mehedinți worked out a set of laws designed to transform the Romanian school system.

The main point of these laws was to change 'the school of the people', which was what primary school was called back then. Knowing that school reform should start with preparing the educators, the Minister of Public Instruction decided that the selection of future teachers should be made on vocational criteria, out of those who had graduated "preparatory and normal schools" [7].

Through the law passed in 1919, Simion Mehedinți made school compulsory for seven years, instead of four. Thus, he created the 'over primary' education, which was designed to help with the practical education of those students who couldn't afford going to secondary school. In Simion Mehedinți's view, the villager represented the cornerstone of the nation, and that's why primary school had to be one especially designed for him, capable of preparing the future farmer and craftsman in the spirit of the traditional life and workstyle of the Romanian villager.

Although Simion Mehedinți's law didn't get to be properly enforced, its general principles would be later found in the legislative measures taken during the education reform, performed by his predecessors.

In the liberal government led by Ion I. C. Brătianu (29th November 1918 – 12th September 1919), Dr. Constantin Angelescu, a well-known surgeon, held the office of Minister of Public Instruction. Through his endeavours in the ministry, Dr. Angelescu would make his mark in developing the Romanian education system between the wars.

A first measure taken by the Minister Dr. Angelescu had to do with the development of compulsory education. The Decree of 5th July 1919 extended the compulsory primary education until the age of sixteen and established the complementary course as the second compulsory course of primary schooling. This course had a practical utility for children who could not afford to continue their studies in theoretical or practical secondary school.

Peter P. Negulescu, as the Minister of Public Instruction in the government led by General Alexandru Averescu (March 13th, 1920 - December 16th, 1921) developed a first draft education law in 1921, in order to primarily solve the most pressing problem of the education system after the Union: the unification of Romanian education of all the historical provinces in one type of school.

One of the first major steps taken by the Minister Petre P. Negulescu was to reorganize the ministry, separating education from cults. The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Public Education turns, from June 13th, 1920, into the Ministry of Public Instruction and the Ministry of Religions.

Just like his predecessors, in the legislative draft of 1921, Petre P. Negulescu considered that over-primary education was for those categories of children who could not afford going to secondary school, and would turn to manual labour. For this reason, he sought to ensure it as primarily a practical education.

Compulsory education was increased to eight years. Peter P. Negulescu proposed that the old four compulsory "beginning" classes be followed by another four "completing" ones, in which the work would be mainly carried out in school workshops [6]. The whirl of political events of the time made Petre P. Negulescu's project not come to a vote in parliament, as the government of General Alexandru Averescu was removed from power.

Once Ion I.C. Brătianu returned to government (January 19th, 1922 - March 29th, 1926), Dr. Angelescu, Minister of Public Instruction, received political support to reform the education system. Romania's economy was until 1922 in a period of recovery in which the social product did not reach the level existing before the war. In the following period (1923-1926), the Romanian economy went through a period of post-war recovery, with inflation that was difficult to manage and high costs of adapting to the new geopolitical situation [2]. In this difficult economic situation, the liberal government has promoted a policy of massive investments in the development of the pre-university education system.

Investing in the education system was a matter of national priority because the school was considered a tool for building the Romanian nation in the new geopolitical context created after the Union. The changes made regarding the educational system during the studied period were implemented in the conditions of increasing the expenditures made from the state budget for this field. Between 1922 and 1928, the budgetary resources allocated to the development of the educational system increased more than

6,2 times. The increase of the sums destined for the development of the educational system was the consequence of increasing the level of the total expenditures of the state budget. There have been massive investments in expanding the school infrastructure in terms of primary and secondary education, but also in increasing the number of teachers. In 1922 the share of public education expenditures in the state budget expenditures was 10.1%, and in 1928 it rose to 13.4% [15].

