

## HOW TO BECOME A POLITICIAN. THE ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IN ROMANIA

C. GAVRILUȚĂ<sup>1</sup> C. M. DALBAN<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract:** *The present work analyses the theoretical perspectives on the role education plays in the formation and recruitment of politicians in Romania. We have analysed the legislative mandates of the parliamentarians of the Chamber of Deputies from the 2004-2008, 2008-2012 and 2012- 2016 periods, whose mandates overlapped with two types of electoral systems. Additionally, we have analysed the CVs of the parliamentarians who, in 2016-2020, ran as number one nominees on party-lists of both the Social Democrat and the National Liberal parties. In this analysis we took into account the validity of the degrees they received from Romanian universities, as well as the number of degrees: Bachelor's Degree, Masters's Degree, PhD. From the capital theory standpoint, we noticed that there is a two-way transaction between the political capital and the educational capital. The results highlight that the parties opted for a negative selection education-wise of those nominated to occupy a Parliamentary seat or a public office.*

**Key words:** *education, vocational training, political parties, electoral lists*

### 1. Political Background and Educational Capital

Politics has always been one of the phenomena that impact social layers, whether it was seen as science, strategy, art of governing, power exercise or an assertion of sovereignty. Whatever the context, what stands out is the ubiquity of the politicians with their preoccupations for public work and their desire to impose a certain social order (Bourdieu, 2012).

Nowadays, analysis and research on politicians seem to be relegated to the media. Comprehensive studies (Carp, 2008) on this topic are virtually unknown to the public, while sociological research on the evolution of politicians are few and far between, usually confined to the academic ivory tower.

Romanian press has a propensity for critical exercises or for merely observing the political act, which is sometimes accompanied by an outcome analysis. More often than

---

<sup>1</sup> Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, [cristina\\_gavriluta@yahoo.fr](mailto:cristina_gavriluta@yahoo.fr), corresponding author

<sup>2</sup> Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iasi, Department of Sociology

not, what passes unnoticed is the actual performer of the political act, the politician. To put it bluntly, neither the press nor the academic papers opt for a thorough analysis of the educational and professional formation and background of Romanian politicians. Usually, such analyses of the educational aspect of their careers are abridged, incomplete or something tabloid columnists tend to chew on.

It is worth noticing that Romanian society still holds in high regard the educational and professional portfolio of Romanian politicians in various social contexts. The Romanian saying „ai carte, ai parte”, which roughly translates as „knowledge is power” is a metaphor for prizing knowledge and education (Gavriluță, 2017). This is just as valid in the political life, and consequently politicians have become aware of this social requirement. Thus, the educational capital and the professional background become cornerstones of a politician’s career. These act as visiting cards that bestow an elitist image upon their owner, heralding one’s knowledge, degrees and professional competence.

The preoccupation of a certain type of politicians for this kind of capital equates to their attempts to complete their studies or to acquire new degrees after they make it to the political scene, as highlighted by their resumes or disclosed by the media. However, such endeavors are not indicative of intellectual curiosity, an urge to study or ongoing formation. For most, this is a mere brand and image strategy.

Thus, the educational formation of the politician could be scrutinized through a sociological lens, drawing on Pierre Bourdieu’s (1886) theory of capitals. Such an approach illustrates the way political vision works within Romanian society, laying bare a series of image strategies tailored to our collective mentality and an ability to convert political capital into educational capital and vice versa.

Analyzing the intricacies of the image and brand making mechanism in current Romanian politics, we gain access to the entire spectrum of political generations and become aware of the connections and fault lines marking the relationship between them.

Our research puts under scrutiny the resumes of Romanian parliamentarians in the 2004-2008, 2008-2012, 2012-2016 periods, taking into account their academic degrees and study levels. Moreover, we also analyze the most important nominees on Romanian party-lists, representatives of both the left (PSD) and the right (PNL) during the 2016-2020 legislature.

