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The Romanian higher education policy between
1990-2003

Thesis

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1 Purposes

The aim of my research – supported by the conflictual Anglo-Saxon education policy theories – is to study the changes of Romanian higher education policy based on the law, politics, history and sociology sciences. My starting point is the assumption that it is possible to understand and explain the Romanian higher education with the classical pluralist theories. The assumption is based on the fact, that the Romanian higher education system (as other Western-European education systems) gradually became a multi-player square, where the pressure groups, stakeholders, social and political coalitions one after other came into reality and begin to assume their supposed or real tasks. The pluralist theories use the quality (being conflicts or consensus) and dynamics of the relations between the different actors to explain the causalities of the changes.

The objective of the analysis is to examine to what extent is appropriate in the case of a state like Romania to base a higher education policy research on the study of the parliamentary debates? In what circumstances is possible to use the method in the case of other Central and Eastern European countries? Which higher education topics became in the centre of public parliamentary debates in the last thirteen years, and why even those? How the balance between the state bureaucracy, academic oligarchy and the market's hyena¹ to control the higher education system has changed? How the changes in the internal and external social, political events and changes influenced the higher education policy? Which were the basic higher education policy models adopted or followed by the Romanian governments? Which were the explicit or implicit higher education policy targets of the different governments, political parties, social and pressure groups (teacher-, student unions, academic organization) stakeholders? Which group could implement their policy targets, and why? On which fundamental values relied the higher education policy of the governments, and different political parties? To what extent the representatives of political parties used political, sociological, economic or educational arguments? If they used educational policy arguments, which dimension was highlighted: equity – fairness, quality – affectivity, freedom, or other traditional values like moral or faith). What type of strategies, rhetorical elements and legitimising mechanisms were used in different governmental periods?

2 Research methods

In my work I study the changes of higher education policy between 1990 and 2003, using the discourse analysis of the parliamentary debates, the analysis of political programs and interviews made with representatives of political parties.

The starting point of my research is the supposition that the higher education system is managed by the policy clashing of the different actors and the consensus rose behind, and the best way to observe the process is following the parliamentary debates. I presume, that although Romania has weak democratic traditions, because of the high participation rates (in 1990 - 86%, 1992 -76%), the elections could be considered legitimate. In the bi- cameral parliament created after the 1989 change every social groups could be present and could represent their interest (no matter if that is a proportionate, or unequal representation). However, like the political declarations, the parliamentary debates are also aiming the wide public, but in contrast with them are less manipulative. In this way the parliamentary diaries are the most authentic source not only of the education policy but also for political, sociological analysis. I suppose that the composition of the governments - in minority or coalition – influences fundamentally the relation between higher education institution and state, the relation between higher education and the market.

The historical and evolutionist type of approximation makes possible to understand why one educational policy resolution gets priority and not the other. The chronological aspect of the analysis could be explained by the fact, that the Romanian educational reform is a two way process. From one part, the government had always the intention to take in its hand the initiatives, and the education system only reacted to the waves started or regulated by the center. From other part the delay of the educational reforms give birth to the institutional innovations and it was needed that the government to react to those. That is why the dynamics of the higher education policy is determined by the dialog of these two actors. The chronological approach could be also justified by the fact that the actors of the Romanian higher education system came into being gradually, with the pluralisation of the system. I suppose that by analyzing the dynamics of the changes we can find relevant explanatory elements of the Romanian higher education formulation process.

My study is based on the analysis of the Parliamentary debates, on the analysis of interviews I had with representatives of political parties members of the Education Committee in the House of Representatives. As secondary resources I studied the political parties election programs and political documents, and the experts analysis on the higher education and political aspects.

Between 1990 and 2003 several higher education related disputes took part in the parliament. I examined debates about the annual state budget allocation for education, discussions on the education bills, the parliamentary interpellations as well as the education ministers and their secretary's answers to those interpellations. I focused mainly on the discussions of the accreditation

¹ It is an expression suggested by Tamás Kozma. He says, that if we would like to be fair play, we need to use a connotative expression in the case of market (hyena), as we do in the other two cases (oligarchy, bureaucracy), and I considered this argument acceptable.

and education bills. In those parliamentary sessions where there was no discussion about an education-related bill, or an amendment to those bills, I analyzed the discussions of the annual state budget distribution with regard to the higher education.