In the economic conditions shown, the Minister of Public Instruction, Dr. Angelescu, launched an extensive school construction campaign. In 1923, education of all grades received 7.3% of total state expenditure, but to this percentage were added the sums from extraordinary credits: 200 million for construction, 50 million for scholarships, and 500 million for construction wood, reaching in fact 12.2% of state expenditures. Between 1922 and 1926, 4,007 primary schools were built, 268 school premises were purchased, 889 schools underwent major repairs, and 660 school premises were under construction at the end of the Liberal government's term. 1,511 new homes were built for school principals. Together, they represent the impressive number of 7,335 new buildings in the service of education. By 1928, almost 7,800 primary school premises had been built and all schools had been repaired, some of which had been almost completely destroyed during the war. For this purpose, significant amounts were spent from the state budget, to which were added the extraordinary credits, as well as the amounts obtained by the school committees (almost 760 million lei), the voluntary work submitted by the villagers and almost 2 billion lei, the value of the wood made available free of charge from the state forests [1]. As the state budget alone could not support such a rapid expansion of the school system, part of the cash and labor costs involved were covered by sums raised through school committees established in 1919 [4]. During this period the number of primary schools increased from 6,508 in the school year 1920/1921 to - 14,318 in the school year 1927/1928. At the same time, the number of teachers increased from 13,646 to 37,338, and the number of students assigned to a teacher decreased in the same period from 61 to 45 [15].

The Minister of Public Instruction was planning a rapid rearrangement of primary education due to the inability of the state to achieve an efficient education cycle. In May 1922 Dr. Angelescu addressed the teachers, speaking about the need for reform and asserted that "rural primary education does not give the results we expected, as more than half of school-age children remain without the basic knowledge that they should acquire in primary schooling"[12].

Considering the sad state of the Romanian education, Dr. Angelescu aimed to accomplish the education reform in several stages, starting from two major considerations. The first was that of the unification of the four types of school organization that existed in Romania. The second was that the educations of the young generation ensure what was achieved on December 1st, 1918.

In 1924, Dr. Constantin Angelescu went into Parliament with a draft law aimed at primary and normal state-supported primary education. In the *Explanatory memorandum* to the bill for primary education, the Minister of Public Instruction stated that "Only by enlightening and strengthening the national consciousness will we enhance the powers of life and resistance of the nation to all assaults from without and within, and will we ensure the durability of our dominion and of our new borders of the kingdom". It was clear that this law was to strengthen the national unitary state, and that this consolidation could not be achieved without the awakening of national consciousness and the unification of mind of all Romanians. And this could be done only through the education system.

At the same time, the Liberal government aimed towards strengthening the faith in the virtues of democratic rule through school. Dr. Angelescu showed that democracy "gives everyone the possibility to elevate themselves where his intellectual powers and his work permit, for only thus can the hierarchy of merit be established. But because anyone can elevate themselves, they should have the freedom and opportunity to gain the broadest education the country can offer. Only by doing so, the country may put forward and use all its values"[16].

In drafting the bill, the Minister of Public Instruction consulted the teachers' associations in all provinces, and the territorial bodies of the Ministry which were in charge of controlling and guiding the teaching activity. Furthermore, the project proposed by Dr. Angelescu was debated in the Congress of the Association of Teachers across the country, which was held from 8th to 12th September 1922. Following these discussions, the draft legislation took final shape, being submitted to Parliament in the extended ordinary session of 1923 – 1924.

This impressive political project gave cultural figures of the Romanian Parliament the opportunity to highlight the importance of adopting the law and at the same time to make a number of critical comments, suggestions and additions. The Minister of Public Instruction was present at all the debates in the Senate and intervened on several occasions with answers and clarifications.

Dr. Angelescu insisted in front of the Legislature on the essential requirements covered by the project, which sought both to spread culture in all walks of life, and to unify education and make it live up to the requirements of the time and of the modern teaching. At the same time, free and compulsory education had to become an absolute necessity, and had to erase the "shame of illiteracy, which puts our country among the most backward countries in this part of the world" and to open a period of progress for Romanian society [8].