## **2. Sociological Perspectives on the Educational Formation of the Romanian Politician**

In the world of politics, where the emphasis on educational formation is ever more conspicuous, there is an urgent need for an analysis of the educational formation of politicians. Sociological studies are important, in that they highlight a whole plethora of actors on the political scene (Balandier, 2007), each trying to capitalize on the credentials they have. A first glance at the Romanian political scene shows an array of political figures who evolve incoherently, belying a lack of knowledge, professional formation, administrative and political experience, spiced with cultural blind spots. In such cases, the media proves unrelenting, criticizing them promptly: “A thorough overhaul of the political class should not draw solely on what our politicians do, but on who they are” (Pleşu, 2008, p. 49). The author of this quote, Andrei Pleşu – in his analysis of

the resumes of ministers – draws a parallel between French ministers and the Romanian ministers of the Grindeanu cabinet: „In France, the current Finance minister is Mr. Michel Sapin. He is a left-wing politician, whose politically active ancestors hark back to the 1789 Estates General. He has served as deputy, mayor, minister under Mitterrand and Jospin, a perennial representative of the reformers of his party (in the vein of Michel Rocard). Studies: the legendary high school Henri IV, a Bachelor's Degree in History, PhD in geography, alumnus of Ecole Normale Supérieure, Ecole Nationale d'administration, French School in Rome (numismatic studies). In the Grindeanu cabinet, finance minister is Mr. Viorel Stefan. He majored in Economical Studies in Iasi and completed his doctoral studies in Galati. Mr. Stefan occupied several administrative positions in the Galati River Navigation Company Navrom. In the Parliament he was a member of the budget-finance committee (2000-2008). I have little information at my disposal to judge the professional prowess of our current finance minister, yet the difference in educational credentials between him and his French counterpart is hard to overlook” (Pleșu, 2018, p.49).

Is this a natural phenomenon? Is it symptomatic of a fledgling society as far as political exercise is concerned or is it indicative of a structural flaw related to the formation, the election and the performance of the political man pitted against social requirements? This chain of questions points, undoubtedly, beyond the rules of the political game, to values, norms and a dire need of genuine political elite. Wright Mills (1951) formulates a direct connection between the elite and power. For him “the ruling class is not a class of elites but an assembly of elite classes” (Bădescu, 1966, p. 607), which is a collection of elites converging under the umbrella of power. In Romanian sociology, Dimitrie Gusti (1941) defines the elite as a social personality that manifests itself on all social levels. Authority, Hierarchy and Solidarity cannot exist without leaders, rulers, front liners, that is without elites. This is why the founder of Romanian sociology advocates for a national pedagogy for the creation and development of the social personality (Gusti, 1940). According to him, the whole existence of an elite gravitated around three essential variables: knowledge, ethics and actions, all three serving the nation. Without doubt, the political man was bound to embody the three variables which the renowned sociologist advocated.

The idea advanced by Dimitrie Gusti in the 30s and 40s is just as relevant for the 21st century Romania, as it touches on the ethical and professional requirements as well as on the paramount importance of knowledge. These are closely tied to both the political legitimacy and to the quality of the political endeavor.

Thus, wouldn't it be safe to say that being a politician entails being an unblemished professional? Is the politician supposed to have expertise in his field of political activity? The answer is tied to a series of social phenomena that have been recurring during the past 30 years of democracy. The 1989 Revolution enabled several human types to reach the political scene: some were second echelon members of the Communist Party, others were seasoned anti-communist fighters on whom Communism had taken a heavy toll, while the third category was made up of culture figures, intellectuals and professionals in various fields. Needless to say that, during the dawn of our post-December democracy, having been a revolutionary was a key that opened many doors leading to the power. A close analysis allows us to take notice of a phenomenon called „a relay of

power”, as those newly perched in places of power were not quite unacquainted with power. To prove our case we must mention that Ion Iliescu served as Secretary General of the Union of Communist Youth and he was not unfamiliar with the preoccupations of the Communist regime. His successor at the top of the Social-Democrat Party was Adrian Năstase, who had been jailed for common law offences. Adrian Năstase provided political support to the one who would come to replace him, the political adventurer Victor Ponta. Gradually, the political scene became more diverse, making room for businessmen and other social types.

As time passed, the term expertise became a stepping stone of the political language. Borrowed from the field of management, the concept refers to a set of skills, competences and knowledge that warrant an individual’s position of power, or for one who is aiming at occupying such a position.

The expert politician is a seasoned player who can vouch for certain qualities that will enable him to pursue the plans that his electors had sanctioned.

In Romanian democracy, expertise has been exploited as a populist catch-phrase that concealed political schemes and electoral agendas that were poorly anchored in reality. The pinnacle of expertise is the technocrat figure. Thus, the one who steals the political show is the expert politician who plays the part of the saving hero (Campbell, 2015), who knows how to shape and implement public projects, who knows the recipe for success. He is the one people turn to when in need of miracle solutions that would allow us to overcome our problems and to live happily.

