

## THE STRUGGLE AGAINST CENTRALIZATION AND POLITICKING OF ROMANIAN UNIVERSITIES IN THE INTERWAR PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

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### ABSTRACT:

*ANALYZING THE EVOLUTION AND THE CONTENT OF IDEAS AND PRINCIPLES THAT SERVED AS GUIDING LINES FOR THE ROMANIAN POLITICIANS DURING THE INTERWAR PERIOD IN THEIR EFFORT TO CONFIGURE THE ROMANIAN EDUCATIONAL POLICY, ONE OF THE TOPICS THAT HAS DRAWN OUR ATTENTION WAS THAT OF CENTRALIZATION AND POLITICKING IN UNIVERSITIES. THEREFORE, THIS ARTICLE BRINGS TO LIGHT THOSE SPEECHES DURING THE MEETINGS OF THE ROMANIAN PARLIAMENT THAT APPROACHED THIS ISSUE, ADDRESSING THE MESSAGE OF AUTONOMY AND THAT OF REMOVING THE INSTITUTIONS THAT CARRY ON THE EDUCATIONAL MISSION FROM UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF POLITICS. THE PAPER FOCUSES ON OUTLINING, FROM THE PERSPECTIVES OF THE DEBATES WITHIN THE PARLIAMENTARY REUNIONS, THE CONTROVERSIAL REACTIONS, THE DIVERGENCE AND THE DIVERSITY OF OPINIONS EXISTING AMONG THE INTERWAR POLITICAL PARTIES WHEN DEALING WITH CENTRALIZATION AND POLITICKING IN UNIVERSITIES, UNDERLINING THE STRUGGLE OF THOSE PLEADING FOR THE STRENGTHENING OF THE UNIVERSITY AUTONOMY AND FOR THE REDUCTION OF THE BUREAUCRATIC CENTRALISM, CRITICIZING CENTRALIZATION AND CENTRALIZING TENDENCIES.*

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**KEY WORDS:** CENTRALIZATION, POLITICKING, UNIVERSITIES, INTERWAR, PARLIAMENT

### INTRODUCTION

The debate over the way in which the education system in Romania was organized before World War I, the main problems raised by the Romanian deputies during the interwar parliamentary debates, the legislative initiatives and the laws adopted during this period of time (a period in which the public opinion in Romania unanimously believed that the education reform had to be rethought), shows us that education occupied an important part in the ongoing process of Romania modernization. The proof is also provided by the legislative measures taken in the period after 1919, the legislators' attention being mainly focused, in the field of education, toward the unification of the educational system, goal accomplished through the adoption of the law for primary school in 1924, the private education law in 1925, the Law of 1925 regulating the high school examination, the

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secondary education reform of 1928, and legislative provisions with regard to the organization of higher education.

In higher education, the modernization projects resided not only in collaboration projects with foreign universities, but also in new initiatives to transform certain upper education schools into faculties, in proposals to set up new institutes and chairs, or to transform certain conferences into chairs. A long debated topic, which had frequently led to parliamentary debates, was that of politicking in education and administration, especially when referring to the way in which was carried out the recruitment of university teaching and administrative staff. In the context of those debates over centralization and politicking in universities, minister Negulescu's opinion offers a clear point of view. He was pleading for the strengthening of the university autonomy and for the reduction of the bureaucratic centralism, underlining the fact that the recruitment of teaching staff in higher education represented one of the leading points of the reform in this field. Negulescu criticized the centralization and the centralizing tendencies to control universities, considering that the centralizing tendency, as well as the shortcomings of the Romanian system, came from the legislating method of 1864. In his opinion, Romanian universities were treated as being upper vocational schools, fact proved by the norms used when recruiting university professors, norms stipulated by that law and only partially improved by the laws of 1898, 1901 and 1912.<sup>2</sup>

### THE MISSION OF THE UNIVERSITIES

The role played by the university is described in the interwar specialty literature, and the interwar written press. From the very beginning of the interwar period, the written press had published articles where the university was described as a knowledge environment, universities being seen not only as "schools where certain was taught, endowed with the rather material and external part of culture: laboratories, museums, libraries, seminar rooms", but also as "focal points of national light, the central establishments where the cultural ideals of a people are formed, as well as the spirit of a nation, and where the upper ethnical energies are directed towards the cultural and national progress". Universities were "that *alma mater* of culture, the springs of the civilization trends"<sup>3</sup>.