The state primary education law and that of the normal-primary education adopted on 24th July 1924 reveals the importance that was given to the problem of training and educating the broadest category of children, at a time when, in the most advanced European countries a longer than four years compulsory education had already been adopted.

The primary education was the first degree of the education system and consisted of: *the school of young children* (kindergarten); *the primary school* (of 7 years); *the schools and courses for adults* (to reduce illiteracy) and *the schools for feeble children and the abnormal students*.

This law also secured the duties of the Ministry of Public Instruction for primary education: the guidance and general supervision of primary education, the preparation of regulations and syllabuses for primary education, the research and approval of regulations for the management and operation of primary schools, and the syllabuses for private schools.

According to the Constitution, primary education was declared free and compulsory, and at the same time, uniform throughout the country. Based on Article 6 of the law, all Romanian citizens were bound to give their children basic instruction, absolutely indispensable to every citizen, including the full program of primary school for 7 years.

The objective of this law that of ensuring primary schooling for all children, caused in many cases hostility towards the school because of teachers forcefully applying the sanctions provided by law. That is why Dr. Angelescu more than once gave further explanation on punishing those parents who did not comply with Article 6 of the law. Addressing the teachers, the Minister of Education explained that "the people are not convinced by this imperative – education being compulsory – and therefore they need convincing." [13] The law stated the use of milder means of convincing, such as "notices, wide publicity, advice, encouragement, material support, the purchase of books and clothes for the children, and only in extreme cases of ill will to resort to criminal and material sanctions" [14].

Another issue raised by this law was that of Romanian language being used in teaching as compulsory. Article 7 stated: "Primary education in

state schools is taught in Romanian. In municipalities with the population of another language than Romanian, the Ministry of Public Instruction will establish primary schools with the language of instruction of the population, in the same proportion as in Romanian villages. In these schools the study of Romanian language will be compulsory and the number of hours set by the regulations" [21].

Because of the compulsory teaching of Romanian language, Hungarian MPs, and Catholic and Protestant church leaders made a number of reservations about the 1924 law. Toth Szilard claims that the situation of the Hungarian confessional schools after the Union of Transylvania with Romania gradually worsened due to the fact that the Romanian state granted them only a financial subsidy of 3.5 million lei, in 1921. In comparison, he claims that only in 1913 the confessional schools Romanians, received subsidies from the Hungarian state of approximately 100 million lei [11]. But the access of national minorities to education during the studied period is reflected in the number of schools. In 1922 there were 5.842 primary schools in Transylvania, of which 3.611 were Romanian, 1.699 Hungarian, 403 German and so on. If before the Union, the Hungarian state did not finance any Romanian school, but only the Hungarian schools, in 1922 the Romanian state financed 1.020 Romanian schools, 562 Hungarian, 51 German and 159 other nationalities. Also, the number of confessional schools of minorities increased significantly during this period: in 1918 there were 987 primary schools, and in 1925 their number reached 1.377 [1].

The same law of 1924 established and extended the training of teachers, from 6 to 7 years. The organization of normal education was laid down in Article 201, which provided: "The curriculum for normal schools will include: religion and Christian morality, Romanian language and literature, knowledge of Romanian folklore and the means of its research, French language and, optionally, another modern foreign language, Romanian history and notions of world history, with special attention to events that are related to national history, and geography of Romania (with particular attention to the economic geography and notions of world and mathematical geography), mathematics (arithmetic, geometry and concepts of algebra and geodesy), notions of accounting and commerce, physicochemical and natural sciences, notions of agronomy and its connecting items with practical application, household and agricultural engineering pedagogical sciences (psychology, logic, pedagogy, didactics, ...) with school legislature and teaching practice, teacher duties, popular hygiene and medicine, notions of constitutional and administrative law and political economy, calligraphy and drawing, vocal, instrumental and church music,

physical education, ... handicraft and home economics, and additional subjects provided in the secondary school curriculum. (...) Commercial education, agricultural and manual labour will be taught to prepare teachers to apply it, in practical utility, in the last three years of primary school. In normal schools in which there are minority students of at least 20%, teaching their first language will be compulsory, so as they will be able to teach in that language, and so will religion" [21].