The evolution of the Romanian political class undergoes a series of upheavals under the pressure of public opinion and of voters, as well as due to the contact with foreign counterparts. In this regard, one could talk about 3 different periods: the revolutionary period- when the Romanian politician perpetuated a series of elements from the old regime, the renewal period – when the political class was flooded with politicians coming from various social layers and the expertise period of politicians.

The latter period, that of the expert politician is characterized by a penchant for certifying skills and competences. Consequently, politicians seek to obtain a series of diplomas and academic credentials that would warrant their value and competence. For many politicians, the diploma is a vector that enables them to cement their political influence and to carve out a favorable image of oneself in the eyes of voter and fellow politicians alike. Therefore, the diploma is the guarantee of an educational capital that is gradually being tapped into on the political market.

Pierre Bourdieu was actually right when he stated that man would tap into all capital resources at his disposal in order to maximize his profit. In our context, the profit translates, on a symbolic level, to prestige and power. Conversely, there may be something else at play here, which is a conversion of the power and social status of a politician into educational capital. The bottom line is, in their desire to make up for the absence of capital, politicians may resort to various strategies to obtain the sought certifications.

This is not necessarily a negative aspect, as long as the diplomas are a token of an authentic professional formation and attest to extensive knowledge in various fields, as well as in the field of politics and public administration. Knowledge is a very important capital in the context of what one might call today’s information society. In light of this, it is necessary that we

conjure up Dimitrie Gusti's ideas who always advocated for a close-knit relationship between knowledge and action, circumscribed to what he called a Militans Sociology. The educational formation of politicians has always entailed earning an array of diplomas and certificates testament to the skills and competences vital to the political act.

Needless to say, this phenomenon is a double-edged sword, as the praxis of plagiarism and counterfeit diplomas often made it to the front page of Romanian press. These public scandals lead to governments being overthrown and to key politicians being replaced. For instance, Ioan Relu Mang – Minister of the Education, Research, Youth and Sports between May 7th-May15th 2012, member of the Ponta cabinet, resigned following plagiarism accusations. All these facts contributed to a more thorough selection of the nominees for the electoral lists and to a more minute scrutiny of party members and their careers.

In the present paper we embark upon analyzing the key aspects in the formation of a politician. We take into consideration political recruitment and its impact on electoral lists, as well as political endorsement mechanisms. All these aspects are fine-tooth combed using the educational formation of the political candidate as a reference point.

The literature of some others like P. Norris (2004) and A. Miroiu (2006) states that there are two key elements underlying the presence of candidates sharing a common educational background:

1. The Political Party Law and the derivative process of recruitment (Norris, 1997)
2. The role the political party plays in this process

According to Fortin-Rittenberger (2015), there are three key dimensions in the process of recruiting candidates for elections:

- *The Inclusion of the Selectorate*– The Selectorate is made of those party members who make the selection of the candidates, and it can be inclusive or exclusive. In this case, Romania is characterized by a lack of a selectorate that can be easily traced back to the traditional parties, as the selectorate is usually represented by the District, Local and National Electoral Authorities. Sometimes, party members get to choose the members of these authorities, but not the candidates for Parliament and Government seats.
  - The degree of centralization in the process of candidate recruitment. Ascension to the political scene is influenced by the way the candidate list is built ( be it on a central electoral level or on electoral district level)
  - *The type of nomination procedure*
- K. Beckwith (1992) identifies several elements characteristic of electoral systems:
- For nominal elections the most important aspects are: disrepute, repute, integrity, competence (educational formation)
  - Candidate-list election is influenced by the power amassed by candidates as well as their repute.

### **3. The Educational Profile of Romanian Deputies**

In order to identify the profile of the political man, we have chosen to analyse the CVs of all the parliamentarians in the Chamber of Deputies over various legislative mandates

and to map the evolution of their educational formation. The data analysis has been pitted against other similar studies carried out on a national level, such as recruitment methods and the cases of plagiarism uncovered nationwide.

For all these elements we have proposed three inquiries:

1. What is the role of education in the identification and grooming of a candidate by Romanian parties? The conclusion was drawn from the analysis of the electoral lists for the 2012-2016 mandates and the identification of the traits of the electoral list front liners.
2. What was the evolution of the educational formation of Romanian deputies from one legislative stint to another, taking into account graduated studies? The analysis drew on the 2004-2008, 2008-2012 and 2012-2016 mandates, and enabled us to analyze the percentage of deputies who garnered Bachelor's Degree, Masters's Degree and PhDs issued by category A, B and C universities. According to the Law of National Education, the universities in Romania are classified in three categories, namely universities focused on education (C), universities of education and scientific research or universities of education and artistic creation (B) and, respectively, advanced research universities and education (A).
3. How much does their formation weigh in the electoral competition, as well as in the light of short term party interests and in the selection process?