I used the discourse² analysis method, with the ambition to present the impact of the different factors at the same time. I considered the following factors: the institutional position of the actors, their relation with the economical and professional stakeholders, their different ideological determination, their various political social patterns and experiences, their different level of participation in the decision-making and their different level of implication. I based my study mostly on the analysis of the Deputy's Chamber discussion using the senate's parliamentary diaries only in exceptional, indicated cases.

Beside the analysis of parliamentary debates the second most important sources were the interviews made with the representatives of political parties and members in the Deputy's Chamber of the Education Committee. Although it was very difficult to enter in contact with the political parties representatives, I succeeded to make interviews with the representatives of the five most important political parties. I also used in my work the available political parties (election and coalition) programs, government programs and documents. To verify and support my results, I used materials and studies published by the experts in the higher education policy issues.

3 Research results

The main characteristic of the Romanian parliamentarism is that the historical traditions had a more important role in their functioning than the formal legal norms in itself. The society - like most societies in the Central and Eastern Europe – reshaped the communism to fit with the tradition and specific of the state, as reshaped the parliamentary democracy too. In the interpretation of the specific functioning the analysis of the parliamentary debates proved to be the most suitable tools. By studying the parliamentary discussions this allows to reveal entirely the facts, which lay hidden in the dynamics of the changes. The parliamentary debates reveals in which circle were the most important decisions born, who are the main actors of the Romanian higher education policy, how they were born and how did they become part of the system. The parliamentary deputies are less familiar with the specific Anglo-Saxon higher education concepts, than the experts, who are more familiar with the Western-European concepts used in the description of a country's higher education systems and policies. That is why the parliamentary chambers deputies offer a more realistic approach to problems of the higher education. The method and process of the parliamentary discussions in the meantime offer a good insight into the functioning of the

² The discourse concept has a french-english origine, and could mean presentation, speech, communication, but sometimes also text.

Romanian democracy and the working or shortcomings of the parliamentary system, reveals the possibilities and barriers of the social control. The study of the parliamentary diaries makes possible to analyze the birth, construction and dynamics of a pluralistic system which came into being parallel with the change of the whole political-social-economical system. The underlying possibilities in the study of parliamentary discussions offers a reason to apply this method in the future in the higher education policy research of the “new” democracies, like Bulgaria, Moldavia, Ukraine, and Slovakia.

The higher education policy debates were founded around two major issues. One concerning the reestablishment of a state-funded Hungarian higher education university. This problem was initiated and constantly kept on the agenda of the Parliament, by the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania³, the political party representing the political and cultural interests of the Hungarian minority living in Romania. The other consisted in the competition between the academic oligarchy and state bureaucracy regarding the management and control of the higher education system. This second issue appeared implicitly hidden in the debates on the role of private higher education as opposed to state-owned (funded) higher education, in the conceptualization (definition) of the right weight of time spent at university by teaching and/or research, in the status of the Romanian Academy in the academic sphere. The Peasant⁴, Liberal⁵ and Great Romania⁶ parties played a significant (principal) role in the thematization of these subjects. Interestingly the functioning of the state bureaucracy and the academic oligarchy is based on the same clan type of organization model. The first one considers to fulfil its goals through the Education Ministry, the second one considers itself enough strong within the management of higher education institutions to suppose that putting the control in its hands (by strengthen the university autonomy) it could influence the decision making process. The last thirteen years can be considered like a clash between the higher education institutions autonomy ideas and the reform projects envisaged by the Ministry of Education. For the ministers, who changed their ministerial chair frequently, the highest challenge consisted to reform the system of autonomous higher education institutions which objected to change.

The market - as the third actor in the Clark's model - it has its own to the same extent important tasks like the other two actors already mentioned, but remained much more hidden than the state bureaucracy and academic oligarchy during the parliamentary discourses. Market actors could be heard mostly in the case of the legalization of private higher education institutions. This phenomena can be interpreted by the overlapping social roles. Most of the times the founders of private higher

³ Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania - DAHR – Romániai Magyarok Demokratikus Szövetsége – Uniunea Democratică a Maghiarilor în România.