Moreover, there were people who underlined that the role of universities was far above, considering that higher education had a great mission, firstly "to satisfy the practical requirements, to form specialists in various branches", then "to create national science", and finally "to determine national activity guidelines, to formulate national ideals and keep alive the sacred fire for those ideals"<sup>4</sup>. Given their role, there were views that sustained that the university did not receive enough "attention" from the interwar legislators, more than that, that the universities were neglected, mentioning that the efforts of the society should not be focused only toward primary schools but also toward all educational levels, from primary to higher education. A.C. Cuza, professor at the University of Iași, politician, and member of the Chamber of the Deputies, declared:

'But when you say that we must start with primary school today, and we have to deal exclusively with primary education, which has been ignored for a long time, I would answer, no. We must deal equally with primary and higher education. [...] The university is the one that creates elements of culture of the villages, because if it were not universities that create secondary teachers, we would not have secondary teachers to create educators [primary school

<sup>2</sup> See for details P.P. Negulescu, *Reforma învățământului. Proiecte de legi*, 2nd edition, (Bucharest: Ed. Casei Școalelor, 1927), CXVIII.

<sup>3</sup> *Viitorul*, XII, No. 3.520 of 15 November 1919.

<sup>4</sup> See the speech of A.C. Cuza in *Dezbaterile Adunării Deputaților (D.A.D.)*, the reunion of 8 February 1921, in the *Official Gazette* No. 34 of 11 February 1921, 736.

teachers]. Therefore, in order to organize education, is required, in the first place, Mr. Minister, and I think you will be in our opinion, to begin by setting up thoroughly the university education.<sup>5</sup>

The crucial role of the universities was also outlined in the work of Gheorghe Dascălu where the author, quoting professor Petru Poni<sup>6</sup>, said that university was not just “a school designed to prepare different professionals that a State does need”; their mission consists in being places of culture designed “to spread the light, the truth and the own ideas of a nation”<sup>7</sup>.

A decade later, Negoită Dănăilă, professor at the University of Bucharest and member of Senate, marked the importance of the university noting the virtues of the Romanian universities in their effort to accommodate to the nation’s needs and to that specific time, and to contribute to the advancement of science, keeping pace with other Western universities despite their secular traditions. Even if the Italian university’s origin goes back to the eleventh century, the French university’s origin goes back to the twelfth century, or the German one, who dates back to XIV century, the University of Bucharest accounted as being the fourth university in the world, in what regard the number of students. The first place had been taken by Columbia University in New York, with approximately 36,000 students, followed by the University of Berlin with 33,000 students, Sorbonne University in Paris with 26,000 students, and, then, the University of Bucharest with 22,000 students<sup>8</sup>.

Although the positive remarks regarding the Romanian higher education, there were voices expressing the failures of public education at this level. The divergent views, expressed orally during the parliamentary sessions, due to political and administrative spectrum, legislative gaps or outdated provisions that existed immediately after 1918, have caused that many ministerial or parliamentary projects to be long debated, to be delayed in voting or even abandoned.

## **PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES OVER CENTRALIZATION AND POLITICKING IN UNIVERSITIES**

The issue of centralization and politicking in universities had a strong echo in interwar Romania, a lot of MPs stressing out, not infrequently, the urgent need for decentralization and autonomy. By contrast, in Germany, the universities were closed associations, the acceptance inside the system being determined not by scientific criteria but rather on ideological criteria according to those who run the university. Therefore, in Germany, was an urgent need for the state to involve itself in controlling the faculties and in the nominations of the staff, establishing criteria based on their scientific capacities. On contrary, Romanian scholars advocated for decentralization and looseness of the state control, claiming that the Romanian centralized system, at least at the university level, came from the way of regulation of 1864, the legislator of that time treating Romanian universities as professional schools, fact proved by the rules of recruitment in the academic field, relative improvements being made through the law of 1898, the laws of 1901, respectively 1912.