Our endeavor entailed some thorough documentation and also a statistic analysis of the data we entered. Thus, we analyzed 1025 out of 1134 Deputy CVs, stemming from the 2004-2008, 2008-2012, 2012-2016 mandates. In this category also fall 160 deputies who ended their mandates prematurely for various reasons. The research hindrances stemmed from creating a generally valid set of indicators and analysis fields: the prestige of the diplomas based on national university rankings, the age thresholds when they completed the studies, the absence of numerous CVs from the website of the Chamber of Deputies. The age thresholds were taken from a similar research of the university professor Marian Preda (2016), in a research regarding the negative selection of the Romanian parliamentarians in the electoral process. We also identified the front liners on the parliament lists for the 2012-2016 and 2016- 2020 mandates, and we analyzed their CVs, insisting on their educational formation. A set of sociological studies provided us with invaluable data regarding the trust level the electorate puts in the Parliament. We tried to correlate this information with the educational preparation level of Romanian parliamentarians.

The analysis of the diploma values obtained by Romanian Deputies led to indentifying some indicators that influence the electoral laws and the selection method of the candidate by the selectorate, be it at a nominal or a party list level. In this analysis we included both private and state universities, and the diploma analysis takes into account the education system from 1989 to the present day, as well as the value of the diplomas earned before 1989.

In Figure 1 we notice that within the 2004-2008 legislative mandates 51.3% of the parliamentarians boast Bachelor's Degree issued by category A universities, 23.2% Bachelor's Degree had diplomas issued by category B universities and only 13.7% graduated from category C universities. According to Romanian university rankings,

private universities fall into the C category that is universities that emphasize education rather than research.

In the case of the 2008-2012 mandates: 34.6% of the parliamentarians have category A Bachelor's Degree diplomas, 16.7 % fewer than the previous legislative mandate. We notice a slight increase in the category B Bachelor's Degree diplomas, from 23.3% to 25.4% whereas the percentage of category C Bachelor's Degree diplomas doubled in comparison with the previous mandate, from 13.7% to 27.6%.

The 2012-2016 mandates shows category A Bachelor's Degree figures similar to the previous mandate (35.2%, 34.6% respectively), yet still a far cry from the 51.3% of the 2004-2008 mandates. As far as the category B and category C diplomas are concerned we found 26.1% and 31.4% respectively.

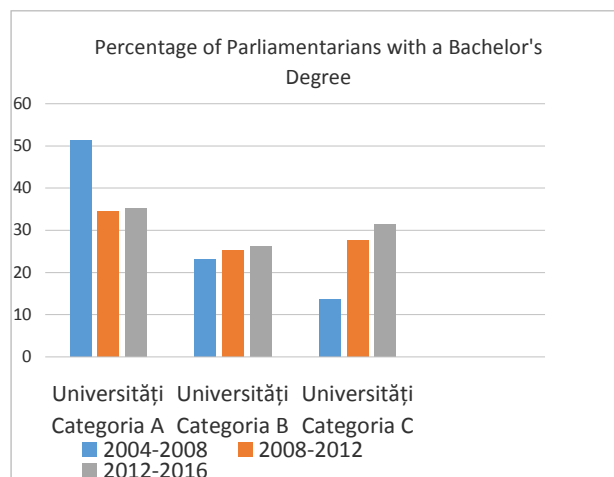


Fig.1. *The prestige of Bachelor's Degree diplomas*

Source: *personal data analysis*

Masters's Degree diploma-wise, for the first legislative mandate (2004) we found a 41.3% category A graduates. This figure took a huge dip in 2008 (27.6%) and further plummeted in 2012-2016, when not more than 24.7% of graduates boasted a category A Masters's Degree diploma.

The percentage discrepancy is just as stark in the case of studies completed in category B universities: 17.2% in 2004, 25.8% in 2008 and 33.4% in 2016. Conversely, the number of graduates from category C universities skyrockets, the vast majority of diploma recipients having chosen private universities over state universities. It is worth mentioning that private universities may not meet the same quality of education standards as state universities. Thus, category C Masters's Degree diploma figures are as follows: 24.5% in 2004, 32% in 2008 and 30.8% in 2012.