⁴ National Cristian and Democrat Peasant Party – PNȚCD – Partidul Național Țărănesc Creștin și Democrat.

⁵ National Liberal Party – PNL – Partidul Național Liberal

⁶ Greater Romania Party – PRM – Partidul România Mare.

education institutions were professors of state funded higher education institutions, and as members in the Deputy Chamber equally promoted academic and market interests. From other point of view we can suppose that in parliamentary discourses the academic type of arguing is considered much more legitimate than the dirty economic interest related reasons. That is why beyond the private university issue, the market actors revealed their wish and opinion across hidden mechanisms (by voting, secret background agreements). For analyzing in-depth the market's impacts on the Romanian higher education we need a much more inventive method, than the present (actual) one.

It is not possible to consider coherent or homogeneous the higher education policy of the last thirteen years, because the internal affairs, the social and economical changes and the foreign policy equally influenced it. The reform was a stop-go process, where the increase steps were followed by decrease phases. The reform process was influenced by external factors, like the adopting by neighboring, ex-soviet countries new education bills (Ukraine in 1991, Russia 1992, Hungary 1993), the recommendations of foreign aids and projects (World Bank, Phare), the commitment by signing different educational (1998 Sorbonne, 1999 Bologna), minority and human rights agreements. Internal motivation was given by the 1989 social, political, economical changes, some government crisis, the malfunction, and inertia of the education system, the uncontrolled expansion of the private higher education. A high level of uncertainty, improvisation and temporariness marked the government's higher education policy. The higher education policy was uncertain once because the maintaining of the education minister function proved to be the biggest challenge (during four government periods 9 ministers changed position, in the first two years three). The higher education policy was characterized by improvisation secondly because between the different groups of elites (management of higher education institutions, the members of academic oligarchy, the political elite, and intellectuality) lack the consensus regarding the reform of education. During those thirteen years several reform projects were born, but neither of them could reach the purpose, mostly due to the political changes, as neither of the laws operated enough time that would have allowed to measure their effects.

The absence of a standardized educational policy was reflected in the way foreign educational policy patterns were adopted. Romania always followed the model, proposed by the actual educational minister as dictated by his/her thought, sentiments and knowledge. That is why between 1990-1996, moreover until 1998, a French educational pattern dominated. The German influences could be detected between 1998-2000 as unique impact of the minister Marga. After 2000 neither of foreign educational models prevailed. During the parliamentary debates, FSN senators emphasized the lesson of the West-German and Japan after-world war models, which contributed to the

economic recovery of these countries as a consequence of investments in education, but the senators initiatives had no effect on the further evolution of the educational policy.

The analysis of parliamentary debates revealed that the essence of the Romanian parliamentarism is rather the editing, controlling, legitimating and clashing of the different point of views, than the impact on the events. It brought to the light, that the parliamentary law and order and the forms of law technique are not a guarantee for democracy, but devices of the prevailing government. Apart from a very beginning, confused period, when the legislative power was earlier installed than the government, we can observe the dominance of executive power above the legislative one, which power is at times oppressive, other times subtle.

The parties omitted from the government tried to implement their education policy concepts, if they had, through the legislation. The critical aspect in the previous sentence refers to the fact, that most parties do not have until today a well elaborated education policy, as they neither have education policy experts in the right sense of the word. Although most parties have one or two (pre-university and university levels) education policy councils, and they lay down their education policy decisions on their advice, those councils are made up by teachers working at different school-levels, and not independent expert on such matters.⁷

By studying the parliamentary debates we can identify the higher education policy concepts of the different political parties, in a way that no other document can show us. Some parties defined their relation to education policy along education policy values, other parties education policy can be reconstructed across ideological and political norms, and other parties defined their educational policy through conflicting stances. The declared education policy concept not always coincided with the former actions value election, because other powers and influences co-acted in the action.