P.P. Negulescu, minister of public instruction between March 1920 and December 1921, approached this issue advocating for strengthening the autonomy of universities and

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<sup>5</sup> D.A.D., the reunion of 8 February 1921, in the *Official Gazette* No. 34 of 11 February 1921, 735.

<sup>6</sup> Petru Poni (1841-1925) was professor at University of Iași, member of the National Liberal Party, minister of Education in 1891, 1895-1896 and 1918.

<sup>7</sup> Gheorghe Dascălu, *Organizarea universităților din teritoriile românești eliberate. Menirea lor – ce ar fi bine să cerem Franciei*, (Bucharest: Tip. “Cultura Neamului Românesc”, 1919), 4-9.

<sup>8</sup> Negoită Dănăilă, *Cuvântări rostite în Senat în sesiunea extraordinară din Iunie 1931 și sesiunea ordinară din Noembrie 1931*, (Bucharest: Tipografia “I.N. Copuzeanu”, str. Isvor 97), 1932, 30-32.

the avoidance of the bureaucratic centralism, stressing that the recruitment of teachers in higher education is one of the major points of the higher education reform. Negulescu criticized the centralization and the centralist tendencies of control over universities, mentioning that the experience proved that a higher involvement of the Minister in the recruitment of universities staff it was sometimes used as a political weapon against opponents and as a mean in the upstart of the partisans.

‘Undoubtedly, not all what is said on this subject deserves credit. Or, where there are many competitors for a vacancy is naturally, often, envy and intrigue; is even sometimes, after the manner of the earth, and some slander. But there are still cases in which policy mix cannot be questioned, which, unfortunately, gave many the right to believe that the laws have so far been made as they were, to allow political parties to place their adherents to universities... With the provisions of law of 1912, the situation has not been improved; on the contrary. The shortcomings of the previous law were not removed and new ones were added. It added, for instance, the famous Article 81, due to which one can reach more easily the position of being professor at university than being a rural school teacher. It is enough to write a brochure that his political friends from the University to find it as being of «a high scientific value» and does not need any other proof of ability. Strictly, it may even lack the brochure. It's enough those friends in issue to find, after the text of the law, that the aspirant has «a valuable scientific activity». How should this activity be manifested and how should be proved, the law does not say, what escapes the benevolent friends from any trouble.’<sup>9</sup>

These writings were published after a full series of events. At the end of 1919, a first event that caught the attention of the Chamber of Deputies was the speech of MP V. Haneş, following a motion published in the media by the students from Medicine Faculty of University of Bucharest. In making its position, supporting the students’ view, Haneş noted that the medical students association published in newspapers a motion in which they asked the professors at their faculty to be appointed only if they meet the conditions of moral integrity and according to their scientific competence. Haneş emphasized over the moral and national integrity which teachers must show, proposing a bill that amended the existing provision. In reply, I. Borcea, the minister of public instruction at that time, stated that the universities have autonomy and the faculty members are those responsible to support the dignity of their faculty. Borcea underlined his confidence in the fact that the teachers of those faculties, in which were reported cases of appointments based on friendships, and not on scientific merits, will realize the seriousness of the problem and the responsibility that they have in order to make appointments or recommendations satisfactory, not otherwise<sup>10</sup>.