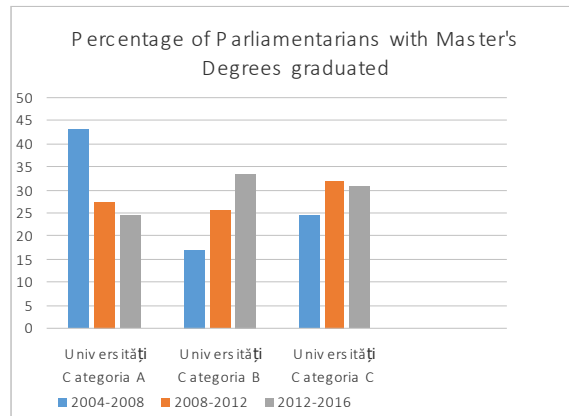


Fig. 2. Prestige of Masters's Degree diplomas

For the analysis of the PhD diplomas we turned to statistical data from M. Preda (2016), why does Romania have a negative selection in parliamentary elections? The results are as follows: during the 2004-2008 mandates, 32.5% of the deputies had category A PhD diplomas, 20.8% cat. B and 3.9% category C. The low percentage of diplomas issued by category C universities is explained by the low number of universities in this category that have Doctoral Departments for advanced research. The 2008-2012 period showed a percentage increase in all 3 categories: 36.5% A, 27% B and 9.5% C. For 2012-2016 the figures are the following: 32.1% A, 24.4% B and 10.3% C.

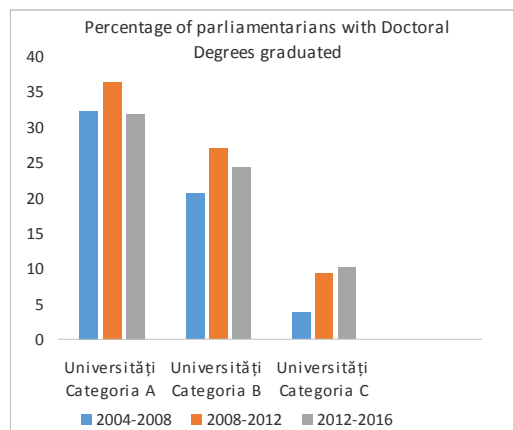


Fig. 3. Prestige of PhD diplomas

From the CV analysis we notice some aspects related to the low number of parliamentarians with high education qualifications and that fact that it is constant over time. Unfortunately, the number of parliamentarians with high education diplomas issued by category C universities is constantly growing. This fact is indicative of a certain level of preparation and belies certain practices of obtaining diplomas. What we are referring to is their tendency to enroll in certain universities where earning a Bachelor's Degree diploma is



way easier. Analyzing the graduation years, we conclude that most of them do not complete their studies in due time. The practices they lend themselves to in their attempt to catch up with the educational and cultural requirements are explored by Constantin Schifirnet (2013) in his work *Romanii, cum au fost si cum sunt*. The high education diploma traffic is, according to the author, a praxis that represents a social hazard.

By analyzing figures we identify a negative selection (Preda, 2016) promoted by political parties from an educational standpoint, doubled by compensatory strategies of converting the political and other forms of capital into educational capital. These strategies are essential to projecting one's image in the eyes of the electorate and of the peers, and carry weight in the attempt to work one's way up the political and power ladder. Our starting point was the assumption that democratic systems facilitate the selection of an elite meant to harness power and to govern. In this line of thought we bring up Occidental schools that spring boarded famous names onto the political scene, thus earning a reputation for being nurseries for the formation of genuine politicians. For instance, in France the majority of the political and administrative elite are educated in renowned schools such as École Polytechnique and École nationale. In the UK, the political elites are educated in world class universities such as Oxford or Cambridge, while the USA are equally famous for their Ivy League.

On the other hand, authors like Bauer and Bertin-Mourot (2013) assert that there is no clear-cut correlation between successful careers, important administrative, political or financial positions and the academic results and certificates. Furthermore, Raymond Boudon (1997) goes as far as stating that those who do not boast a diploma issued by a prestigious university can still have access to circles of power, taking a different path: "The political trajectory is something that comes naturally and this enables the sub elites to enter elite circles, even though indirectly, through militancy and elections". In this case, politics becomes a springboard to the elite circles for those who fail to take the traditional path, that of educational strategies (Huther, 2007). Just as Bourdieu put it, this is a case of backward conversion of the capital, its political dimension turning into an educational one.