The Liberal Party and the DAHR had the most visible and transparent higher education policy concept. The Liberal Party gradually realized what it takes to develop liberal policies that are in ideological compliance with its concepts, although it has still a long way to go. According to the classical liberal concept the Liberal Party would be expected to emphasize individualism, egalitarianism, free-market and private property, and according to the post-liberal doctrine it should support the peaceful living together of different ethnic and national minorities and their culture. Instead of formulating a real liberal image the Liberal Party focused on political games and backstage movements, proving to be hostile to the question of establishing of the state-owned

⁷ This could explain beside other facts, the “provider-centered” aspect of the Romanian education system, which seeks to fulfill the providers interest rather than the consumer’s one. If we consider the education as a service, the main task for the providers would be to correspond the customers needs.

Hungarian language university. The Liberal Parties parliamentary initiatives mostly were social-democratic type. They supported the highest percent expenditure on education from the GDP (8%), the decrease of state-bureaucracy in education, assurance of equal opportunities for all (liberate the children schooling from the parent's earnings), the liquidation of educational obstacles, like solving the teachers difficult economical situation. The Liberal Party fostered the elaboration of a political consensus between all political parties regarding the development of education system. In the row of those certainly left wing type of arguments it lined the issue of private higher education too, which the Liberal Party conceived at all levels of education as a positive alternative to the state owned education. Paradoxically, the Liberal Party (together with the Democratic Party⁸) supported the concept, that the education system needs stability and hold the conviction, that "in the education system there is a need for a real revolution".⁹ The interviews made with the representatives of Democratic and Liberal Parties revealed that theoretically both parties are customer-oriented. Moreover, the Liberal Party is supportive of the very modern "vouchère" system ideology regarding the education financing.¹⁰ The Liberals criticized the actual system because remained provider-oriented, gave preference to the interest of teachers instead of children. From liberal point of view, the education systems bureaucracy is one of the most strong, extensive and backward bureaucracies of the state apparatus.

The DAHR education policy received the most attention both from the Romanian and Hungarian public opinion and media. In the last thirteen years the party representing the Hungarian minority's interest in Romania had both balanced, stabile and changing higher education policy elements. We can observe stability in the tasks, while changes occur in the widening of the education policy point of views. Comparing to the 1990 start point, we can remark today that the DAHR pays more attention not only to the positive minority-concerned foreign practices but to the Romanian majority education needs as well. In the course of time the DAHR introduced more and more education policy slogans in their political program, which corresponds to the modern social values, like the democratization of education and the decentralization of the management of education, support of the university autonomy, and private higher education, the minimalization of the state intervention. We can also observe in the case of DAHR education politics, and other parties education policy as well, a switch from a directly confrontative approach to a much more consensual political style. The DAHR education policy shows a substantial stability regarding the objectives and the tools applied to reach those objectives. Lack of vision in the long run could lead to the loss of competitiveness of the Hungarian minority in the Romanian social context. The Hungarian minority

⁸ Democratic Party – PD – Partidul Democrat.

⁹ Interview with the representat of Democratic Party – IOBK – 04 – 2003..03.11, 1p.

¹⁰ It consists in a state ticket system, which ensures equal opportunities, and free election for the childrens, meanwhile stimulates competition between the education institutions.

remained omitted from the education reform-conceptualization and preparation process, or took part only partially (in the elaboration of Hungarian language textbooks), which caused difficulties in understanding and identification with the reform objectives, caused difficulties in orientation and exploitation regarding the different new opportunities (new applications, scholarships, modern teacher training alternatives, etc...). Although the DAHR already in his 1996 political program formulated the need for the establishment of a Hungarian educational policy research group, until today there are no steps made forward in this question. As we can understand from the different DAHR documents the task of this research group would be that based on the needs of minorities to elaborate and optimize the minority related aspects of the education reform, the professional representation of the minorities interests and problems, participation in the problem-solving, the professional preparation of the decision making and consultation-services.