One month later, a new attempt to modify the current provisions regarding the recruitment of teachers in higher education took the form of a proposing bill, sustained in front of the Parliament by MP Simion Mândrescu. The bill explicitly recommended the amendment of Articles 81, 82, 83 and 84, provisions that, in the existing form, offered the opportunity to be appointed as professors people without scientific papers and without any serious test of capacity, the minister being the one who could entitled professors even naming persons from outside the university and without any approval of the university, if the vacancy had not been occupied during a fixed term<sup>11</sup>. The criteria used in the selection of the candidates had been also criticized, namely the lack of objectivity in assessing the scientific activity who give space to personal considerations, sympathies and antipathies, resentments and personal interests. For instance, the law stipulated that the proposal for filling in a vacant chair should meet half of the numbers of teachers employed at that faculty, being questioned here the fairness with which a professor who’s not a specialist in that specific area is giving

<sup>9</sup> Negulescu, *Reforma învățământului*, CXVIII.

<sup>10</sup> See *D.A.D.*, session 1919-1920, the reunion of 31 December 1919, in the *Official Gazette* No. 24, 325.

<sup>11</sup> *D.A.D.*, the reunion of 9 February 1920, in the *Official Gazette* No. 33, 447-451.

his vote to a candidate. The hiring process was reduced to a simple voting, being well known that “any action supported only by vote is very exposed to influences apart from education and harmful to it, especially to political ones”<sup>12</sup>. The discussion’s purpose was to implement new methods when recruiting and hiring professors, so, when a chair becomes vacant or it is new created, the faculty council to have the possibility to call for employment professors from other universities in the country or abroad, specialists in that field. If there is no other option, the council would proceed to the selection of specialists who work in that field, from inside and outside of the university<sup>13</sup>.

In the same context, Mândrescu proposed that Article 83 to be modified, so the exam for the title of professor to consist in three parts: a) research of original scientific papers; b) oral test; c) practical test. The bill meant to bring responsibility in the recruitment process, mentioning that those who did not respect the terms, the conditions, and the recommendations of the law could be brought in front of a committee of judges. Unfortunately, Mândrescu’s project was not voted, the deputies agreeing to postpone this bill at the express request of Minister Borcea who claimed that the project does not fulfill the formal conditions to be voted, not being known by the University of Cluj and the University of Chernivtsi.

On April 5, 1921, over 100 MPs signed a bill, sustained in front of the Parliament by Chr. Musceleanu, proposing a new organization of the scientific personnel, underlining the difficulties met in the education process and the need to make changes for the improvement of higher education in Romania<sup>14</sup>. In support of this motion, Musceleanu underlined the precarious situation of the university staff and the raising need for qualified members inside all faculties, given the constant increasing number of students. He asked the deputies to note that “starting from the assistant professor to the professor, the entire staff of universities are the elite staff of our entire education. It is his duty that in classes and laboratories to develop and disseminate the latest achievements of science from the West; it is his duty to work in laboratories the science contributing so to the achievements that our country should bring to the heritage of people civilization. And although it fulfills its mission with honor, proof being our teachers called to the Sorbonne and Strasbourg [...], though their situation is so bad that they sometimes leave their apostolate after 10-15 years of work to pursue other occupation”<sup>15</sup>. The law under discussion didn’t provide any prospects for assistants and lecturers to be promoted, many of those jobs being taken by students, the result being disastrous for the education. The bill proposed a rapid promotion of those who distinguished themselves in the academic world through their scientific work, who had a PhD in the field, and experience of at least 3 years in that specific field. The bill also proposed changes in what regard the administrative organization of the universities, stipulating that the rector of a university may be elected for a term of 3 years and reelected only once, must be at least 40 years old, and should have at least 8 years of experience as a university professor. The dean of a faculty has a term of 2 years, may be reelected once, being voted by the council of the faculty. This new proposal draws attention through the fact that its provisions stimulates the teachers to focus toward knowledge, progress and science, trying to impose objective criteria in recruitment and promotion, to appreciate the effort of bringing important contributions to the scientific work, and to facilitate the accession to higher positions in the academic field.

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<sup>12</sup> D.A.D., the reunion of 28 February 1920, in the *Official Gazette* No. 49 of 2 March 1920, 817.