In Romania, the legislative change regarding the way of electing parliamentarians led to essential changes in the selection methods and their relation to educational formation (Chiru, 2009). In 2008, against a backdrop defined by a Prim Minister - President conflict, a new electoral law was adopted – Law no.35/2008. Known as the single-winner voting law, the new regulations regarding the election of parliamentarians were set to force a political class reform, by introducing a single-winner voting mechanism. This occurred in a time when the people's trust in the Parliament hit a record low. According to a Eurobarometer in March 2008 (the month in which Law No. 35 was adopted), 21.59% of Romanians trusted the parliament. In May 2012, the same instrument - the Eurobarometer survey conducted by the European Commission - indicated a confidence score of 15.76%. Unfortunately, this selection method had a short life span.

The design of the new electoral mechanism was based on a two-fold misdiagnosis. On one hand, the fathers of the new law relied on the fallacy that the change in the electoral system would inherently lead to an overhaul of the political class. However, as

niche studies and Romanian reality would prove, the electoral system does not independently create the necessary pull that would lead to achieving a large-scale goal such as reforming the political class (Hintea, 2011).

#### 4. The spearhead within Romanian political parties

The role of the elites in politics and in the art of governing has been well formulated throughout history. From V. Pareto's (2014) elites –Lions and the Elites- to the more intricate model of pluralist analysis advanced by R. Aron, the elites had been the object of a series of sociological debates. According to the French sociologist, an important part is played by the formation and recruitment of the elites. He explores the ways in which a social elite manifests itself in the field of power through the recruitment and promotion mechanisms perpetuated by parties. If we defined the elite as a minority that is meant to lead, could we talk about some leaders who embody the traits of these elite groups? How can this capital be quantified? Does this capital transfer from the individual to the group or vice versa?

Do the spearheads, that is the individuals who are nominated by the party's electorate to run for important offices, identify themselves as a trailblazing elite? How much does the educational capital contribute to the profile of the spearhead?

The relation of the intellectual, as the main owner of educational capital, to power was illustrated by Raymond Aron in a work from 1955. Just like some of his peers who followed in his footsteps, he underlined the role of intellectuals in the equation of power and social changes. Education virtually becomes a tell-tale sign of the presence of an intellectual elite within a party mechanism.

Therefore, we analyzed the 2016-2020 legislative mandates in order to observe an evolution over time, and we have chosen the main Romanian political parties: the left-wing (PSD) and the right-wing (PNL). We analyzed 86 CVs of Parliament candidates who were sent to the Chamber of Deputies from 43 electoral districts, according to the law. What we leaned on were the high education levels we found in their CVs and the prestige of the diplomas with regard to university rankings.

Table 1

*The Prestige of the diplomas of the PNL spearhead candidates for the 2016-2020 mandates. Source: personal data analysis*

University ranking		Bachelor's Degree diplomas	Masters's Degree diplomas	PhD diplomas
A	universities dedicated to advanced research and education	47.3%	42.3%	16.6%
B-	universities dedicated to scientific research and education	18.4%	19.2%	50.1%
C-	universities dedicated to education	34.2%	38.4%	33.3%

Out of 43 spearhead deputy candidates for the 2016-2020 mandate, 88.37% graduated higher education studies. We notice a high percentage of graduates on all levels: Bachelor's Degree, Masters's Degree, PhD. An intriguing phenomenon arises from the number of candidates who graduated from category C universities. A possible explanation would be that this situation results from the high number of engineers to be found in the party memberships. The diploma distribution figures for the PNL 2016-2020 candidates show: 47.3% graduated from prestigious universities, 18.4% earned diplomas from category B universities whereas roughly a third (34.2%) graduated from category C universities, most of them private institutions.

Masters's Degree -wise, the situation is somewhat similar: 42.35% category A diplomas, 19.2% category B diplomas and 38.4% category C diplomas. This could be put down to the large number of candidates who majored in finance and law. Many of those who did not complete their initial studies in due time, earned their diplomas in private universities.

As far as PhD studies go, category A diplomas amount to 16.6%, 50.1% category B diplomas and 33.3% category C diplomas. In a nutshell, the higher the education level, the lower the quality and prestige of the diploma provider. This inverse ratio shows that the PNL spearheads use political capital as a way of attaining educational capital, especially when it comes to higher education and doctoral studies. There could be an entire plethora of explanations: from a symbolic nature (prestige, respect, power) to an economical rationale (accessing financially satisfying positions) to a political urge (access to power leverage) (Radu, Buti, 2018). We applied the same indicators for the PSD spearhead candidates.