The different political parties, including the coalition partners of DAHR consider that the DAHR's educational claims are excessive. The DAHR could gather some support for its educational policy objective from some independent liberal intellectual circles (eg. Pro Europa Ligue and the Romanian Helsinki Committee). From the political parties point of view, the DAHR instead of representing the interest of its constituency, forces the realization of its own political ideas. The DAHR was not able to implement several elements of its political program like the Hungarian language entrance examination to all higher education institutions and the setting up of Hungarian language learning groups within the framework of Romanian universities. The most critical point of the unresolved questions remained the re-establishment of the autonomous, state funded Hungarian language university. In this respect little progress was made. In the public debates the DAHR supported its educational claims based on the international minority and human right standards guaranteed by the international agreements signed by Romania, on the western-European countries positive example in minority-treatment (Swedish education in Finland, the German's educational status in Sud-Tirol), on the different paragraphs of the Romanian Constitution, on the 1.5 millions Hungarian taxpayers and their equal right to the native language education, the need to preserve the Hungarian minority's culture and language in which the education has a key role, and the existence of a former Hungarian language university, closed down by the communist regime in 1959. The DAHR used modern, Western-European type of political codes, avoiding to reveal those historical events, like the Trianon trauma, and not replying to the provocative, chauvinist type of provocation coming from the extremist or left-wing ex-communist parties.

We can understand the Peasant Party's educational policy from the declarations and manifestations in the parliament made by party representatives. The parliamentary discourses reveals the strong interconnections of historical parties with the academic oligarchy. Accordingly, this party supported

the widening of academic autonomy with the increasing power of the universities senate in the decision making process. Fostered the maintenance of the Romanian Academy's role in the actual power-sharing system and consistently (whether in government or not) emphasized the role of the research in the higher education institutions, as a constructive component of the academic life (together with the teaching of course).

The FSN-PDSR-PSD¹¹ party's higher education policy aimed at the preservation of state bureaucracy and centralization. This public policy, as other social policies of the party is a Jan-face policy. Meanwhile they communicated to the outside world (to Western-Europe) that they are committed to the modernization, decentralization of the education system, supporting the university autonomy idea, supporting the increase of the education expenditures, in practice they maintained the state controlled, centralized education system in which the "order" is maintained by sanction, and by strengthening the bureaucracy and maintaining the education expenditures at a low level of the GDP. The FSN-PDSR-PSD consistently received assistance from PUNR¹² in the realization of the above objectives. As the FSN-PDSR-PSD was the main ruling party in most of the thirteen years (9 years) basically determined and controlled (or restricted) the contents of the parliamentary discourses, its subject and content, its place and timing and the persons allowed to speak in these matters. In order to pass its (not so democratic) legislative initiatives - beside the help of the PUNR and PRM parties, the party used several discursive strategies, from the search of scapegoat to threatening, from the delay in putting issues on the agenda to distraction of the attention, from the indulge in personalities across to extortion to the public intimidation, from demagogy to populism. The last two political tools aren't exclusively own by the party, those are characteristics of the Romanian day to day political life.

The Democratic Party's (PD) higher education policy seems to be the most invisible. Expressively they gave priority to quality and efficiency as education policy principles. Accordingly, the assurance of financial and material background of the education was in the focus of PD discourse during the parliamentary debates. The party's representatives objected the reform of education, saying that above all, the education system needs stability.

The Great-Romanian Party (PRM) showed an ambiguous picture regarding the higher education policy, as supported the legalization of private higher education, but fostered the state intervention, and emphasized the priority of teaching against the scientific research in the academic day to day

¹¹ National Salvation Front, Party of Social Democracy of Romania, Social-Democrat Party - FSN – PDSR – PSD – Frontul Salvării Naționale, Partidul Democrației Sociale din România, Partidul Social-Democrat. Between 1990-1991 it ruled under the name National Salvation Front, 1991-1992 National Democratic Salvation Front (FDSN), 1992-2000 Party of Social Democracy, between 2000-2004 Social-Democrat Party.

¹² Party of National Unity - PUNR – Partidul Unității Naționale Române.

life. The political ambivalence of the PRM derives from the different background of its party representatives composed by ex-members of the secret services and former communist leaders, who preserved their status and position both in the public offices and in the economic elite (by privatization of state-companies). This could explain the ambiguity and the mediator role between the two antagonistic camps regarding the university establishment regulation and autonomy questions.