I have reproduced this article of the Law of normal education in order to emphasize the importance that Dr. Angelescu granted to training teachers. After graduating from a normal school organized in this manner, it was clear that the teacher sent to enlighten the younger generation will fulfil his very important mission.

Sixty years after the adoption of compulsory education of four years, the Liberal government increased the compulsory schooling period to seven years. The initiators of this law sought to accomplish two objectives through it: a higher level of training for the workforce in industry and agriculture, and a moral and citizenship education. The three-year over-primary education years had to ensure education of the young generation in the spirit of the constitutional state, democratic society, and social and national harmony.

The syllabus for grades V - VII constituted a revisiting and of the notions taught in grades I - IV. The over-primary teaching was led by primary teachers, hence the importance given to the development of normal schools. But, with all the strife of the ministry, the level of graduates of over-primary schooling was much lower than that of those attending lower grades of high school. For this reason, the large-scale application of the article of the Law of primary education, which provided passage from over-primary education to high schools, based on an exam, was not possible [9].

The Education Act of 1924 was a big win for educating the younger generations. Analysing the effects of this law in the 30s, we cannot say that all objectives envisaged by Dr. Angelescu had been achieved. The material conditions of the population have caused over-primary students attendance to be reduced. By 1932, there was on average one graduate per over-primary school. Many communities lacked qualified teachers or adequate spaces for schools. But for all these shortcomings, primary law caused an explosion of the younger generation's cultural development, especially in rural areas. The importance given to state primary education led, in my opinion, to the main objective of the initiator of this law: educating the young generation towards strengthening national consciousness.

As for the overall Romanian education development, Dr. Angelescu presented to Parliament two other bills in 1925. The first concerned the

regulation of private education and the second the introduction of the baccalaureate in secondary education.

According to the Liberal government, the exam taken by students when leaving secondary education was the main cause of the decrease in the level of those who entered higher education. This exam had become mainly a formality and was no longer an obstacle for poorly trained students who could easily enter higher education.

Taking this into consideration, Dr. Angelescu believed that the surest way to raise the quality of higher education was a serious secondary school leaving exam to check the knowledge acquired by students.

The Minister of Public Instruction came before Parliament and proposed the introduction of the baccalaureate on secondary school leaving, as a way to higher education. The baccalaureate exam law initiator saw this as an effective means of verifying the knowledge acquired in school and its influence in shaping the intellectual personality of the young generation [10].

In the explanatory memorandum to the Baccalaureate Law, Dr. Angelescu explained that "middle school should remain wide open to any young person, for an addition of knowledge from primary school, and high school itself should be reserved for those who exhibit the necessary skills to acquire a higher level of culture, and to do this within the borders of the real needs of our state" [17].

The new baccalaureate examined knowledge gained in subjects of national identity: Romanian Language and Literature, Romanian History and Geography of Romania, with an additional two exams in specific subjects, according to the specialization of the student.

The Baccalaureate Law, adopted in 1925, has been proven effective in the first years of application. The seriousness and severity of this examination made it so that the percentage of those who passed be around 50%. Through this rigorous selection of young graduates of secondary school, the Ministry of Public Instruction ensured that poorly trained students did not longer affect the quality of higher education.

The measures taken by the Liberals were not supported by the entire political class. The National Peasants' Party opted for opening the gates of university to as many students as possible. They felt that a society with a high percentage of university graduates is much harder to be politically influenced by a certain part of the Romanian political class [5].