Table 2

*The Prestige of the diplomas of PSD spearhead candidates, 2016-2020 mandates. Source: personal data analysis*

University ranking				Bachelor's Degree diplomas	Masters's Degree diplomas	PhD diplomas
<b>A</b>	–	<b>universities</b>	<b>centered on</b>	54.2%	56%	72.7%
		<b>advanced</b>	<b>research and</b>			
		<b>education</b>				
<b>B</b>	–	<b>universities</b>	<b>centered on</b>	20.1%	20%	27.3%
		<b>scientific research</b>	<b>and education</b>			
<b>C</b>	–	<b>universities</b>	<b>centered on</b>	25.7%	24%	0
		<b>education</b>				

Out of a total of 43 analyzed CVs stemming from 43 electoral districts, 81.4% of the spearhead candidates boasted higher education, 7% fewer than the PNL candidates. A significant 25.6% had PhD diplomas issued by prestigious universities. 54.2% of the candidates had Bachelor's Degree diplomas from category A universities, 20.1% category B diplomas and 25.7% category C diplomas. On the Masters's Degree level, we noticed a total figure of 56%, and a constant figure for category B (20%) and category C (24%) diplomas. Most PSD candidates have prestigious PhD diplomas (72.7%) in fields such as:

management, letters, finance, law. 27.3% earned category B PhD diplomas, most of them majoring in engineering.

In the case of PSD, figures show that most spearhead candidates earned higher education diplomas from prestigious universities. There is a direct ratio between the level of education and the quality and prestige of the diploma provider. This may be testament to a high esteem for educational formation inside the party. This element could vouch for a good image that could be converted into votes and power. On the other hand, we might conclude that, in Romania, intellectuals enjoy a superior acknowledgment from the left-wing.

## 5. Conclusions

The conclusion of this study will consist of a set of observations on the nature of the relationship between education, political recruitment and the professional aspects that converge towards the formation of a political career in Romania.

1. Romania has taken decisive steps towards the development of a political class, but the sought-after reform could not be made in 30 years of democracy, no matter the electoral mechanisms and the nomination procedures.
2. The pressure of the citizens and intellectuals, the inability of the elected to use power according to people's expectations, as well as the unrelenting presence of the media prompted slight changes in the way spearhead candidates are nominated. Given this context, educational improvement has become a stepping stone in the life of a politician and a reference point in a politician's way of exercising power. His expertise warrants his political act as necessary, useful and timely. Today, the only way a politician showcases his expertise is through educational certification. These do not necessarily speak to the politicians' real competences. One might find a guarantee of these competences in the prestige of the universities that issued the higher education diplomas.
3. The lack of professional competence spurs politicians to shortcut the educational act, not necessarily for gaining social and symbolic capital, but as a guarantee of their political act. This aspect pervades people's level of trust in political structures. Most Romanians frown upon the educational formation of politicians, especially parliamentarians. At the bottom of the trust rankings lie the political parties with a 8.9% trustworthiness rating and the Parliament with 9.8%.
4. Our analysis foreshadows a rift between the political class and the Romanian intellectual elites. The utter absence of genuine intellectuals among Parliament members might be an indication of this. In countries with seasoned democracies candidate selection procedures and methods are intensely scrutinized (Riddell, 1995).
5. Engineering, Finance, Management and Law are the main educational formation fields of the politicians we have analyzed, while educational update is achieved through a series of short-term studies, depending on the Parliamentary

committee one is part of. Humanities account for underwhelming figures in the educational preparation of Romanian politicians.

6. Although a significant number of Parliament members have Bachelor's Degree and Masters's Degree diploma issued by prestigious universities, the number of category C diplomas overshadow that of category B diplomas. Most category C diplomas are issued by private universities, which, according to ARACIS, enjoy a limited amount of trust, unlike category A universities which are deemed trustworthy. .
7. A significant increase in the number of candidates who boast complete higher education credentials (Bachelor's Degree, Masters's Degree, PhD) has been noticed. This is clearly noticeable when it comes to spearhead candidates. In the higher education category, PNL leads PSD by 7%. Nonetheless, it is hard to pinpoint how many of these diplomas are backed by genuine competences.
8. Were we to exclude the spearhead candidates, it would come as no surprise that political parties do not value educational aspects, which play second fiddle to fame and power.

These milestones aside, we notice that the number of Parliament members who do not boast higher education diplomas is low and constant, whereas the number of category C diploma owners is growing from one mandate to the other. In reality, we can narrow it down to a negative selection of those who are summoned to represent and lead us. This reality pervades the quality of their political act, their ability to act and their ethic principles. Unfortunately, after 30 years of democracy we do not yet have an authentic political class.