It is indispensable to mention here, that Deputy Chamber Education Council proved to be one of the most important space for political parties to assert their interest. There were opinions,¹³ according to which, the professional questions and the search for a consensus were of primary interest in the Education Council, because most of its members were teachers from different levels of (mostly higher) education system. Other opinions, shaped in the parliamentary discourses, emphasized the dictatorial, antidemocratic style of the Education Council's president, and the exceptional influence of the latter on the decision making of both chambers (deputy and senate). We can conclude, that the presidents of this Council undoubtedly had a unique role in shaping the higher education policy. This position was occupied by a FSN-PDSR-PSD member until 1996, and by the representative of the Greater Romania party between 1996-2003. Although governments have changed, extremist party's representative maintained this influential function.

The single common point in the political parties objective was the emphasis on the unique role of education as a national priority in the development of the Romanian society, but the theory wasn't justified in practice. Although the state's laws are in compliance with the democratic norms and international standards, their implementation remained occasional. This practice is reflected in the measure of annual education expenditures, which until nowadays remained far from the 4% of the GDP guaranteed by the education law. The budget for education was around 2% of the GDP, from which the amount dedicated for the higher education was half percent, much more behind it compared to the higher education expenditures of the neighboring countries.

In the Romanian higher education policy the newly constituted organizations - which came into being with the reform - begun to get a growing role. The National Evaluation and Accreditation Academic Council (NEAAC), subordinated to the Parliament became the most important element of the higher education institution's accreditation process. The NEAAC's role in the decision making of private higher education is unique, totally 86 higher education institutions received their provisional functioning or accreditation status until 2003. In the academic year 2002/2003 the NEAAC accredited 11 higher education institutes and rejected the accreditation of 31 higher

¹³ See the interview made with the representing and former education minister of the FSN-PDSR-PSD.

education institutes, withdrawing their provisional functioning permissions too. Behind the accreditation mechanism – where we can hardly identify who takes the final decision – we can suspect a clientele-based system, which is basically different from an dictatorial system, because the power is not constrained in one hand, but it is based on the equilibrium of different forces. This clientele system is the feature of traditional societies which the communism not only reshaped, but conserved it and we need go back to the period between the two world wars of Romania if we want to get to their social roots.

Other intermediary-type of bodies - which similarly to the NEAAC came into being by governmental initiatives – like the Universities Scientific Research Council and the Higher Education Finance Council had a minor influence on the higher education policy formation. The first had a role in the distribution of the state funds dedicated to scientific researches, based on an application system, the latter which is an advisory body in financing questions, is responsible for the financing of higher education based on a normative structure. These intermediary bodies had limited power, because the Higher Education Department of the Ministry of Education maintained the authority to decide on the most important strategic educational policy matters.

Until 1996 the Consultative Group for Higher Education and Research, set up to the government initiative, played an important role in the Romanian higher education policy, elaborating a comprehensive and coherent reform plan in 1993, accepted and partly implemented by the government in the 1994 Education Bill. The paper “Policy for the reform of higher education” made by this group was accepted in 1996 by the incoming education minister as an authoritative educational policy tool.

The higher education institutions influenced the central (ministerial) decision making mostly through the National Council of University Rectors, and interpersonal relations. The academic oligarchy controls and influences the implementation of educational policies at institutional level. The academic oligarchy intends to influence - across interpersonal relationships and by taking part in different decision-making, intermediary bodies - the education policy making process at both levels, institutionally and nationwide. The Romanian higher education institution leadership could be described following two models: an authoritarian model, in which a powerful rector had all the power, and by an oligarchic model, according to which the university senate has a key role in the management. The higher education expansion followed by recession in the socialist period caused a generation gap among higher education teachers as there are less teachers aged between 30-50. Taking into consideration that this middle aged generation has an insignificant role, and that the participation in the different decision-making bodies is linked to academic position, we could

conclude that all the decision are taken by a tight gerontocratic circle. After the fall of the stateparty, the power of state authority shifted directly to the academic oligarchy. This changed in the last couple years because part of academics retired, but the way to enter in the academic oligarchy remained the same, across informal networks and it is seemingly depending from age and academic position, and from the level of political and professional recognition. Any institutional and nationwide position-holder person is part of this academic oligarchy, thus the existing intermediary and academic bodies are simple corporative bodies, copies of the political powers. Nowadays in spite of all reform processes, still the education related political decisions are taken in an informal way, excluding the formal decision-taking mechanisms. The local powers (local governments, mayors offices) have a minimal influence on the alteration of higher education policy.

