

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES' ANALYSIS IN ROMANIAN UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

This study focuses on extracurricular activities in the field of career guidance and aims to analyse this kind of activities within five Romanian universities. The students' opinion but also their involvement in such activities are captured. The research was conducted by means of the questionnaire method where 728 students of the "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu, Politehnica University Timișoara, Babeș Bolyai University Cluj, Bucharest University of Economic Studies and Politehnica University Bucharest were questioned. This study highlights specific problems and potential improvements related to career guidance extracurricular activities.

Keywords: *extracurricular activities, students' involvement, career guidance activities*

JEL classification: *I23 – Higher education. Research institutions*

1. Introduction

The decision regarding the choice of a university location is influenced in generally by the study offer, the university atmosphere, the university's reputation and facilities, quality of teaching, favourable living costs, tuition fee, but also by the extracurricular activities in the university. (Hachmeister, Harde, Langer, 2007)

This research aims to analyse the extracurricular activities' offer within five Romanian universities, by focusing on the career guidance extracurricular activities.

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This study has been elaborated by using qualitative research, by means of various secondary sources and quantitative sources, by means of primary sources. The data has been collected through the questionnaire method and has been analysed through univariate and bivariate analysis, through the statistical programme SPSS. (Dannenberg, Barthel, 2002; Raab, Poost, Eichhorn, 2009)

Analysing the extracurricular activities in the field of career guidance, the students' opinion but also their involvement in such activities have been questioned and potential improvements have been pointed out.

2. Sample description

In this study 728 students from five Romanian universities were questioned, of which 141 from the Politehnica University of Bucharest, 165 from the Politehnica University of Timișoara, 134 from the Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj, 151 from the "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu and 137 from the Bucharest University of Economic Studies. The sample was constituted from 46% female respondents and 54% male respondents. The questionnaire was developed using various bibliographical sources from this field. (Cătoi, 2009; Dannenberg, Barthel, 2002)

3. Evaluation of the extracurricular activities' offer in the field of career guidance

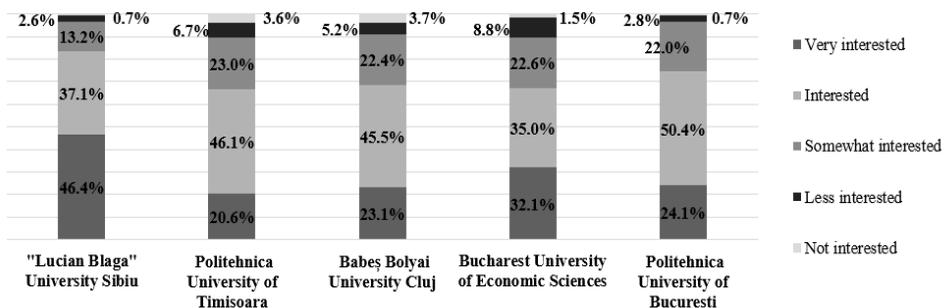
At the "Lucian Blaga" University Sibiu the most frequently practiced extracurricular activities in the field of career guidance are the student scientific communication sessions (29%), language courses (21%) and study visits (18%). It was also observed that about 40% of the students from Sibiu have not heard of the Career Guidance Office within the university, office very important in providing training and consulting services for the purpose of students' professional training and their integration in the economic environment. At the Politehnica University Timișoara students usually prefer to participate in meetings with employers, study visits or workshops / seminars, and yet also in this case not more than a third of the respondents participate in such activities.

In Cluj students choose to participate especially in workshops / seminars, language courses or meetings with employers. The participation at workshops or seminars is noticeably high (40%) compared with the other analysed universities. The respondents from Bucharest University of

Economic Studies generally choose to participate in student scientific sessions, language courses or workshops / seminars and the most students of Politehnica University of Bucharest participate in language courses, where we meet the highest involvement compared to the other analysed universities (41%). Students participate also in meetings with employers (38%), study visits (52%) or workshops / seminars (32%). Overall, about half of respondents had not heard of extracurricular activities in the field of career guidance in their university. The involvement of the students from the "Lucian Blaga" University Sibiu in extracurricular activities in this field is generally low, especially in comparison with those of the Politehnica University of Bucharest or even those of Babes Bolyai University of Cluj.