Strangely, the National Peasants' Party position on this issue was in total contradiction with their position on theoretical high schools. Regarding secondary education, the party ruled very clearly to reduce the number of students enrolled in theoretical high schools and increase those in the

practical schools. The National Peasants' Party argued that theoretical high school graduates only increased the number of those who could not be absorbed by the labour market, due to their lack of specific qualifications.

This position was seen during the National Peasants' Party governing, when the baccalaureate became more of a formality. Thus, the number of graduates increased from 43% in 1925 to 75% in 1933 [7]. Unfortunately, removing the severity of the baccalaureate exam had a very serious consequence: a greatly increased number of poorly trained secondary students, which inevitably led to a reduction in the level of higher education.

The draft legislation proposed by Dr. Angelescu on private education sparked numerous complaints, especially among the Hungarian Party of Romania.

The Private Education Act of 1925 stated that education of pupils could be achieved in state schools, in the family, or in schools owned by communities, religions or individuals. The important part was that only Romanian citizens could establish such schools, which operated under the supervision of the Ministry of Public Instruction. This law made it clear that under no circumstances could there be private normal and high schools.

Another important provision of the law said that "whatever the teaching language of a private school, Romanian Language, Romanian History and Geography of Romania will be taught in Romanian in all type and category of schools, starting with the third grade of primary school" [22].

The Hungarian Party was also unhappy with the fact that in private schools only Romanian citizens were allowed to teach. Foreigners were allowed only exceptionally, to teach their mother tongue or foreign languages, but only with the specific approval of the ministry. Also, books, maps or other teaching materials could only be used in those schools if approved by the ministry. Moreover, private schools were only allowed to receive funds, grants or donations from abroad with the knowledge and approval of the Ministry of Public Instruction.

Both Hungarian MPs and leaders of the Catholic and Reformed Churches made, as we have mentioned, a number of complaints about this bill. The Hungarian representatives appealed to the League of Nations with a complaint about the Private Education Law adopted by the Romanian Parliament.

Through this law, the Liberal government provided the legal framework necessary for the development of private education, supported by religious denominations or by individuals. In most cases, the organization of private schools by representatives of national minorities was beneficial to

the state which was not in a position to support schools teaching in minority languages in all places where the was population belonging to one national minority or another.

The Liberal Minister of Public Instruction, Dr. Angelescu, wanted to complete the legal framework of Romanian education with a law on secondary school in 1925, but the political development of the country did not allow this until 1928.

From the start, Dr. Angelescu stated that through this law he sought the unification of secondary education. This law was to create a uniform school in all the historical provinces of the country which "coagulated the national unity of all Romanians."

By this act, the three sections of the high school Spiru Haret established by Law 1898 were abolished, and a unique school was created, one prevailing in humanities. According to the minister, secondary education was called to "form and shape the souls and minds of young generations, developing national pride and love of country" [18].

Secondary education was divided into two stages: the lower stage, called middle school, which included three years of study, and the upper-stage called high school, with four years of study. Thus, the duration of secondary education was reduced from eight years to seven years, and the so-called *preparatory year* was introduced in higher education. After passing the baccalaureate, students entered this preparatory year in that faculties for which they thought they had inclinations. Their work during this year under the guidance of lecturers, and the exams they had to take proved whether or not they could specialize in their chosen field.

According to Dr. Angelescu, middle school had to be closer to the rural world, seeing that the children of peasants who were eager to pursue higher education institutions could not afford going to schools in big cities. Middle school was regarded as post-primary school after which graduating students might opt to go to high school, normal school, seminar, or applied secondary school.

The Law of 8th May 1928 made secondary education be: theoretical secondary education (theoretical high schools and middle schools); normal education; theological seminaries; industrial education (organized by the Law of 1936); commercial education (also organized by the Law of 1936); agricultural education (organized by the Law of 1929) and military education.

However, the application of secondary law would lead to vehement discussions in the Parliament which was now in majority made of the National Peasants' Party. Coming to power in November 1928, the National

Peasants' Party started a crusade to change the direction imposed by the Liberals for the development of the Romanian national state.