Students organizations had an important role – although limited in time –when organized street demonstrations and strikes. In the early 1990s the first reform steps were taken to the pressure of the student organizations. The student strikes had an effect in the subsequent modification of the 1994 Education Law in September same law that was passed by the Parliament in June. Students organizations rejected the introduction of a fee to be paid in case of exam-failure, year-repetition and other services. The student organizations claims caused income shortfalls for the universities, impeding them to realize own income in addition to the state budget subsidy.

The Private Universities Confederation is the representing body of the private higher education institutions, which intends to represents their interests. However, this confederation has no decision-making power, thus its impact to the system is minimal.

The market influence prevails across the private higher education. The large technical universities were the first higher education institutes open to the economic and civil agents initiatives. After the changes in 1989 in technical universities the sudden decrease of students number caused a much more disadvantageous economical situation than in other state funded universities. They tried to survive, attract or maintain their students by providing new services, by improving their student's employment opportunities, organizing job fairs, inviting representatives of students and possible employees in the university senate, elaborating new scholarship programs. These initiatives were adopted by other universities too. The most common enterprise with the market's agents happened at the innovative periphery of the higher education institutions, which had a relatively independent structure and independent economic policy.

In addition to the above two civil organizations played a key role in the resolution of higher education policy questions, the Pro Europa Ligue and the Romanian Helsinki Committee, who helped with their independent professional advises in the debates on the reestablishment of the state owned Hungarian language university and in the promotion of a law concerning the minorities rights in Romania. At the same time they played a mediator role in surmounting political events which caused great social and political tensions (eg. the threat of the DAHR withdraw from the coalition in 1998).

Probably other stake-holders, encouraged by the success of an unique initiative – I refer to the action taken against nepotism at one Romanian university which received a wide publicity – will shape higher education policy. In the success of the above mentioned case the adoption of western democratic tools played a significant role. To strengthen the stake-holders participation and influence of the education policy it would be important to consider and explore new opportunities that arise with the accession to the European community, like teachers and students mobility programs (Phare, Erasmus, Tempus), projects that support the reintegration of those students graduated abroad (see the CEP projects), the opportunities opened by international organizations.

As a consequence of this analyses we can see, that the table of the multi-actor higher education policy is shaped by the academic oligarchy, state bureaucracy and the market's hyena, acting in background, whose effect one can only suspect. The time proved to be too short, and the circumstances proved to be too unfavorable (lack of tradition) that other actors (stake-holders, civil and/or buffer bodies) could not became stronger and enter into action.

4 Published studies in the field

The Education Policy of the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania between 1990-2003. *Minorities and Governmental Politics in Central_Europe. Minorities in East-Central-Europe X*. Blénesi Éva and Mandel Kinga (ed). Gondolat –Ethnic and Minority Research Institute of the HAS, Budapest, 2004, p. 85-108.

The Analysis of Parliamentary Diaries, Possible Method for Higher Education Research. *Minorities Studies and Research*. Budapest, 13. Vol. 2004. No.3, p. 467-476.

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The Romanian Higher Education and the EU Accession. *Space and Field*. Ethnic and Minority Research Institute of the HAS, Budapest, 2004, p 187-204.

Accreditation of Higher Education in France. *Hungarian Higher Education*, Budapest, 2003/7, p 37-43.

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The Romanian Higher Education in the Light of the 1994 Parliamentary Debates. *Etnopolicy*, Teleki László Foundation, Budapest, 2003, p 251-273.

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Ambitions of Centralization and Decentralization in the Romanian Educational Policy. *Culture and Self-Organization*, Debrecen, 2001, p 56-73.