<sup>13</sup> D.A.D., the reunion of 9 February 1920, in the *Official Gazette* No. 33, 448.

<sup>14</sup> See D.A.D., ordinary session extended 1920-1921, the reunion of 5 April 1921, in the *Official Gazette* No. 83 of 22 April 1921, 1.769-1.793.

<sup>15</sup> D.A.D., the reunion of 5 April 1921, 1.769.

The recruitment of the academic staff was again the subject of parliamentary discussions on October 1922, when a proposal took the following form:

‘With the examination of the candidates will be in charge a committee formed by 7 members, as following: 1. four members delegated by the council of the faculty where is the vacancy, those 4 members being named out of professors specialists at that faculty or another one, or from honorary professors; one of those 4 members could be a person from outside of the University, but a Romanian citizen and with a well-established scientific reputation; 2. three members delegated by similar faculties as following: a) for the faculties of law, letters and science, those three members will be delegated one by each similar faculty from the other 3 universities; b) for medicine faculties, those three members who complete the committee will be delegated by the other two faculties: the oldest one will delegate two members, and the youngest one, one member; c) for the faculty of veterinary medicine, those three members will be delegated by those three medicine faculties, one by each; d) for faculties of theology, those three members will be delegated in this way: two of them by the Senate of the University where is the vacancy, from the members of the Holy Synod, and the third one by the other faculty of theology that exist; e) the Minister names one of the members as being the president of the committee.’<sup>16</sup>

MP V. Pella addressed one amendment to this bill, proposing that the Minister should name as president of the committee one of the members delegated by the council of the faculty where the vacancy is<sup>17</sup>. The amendment was accepted by the deputies and the bill was passed with 126 votes for, and 3 against.

Another powerful voice who militated against centralization in universities was the one of Emil Racoviță, director of the Institute of Speleology of Cluj. In June 1925, during the Congress of the “University teachers association”, held in Cluj, Racoviță, as president of the Congress, caught the attention of the audience with his debate over the issue of politics in education and the autonomy of universities. Racoviță declared that “the material, moral and administrative gaps that exist in universities have three major sources: the politics that was introduced in the university, the bureaucracy that controls the university, and dissension, which hinders the work of the university”, remaining another system, the democratic one, manifested at the university level through autonomy. Regarding the autonomy, the speaker said that the factors of autonomy are “to be a legal person, to have the right to assign its staff and the right to judge, the inviolability of the university with the right of the rector to command public force”. In his opinion, only the rector’s office had the right to communicate directly with the ministry, to the rector should be given the execution of the budget and the universities should have financial independence. In other words, the universities “do not ask to be uncontrolled, but they want to administrate themselves.”<sup>18</sup>

Four years later, during the Congress of the University of Cluj, Racoviță brought up again the issue of the university autonomy, emphasizing that the university “should be continuously in touch with the progress of the science and its methods”; it should also follow the rapid evolution of knowledge, and cannot be imprisoned in a very detailed law. Furthermore, it is necessary “to allow that each university to form its own personality, its own physiognomy”, because we do not need one model of university quadruplicated (referring to those four universities that existed at that time in Romania), with the same services, same offices, same departments, and same chairs, but we want “unsymmetrical universities, each of them developing freely its own vital part” toward a natural development

<sup>16</sup> D.A.D., extraordinary session 1921-1922, the reunion of 25 October 1922, in the *Official Gazette* No. 32 of 5 November 1922, p. 671.

<sup>17</sup> D.A.D., the reunion of 25 October 1922, 672.

<sup>18</sup> *Patria*, VII, no. 121 of 6 June 1925.

in accordance to its desire, its needs, its capacities, aptitudes and local powers, not an artificial composition based on bureaucratic patterns<sup>19</sup>.