The most interested students in participating in extracurricular activities in the field of vocational training are those from the "Lucian Blaga" University Sibiu in proportion of 40% compared with 21% of those from Timisoara or 23% of those from Cluj. Also in Bucharest the interest isn't higher. Only 32% of those from the Bucharest University of Economic Studies and 24% of those from Politehnica University have expressed their interest in such activities. A high interest of the students from Sibiu can be observed in contrast with their low involvement. This can be due to lack of information or due to a low attractiveness of these activities. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1: How interested are you to participate in extracurricular activities in the field of vocational training, in your university?

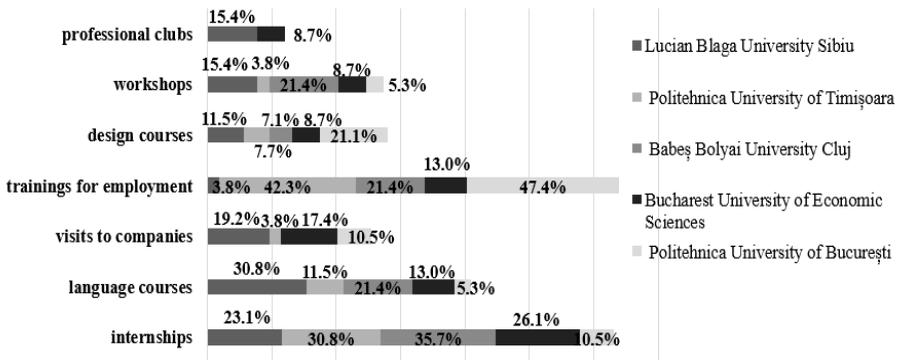


n"Lucian Blaga" University Sibiu= 151
 nPolitehnica University of Timișoara= 165
 nBabeș Bolyai University Cluj= 134
 nBucharest University of Economic Studies = 137
 nPolitehnica University of Bucharest= 141

17% of the respondents from Sibiu seek to diversify extracurricular activities in the field of vocational training, compared to 16% of the students from Timisoara, 10% from Cluj, 17% of the students from the Bucharest University of Economic Studies and 13% of the students from Politehnica University of Bucharest. Students of the "Lucian Blaga" University Sibiu would especially like to introduce language courses, to organize more visits to companies and to develop internship programs. Also the development of professional clubs and workshops seem to have an increased interest to them. For the students from Timisoara specific trainings in the field of career guidance, internships and language courses are demanded mainly to be developed.

Students from Cluj and students from the Bucharest University of Economic Studies have an increased interest in developing internship programs, language courses and trainings for employment. The respondents from the Politehnica University of Bucharest wish to introduce trainings for employment, design courses, visits to companies and internship programs. (See Figure 2.)

Figure 2: What other extracurricular activities in the field of vocational training you want to be placed in your university?



n"Lucian Blaga" University Sibiu= 151

nPolitehnica University of Timișoara= 165

nBabeș Bolyai University Cluj= 134

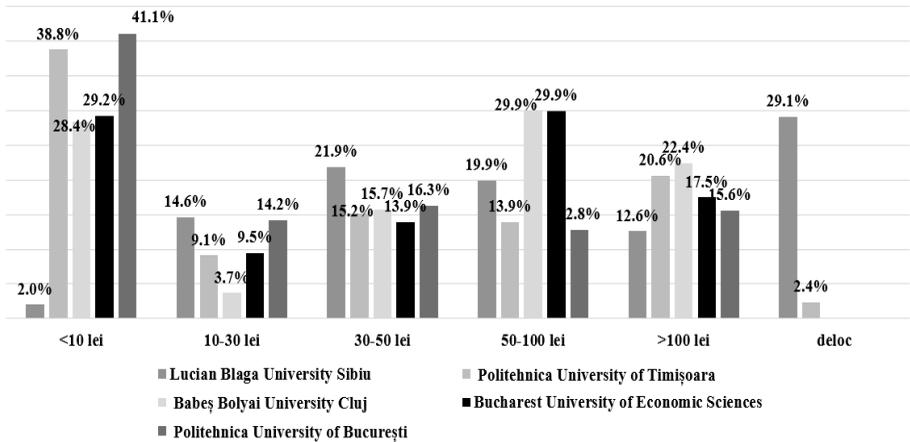
nBucharest University of Economic Studies = 137

nPolitehnica University of Bucharest= 141

An increased generally interest of students to participate in language courses have been observed. For the respondents from Sibiu, Timisoara and from Politehnica University in Bucharest, German and English courses have the highest interest. Students from Cluj and students of the Bucharest University of Economic Studies participate often in English and French courses. Almost all respondents wish to participate or already participate in language courses. Most of the students would like to learn Spanish or French, and those who do not yet know English or German also expressed their interest in learning these languages. Respondents from Timisoara especially want to learn German, Spanish and English, while those from Cluj German, Spanish and French. Students of the Bucharest University of Economic Studies particularly want to attend German and Spanish courses.