## References

- Aron, R. (1955). *L'Opium des intellectuels*. Paris: Colman-Levy.
- Bădescu, I. Dungaci, D., Baltasiu, R. (1966), *Istoria sociologiei contemporane* [History of contemporary sociology]. București: Eminescu.
- Balandier, G. (2007). *Scena Puterii* [The power scene]. București: Aion.
- Bauer, M. and Bertin-Mouro (1999). National models for making and legitimating elites. A comparative analysis of the 200 top executives in France, Germany and Great Britain. *European Societies*, 1:1, 9-31, DOI: 10.1080/14616696.1999.10749923.
- Beckwith, K. (1992). Comparative Research and Electoral Systems. *Women & Politics*, 12:1, 1-33, DOI: 10.1300/J014v12n01\_01
- Boudieu, P. (2012). *Despre Câmpul Politic* [About the political field]. Iași: Universitatea Alexandru Ioan Cuza din Iași.
- Bourdieu, P. (1886). *Economia bunurilor simbolice* [Economy of symbolic things]. București: Meridiane.
- Campbell, J. (2015). *Eroul cu o mie de fețe* [The hero with a thousand faces]. București: Herald.
- Carp, R. (2008). *Mai are politica vreun sens? Instrumentele democratiei si povara populismului*. Bucuresti: Humanitas.

- Chiru, M., Ciobanu, I. (2009). „Legislative Recruitment and Electoral System Change: The case of Romania“. *CEU Political Science Journal*. Vol. 4, No. 2.
- Coenen-Huther, (2007). *Sociologia elitelor* [The sociology of elites]. Iaşi: Polirom.
- Gusti, D., (1940). Problema sociologiei. Trei comunicări, *Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile secţiunii istorice*, [The problem of sociology. Three communications, Annals of the Romanian Academy. Memories of the historical section] seria III, tom XXII. Bucureşti: Imprimeria Naţională.
- Gusti, D. (1941). Memoriile secţiunii istorice. *Analele Academiei Române* [Annals of the Romanian Academy. Memories of the historical section], seria III, tom XXIII. Bucureşti: Imprimeria Naţională.
- Miroiu, A. (2006). *Fundamentele politicii* [The fundamentals of politics], Vol.I: Preferinţe şi alegeri colective. Iaşi: Polirom.
- Muntean, I., Preda, M. (2016). Why does Romania have a negative selection in parliamentary elections? An Analysis of the Recruitment and Selection System during the Last Three Legislative Terms. *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences*, [S.I.], 84-103. ISSN 1842-2845.
- Norris, P. (2004). *Electoral Engineering: Voting Rules and Political Behavior*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Norris, P., Lovenduski, J. (1995). *Political Recruitment: Gender, Race and Class in the British Parliament*, Cambridge University Press.
- Norris, P., Lovenduski, J. (1995). *Political Recruitment: Gender, Race and Class in the British Parliament*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Norris, P. (1997). Choosing Electoral Systems: Proportional, Majoritarian and Mixed Systems - For Contrasting Political Institutions special issue of the *International Political Science Review*. Vol 18(3), 297-312.
- Pareto, V. (2014). *Tratat de sociologie generală* [Treated by general sociology]. Craiova: Beladi.
- Pleşu, A. (2018). *Pe mâna cui suntem? Mică antologie a tragicomediei româneşti*, [Whose hand we are? Little anthology of Romanian tragicomedy]. Bucureşti: Humanitas.
- Radu, A., Buti, D. (2018). Inegalităţi de reprezentare în sistemul electoral românesc. Studiu de caz: alegerile parlamentare din 2012 -2018. [Inequalities of representation in the Romanian electoral system. Case study: the parliamentary elections of 2012 - 2018]. *Revista Română de Studii Electorale*, Vol. VI, nr. 2.
- Riddell, P. (2007). The impact of the rise of the career politician. *The Journal of Legislative Studies*, Volume 1, 1995 - Issue 2, 186- 191.
- Rittenberger, F., Rittenberger, B. (2015). Nominating women for Europe: Exploring the role of political parties' recruitment procedures for European Parliament elections. *European Journal of Political Research*, 54: 767-783.
- Schifernet, C. (2013). *Românii, cum au fost şi cum sunt*, [Romanians, how they were and how they are]. Bucureşti: Tritonic.
- Wright Mills, C. (1951). *White Collor: The American Middle Class*. Oxford University Press.