Into the same assent, Constantin Kirițescu, higher education adviser in the Ministry of Education, believes that cultural institutions need a material and social framework in which to develop themselves, given that the modern science has descended from the sphere of imagination into the field of research and “the scientific research no longer find a place in the narrow cell in which the scholar of other time was philosophizing alone”; now, the scientific research and the science needs space, institutes and laboratories, rich libraries and systematically classified, the atmosphere of information, and suggestion of fellow researchers<sup>20</sup>.

### **DECENTRALIZATION AND AUTONOMY OF UNIVERSITIES IN ENACTED LAWS**

In the opinion of specialists, the existence of the university autonomy stands on two pillars: a traditional, and a rational one. The traditional support consists in the fact that universities are old institutions that have been organized on their own, managing their wealth, refusing interferences from outside world, the history of the western universities showing even a fight with the royalty, the church, or local authorities in order to obtain rights, to defend them, and to fight against new tendencies manifested by the modern world. In the early 19th, because of political changes in the world, universities were determined to change their shape, approaching the state. Even so, there are differences among European universities; the German ones are less close to the state, as the Humboldtian model of University, while in France the Napoleonian University is closer to the state. The English universities have kept their traditional character, the aristocratic one (like Oxford, Cambridge), the English education being oriented toward the shape of the human character. Totally different were organized the American universities, which varied even among themselves, being established as “big commercial enterprises”, their predominant care being the way in which they administer their wealth.

The rational pillar of the university autonomy resides in the essence of the university and its mission, standing in the logic of things that universities should be given credit as being able to organize and to manage, since they were “the temple of the highest intellectuality”<sup>21</sup>.

Based on the fact that the existence of the Romanian university could be linked to the beginning of the modern state (the University of Iași being established on 1860, the University of Bucharest on 1864), Kirițescu studied this aspect of university autonomy from the perspective of its rational existence, its utility and its necessity. In his opinion, the most impressive argument that defends the idea of a complete autonomy of a university and rejects any interference of the Minister, be it the initiative, collaboration, or control, could be expressed in the following manner: “the Minister, a political body, brought at the top of the management department by a current of public opinion or by the hazard of political combinations, cannot have any jurisdiction, nor especially freedom of conscience to intervene objectively in matters of organization of the university. His opinion is influenced by the political principles he profess, by the interests of the political party.”<sup>22</sup> Therefore, another matter is questionable, if the universities are always a crystal clear reflection of

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<sup>19</sup> E.G. Racoviță, *Câteva norme pentru organizarea universităților și a învățământului superior*, Congress of Cluj University, 1929.

<sup>20</sup> Constantin Kirițescu, *Autonomia învățământului. O contribuție la reforma unviersităților*, (Bucharest: “Cartea Românească”, 1932), 4-5.

<sup>21</sup> Kirițescu, *Autonomia învățământului*, 19-25.

<sup>22</sup> Kirițescu, *Autonomia învățământului*, 48-50.

consciousness when taking decisions, being known in history the trends of “scientific popes” or examples of closed universities that do not allow the entrance of prestigious elements, the backstage life of a university having sometimes a strong political flavor.

Kirițescu was the one that underlined that legislators should come to an understanding that the university should be taken out of authoritarian will of governments, which is influenced by politics, but should not be abandoned exclusively to self management, the best solution being a mechanism of collaboration between the state and the university, a “neutral institution” (which functions in France, for instance), a “interuniversity superior council” which should harmonize the interest of our four universities and the interest of the state.

Finally, the discussions over autonomy have found completion after a decade of debates through the enactment of the Law of university autonomy<sup>23</sup>, published in the *Official Gazette*, on July 13, 1931. The law was passed with the intention to pull the university out of political influences and interferences, to bring liberty in thinking and action inside university, but, in the same time, to keep the university on the orbit of the State, the one who creates and preserves its existence.