In February 1929, the new Minister of Public Instruction, Professor Nicolae Costăchescu, debated Parliament the Secondary Education Act amendment adopted the spring before.

The National Liberal Party still maintained its position of 1918 according to which there were certain areas of national interest, which could not be considered in relation to the limited interests of a political party or another. Senator Angelescu insisted in the legislative forum on preserving stability in the education legislation. The liberal senator said that "school matters are not related to party or political opinions: everyone should make sure our schools live up to the times we live in; and petty party politics has no place in it."

Nicolae Costăchescu, The National Peasants' Party Minister of Public Instruction, based his program of reorganization of education on the fact that "our school system is organized and developed according to the structure of our social structure, not giving importance to a category of schools at the expense of other categories, when the structure of our nation requires, on the contrary, to develop the school in inverse proportion" [19].

The National Peasants' Party, through Nicolae Costăchescu, stated that "secondary school has grown too much to the detriment of popular school and higher education." The Minister of Public Instruction believed there are too many middle schools and high schools, and the state was spending too much on secondary education at the expense of primary and university education. Starting from this premise, Nicolae Costăchescu ruled for temporising secondary education and for providing all the support for the expansion of rural schools and higher education [8].

As for the baccalaureate, Nicolae Costăchescu implemented the National Peasants' vision, wanting to increase the number of students, without taking into account the quality of education.

In May 1929, the Minister of Public Instruction came to Parliament with a legislative proposal to amend the Baccalaureate Law of 1925. Although the amendment was presented as minor, and as not changing the basis of this examination, the legislative proposal made by the National Peasants made it so that the baccalaureate lost its importance in the selection of deserving students. Moreover, the fact that the baccalaureate became a formality caused a drastic decline in the quality of both secondary education and university education.

Nicolae Costăchescu stated that he hadn't planned to drastically change the Law of the baccalaureate, but aimed to "only make simple

modifications in its manner of execution, in order to facilitate holding of the examination for both candidates and teachers, and it should not be interpreted as making the baccalaureate easier” [20].

But changes such as the increase in the number of examination commissions; inclusion in committees of teachers who prepared the students; reducing the subjects to two, etc. lead to exactly what the minister nonchalantly said was not desired by the ruling party. As above mentioned, the promotion percentage almost doubled during the government of the National Peasants’ Party.

6. Discussions

There are many historians who believe that the severity desired and promoted by the National Liberal Party was not justified in a country in full development, which needed a lot of qualified staff at the highest level. It is true that you cannot build a stable, thriving and efficient economy without well-trained people, but producing countless graduates in the name of this idea is not something acceptable in our opinion.

7. Conclusions

We cannot accept that the Romanian society could make any progress with a growing number of higher education graduates who could not live up to the level of a high school student who passed the baccalaureate in its severe form.

As for secondary education, the National Peasants’ Party had, in our opinion, false premises that had nothing to do with the real situation. Reducing theoretical high schools in order to bring the children of peasants in practical schools, so as to revive the agrarian world, may seem like a good idea, but the reality was different.

The peasants who had a difficult financial situation and most peasants were in this situation, did not want their children to continue their education after primary school. These children were used in the household chores, and during the agricultural season to work in the fields. Parents felt that working the field with them taught them everything they needed to know about their little piece of land and what to do in order to live their lives [10].

On the other hand, peasants who had an income enabling them to a better life, under no circumstances wanted their children to become farmers. They were making special efforts in order for them to study in the best educational institutions so as to have a career that did not have anything to do with agriculture [3].

We cannot find a reason for the frequent changes in legislation on education. Liberal legislation, in light of the figures, clearly did not yield the expected development of the education system. However, the amendments of the National Peasants' Party did not seek to correct what did not work, but sought to radically change the system, according to their own political ideas. This situation makes us believe that the Romanian school was left, at least in the first decade between the wars, in the narrow constraints of party politics, as far as the priority to developing the education system is concerned.