The compendium of legislative proposals written during the first decade of interwar period in order to organize higher education contains six draft laws: the project of Professor I. Borcea (1920), the project of Professor P.P. Negulescu (1922), the projects of the University of Cluj and Bucharest University (1931), the project of professor Constantin Angelescu (1928), the project of N. Costăchescu (which appeared in several editions between 1929 to 1931), and the bill for the organization of higher education from 1932, which became the Law of higher education<sup>24</sup>, published in the *Official Gazette*. The last one was considered to be the rule through which the universities acquired elastic statutory which allowed them to adapt to the social realities and to the spirit of the time, being able, in this way, to meet the needs of that period of time.

To end the controversies over Article 81 of the Act of 1898, the law of 1932 stipulated that the access to teaching positions in universities should be based on competition, eliminating other ways of entering on teaching positions, trying to put the universities out of the sphere of political interests. The Law maintained the universities freedom to organize their studies, to be sovereign and to choose the teachers, but with limiting this freedom through two bodies, the academic council (a general assembly of professors) who discuss the work of the university and gave directives to the university Senate, and the great inter-university council, a body at the disposal of the ministry which included the rectors and the deans of faculties, that treats matters proposed by the ministry in trying to organize university in close connection with the country’s needs. The law introduced scientific activity as main criteria in the competition tests, leaving the task of control in the “hands” of the university. The dean was the one who had the ability to control the professors, while the rector was controlling faculties and university institutions. If those tasks were not fulfilled, they could be subject to sanctions imposed by the Minister, who had the right to investigate and take necessary measures.

MP Negoită Dănăilă caught the attention of the senators over these two laws, the Law of university autonomy and the Law of higher education organization, emphasizing that those two laws are complementary and show that “universities do not want, and even if they want, they cannot get out of the interests of the State”; more than that, “the «absolute» of university autonomy is very «relative» and in practice it is reduced only to full freedom in terms of organization of the studies and management, who, in turn, can be reduced to the

<sup>23</sup> See *Legea pentru autonomia universitară*, in the *Official Gazette* No. 10 of 13 July 1931, 200-201.

<sup>24</sup> See *Legea pentru organizarea învățământului superior*, in the *Official Gazette* No. 38 of 19 March 1932.

state interests”. To this end, the law of organizing higher education mentioned the means through which the ministry could interfere with breaking the university freedom, “whenever they think that the good of the university or the state’s interests would be neglected or endangered”<sup>25</sup>.

### CONCLUSION

The interwar parliamentary debates confirm the struggle of the members of the Parliament in solving the issue of centralization and politicking of higher education, in order to establish new rules regarding the decentralization and autonomy at university level. The problem of university autonomy did not involve the question if it needs to exist or not, but which are its rational limits, or until where it can be spread in order the institution to function properly, and to not harm the social framework which the university is part of.

In dealing with these issues, the major questions addressed to the Parliament were: “Who can choose with higher competence its teachers than the university itself? Who knows better than the university the needs of national education? Who can choose better than the university itself its leaders? This is what the university wants and nothing else. Is this freedom unreasonable and contrary to the interests of the State?” The responses merged toward the idea that the University is that institution of the State which “wants to have this freedom, not against the interests of the state, but in his favor”, and State interests should not be confused with the interests of politics, which are very often in flagrant contradiction with the state and its needs<sup>26</sup>.

Sustaining this main idea, the debate of the first interwar decade brought with it the enactment of two laws that regulate the higher education autonomy and its organization, laws that were seen as being the first steps toward decentralization and autonomy in higher education, steps that offered new formulas in the process of teachers recruitment, new rules regarding the control of the universities, maintaining the universities freedom in organizing studies, but limiting them in specific matters that required higher control. In regards to the provisions of those two laws, we can better express them through the words of Dănăilă: “Autonomy, autonomy, but within certain limits!”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Dănăilă, *Cuvântări*, 26.

<sup>26</sup> Dănăilă, *Cuvântări*.

<sup>27</sup> Dănăilă, *Cuvântări*, 39-40.

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10. *Official Gazette (Monitorul Oficial)* No. 24/1919, No. 34 of 11 February 1921, No. 33/1920, No. 49 of 2 March 1920, No. 83 of 22 April 1921, No. 32 of 5 November 1922.