Acknowledgement

This work is supported by project POCU 125040, entitled "Development of the tertiary university education to support the economic growth - PROGRESSIO", co-financed by the European Social Fund under the Human Capital Operational Program 2014-2020

References

- [1] Agrigoroaiei I, Iacob G, Buruiană OȘ. Politică și cultură în România interbelică. Iași: Editura Universității Alexandru Ioan Cuza; 2016. pp. 31-37.
- [2] Axinciuc V. Avuția Națională a României. Cercetări istorice comparate. 1860-1939. București: Editura Expert; 2000. pp. 165-211.
- [3] Hitchins K. România. 1866 – 1947. București: Editura Humanitas; 1996. 368 pages.
- [4] Livezeanu I. Cultură și naționalism în România Mare. 1918-1930. București: Editura Humanitas; 1998. p. 49.
- [5] Mihalache I. Ce politică să facem. București: Editura Arc 2000; 1995. p. 145
- [6] Negulescu PP. Reforma învățământului. Proiecte de legi. București: Casa Școalelor; 1927. p. 61.
- [7] Pascu Ș. Istoria învățământului din România. București: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică; 1971. pp. 260-312.
- [8] Sbârna G. Viața culturală și învățământul în dezbaterile senatului în perioada interbelică. In: Istoria Senatului României. București: Editura Regia Autonomă Monitorul Oficial; 2004. pp. 244-319.
- [9] Scurtu I. Istoria contemporană a României. 1918-2001. București: Editura Fundației România de Mâine; 2002. p. 163.
- [10] Teodosia M, Saizu I. Cultură și economie. Puncte de vedere din perioada interbelică. Iași: Editura Junimea; 1986. p. 169.

- [11] Toth S. Problema învățământului minorității maghiare în dezbaterile parlamentare din România interbelică. In: Ciobanu Vasile. Radu Sorin, coord. Partide politice și minorități naționale din România în secolul XX. Vol 4. Sibiu: Editura Tehno Media; 2009. pp. 123-127.
- [12] Arhivele Naționale Istorice. Serviciul Județean Dâmbovița. Fond. Școala de Băieți din Băleni. Dosar 17. fila. 519
- [13] Arhivele Naționale Istorice. Serviciul Județean Dâmbovița. Fond. Școala de Băieți din Băleni. Dosar 22. fila. 42
- [14] Arhivele Naționale Istorice. Serviciul Județean Dâmbovița. Fond. Școala de Băieți din Băleni. Dosar 22. fila. 42
- [15] Institutul Central de Statistica. Anuarul Statistic al României. 1939-1940. București; 1940. pp. 289-412.
- [16] Monitorul Oficial al României. Dezbaterile Senatului României. Nr.69. din 6 iunie 1924. București: Imprimeria Statului; 1924. pp.1287-1288.
- [17] Monitorul Oficial al României. Dezbaterile Senatului României. Nr.38. din 27 februarie 1925. București: Imprimeria Statului; 1925. p. 517.
- [18] Monitorul Oficial al României. Dezbaterile Senatului României. Nr.56. din 2 aprilie 1928. București: Imprimeria Statului; 1928. p.1425.
- [19] Monitorul Oficial al României. Dezbaterile Senatului României. Nr.18. din 15 februarie 1929. București: Imprimeria Statului; 1929. p. 550.
- [20] Monitorul Oficial al României. Dezbaterile Senatului României. Nr.52. din 15 mai 1929. București: Imprimeria Statului; 1929. p. 1780.
- [21] Monitorul Oficial al României. Lege pentru Învățământul Primar al Statului și Învățământul Normal-Primar. Nr.161. din 24 iulie 1924. București: Imprimeria Statului; 1924. pp.8602-8629.
- [22] Monitorul Oficial al României. Lege asupra Învățământului Particular. Nr.283. din 22 decembrie 1925. București: Imprimeria Statului; 1925. p. 14412.