About 20% of the students from Sibiu would be willing to pay 30-50 lei per month for attending language courses, another 20% between 50-100 lei per month, and nearly one third of them do not want to pay at all for such activities, compared with almost all other respondents who are willing to provide a certain amount of money to attend language courses. Almost 40% of the students in Timisoara want to pay less than 10 lei for such courses, 15% between 30-50 lei per month and 20% over 100 lei per month. 30% of the students from Cluj are willing to pay between 50-100 lei, and 22% even more than 100 lei. 30% of the students of the Bucharest University of Economic Studies are willing to pay between 50-100 lei and 17% more than 100 lei. Over 40% of the students from Politehnica University of Bucharest are willing to pay less than 10 lei for such activities, 16% between 30-50 lei, 100 lei 15% and 14% between 10 to 30 lei per month. (See Figure 3.)

Figure 3. What is the amount of money that you are willing to pay monthly for these courses?



$n_{\text{Lucian Blaga University Sibiu}} = 151$

$n_{\text{Politehnica University of Timișoara}} = 165$

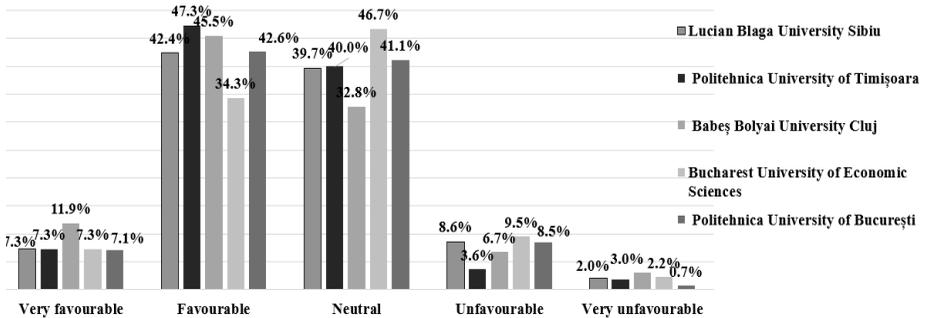
$n_{\text{Babeş Bolyai University Cluj}} = 134$

$n_{\text{Bucharest University of Economic Studies}} = 137$

$n_{\text{Politehnica University of Bucharest}} = 141$

About 50% of the respondents have a very favourable or favourable opinion regarding the extracurricular activities' offer in the field of vocational training. Approximately 40% of the students from the Bucharest University of Economic Studies expressed the same opinion. The students which have the most favourable opinion regarding these activities are those from Cluj, followed by those from Timisoara. However, about half of the respondents have an unfavourable opinion regarding this offer, which identifies a need for improvement in terms of the extracurricular activities' attractiveness and promotion. (See Figure 4.)

Figure 4. What is your opinion regarding the extracurricular activities in the field of vocational training in your university?



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Students’ involvement in extracurricular activities in the field of career guidance is generally low. Those that are more interested in participating in extracurricular activities in the field of vocational training are the ones from "Lucian Blaga" University Sibiu, but their involvement is still rather low.

Some respondents want to improve the attractiveness of the extracurricular activities’ offer in this area by introducing language courses, organizing more visits to companies, trainings for employment, workshops, courses, internship programs and professional clubs.

4. Conclusions

The research analyses the similarities and differences regarding the extracurricular activities’ offer in the field of career guidance within five Romanian universities. Thus, specific problems and possible recommendations are identified.

Regarding the career guidance activities, the university from Cluj was the most appreciated, followed by the one from Timisoara and by the one from Sibiu.

An increased interest to participate in extracurricular activities in the field of career guidance is noticed within the respondents from the "Lucian Blaga" University Sibiu. In general, the involvement of these students in workshops / seminars, language courses or meetings with employers is lower than in other analysed universities. This aspect could be influenced by the low awareness of the students. 40% of these respondents had not heard of the Career Guidance Office within their universities. In order to improve students' involvement in such activities and their satisfaction with the desire to facilitate the integration of students in the economic environment and their personal and professional development, it is recommended to improve the attractiveness of the offer in this area by introducing language courses, organizing more visits to companies, trainings, workshops, developing internships and professional clubs.

Thus, it is recommended to develop more seminars and workshops in the field of entrepreneurship, leadership, time management, conflict management, training and interview simulation, preparing documents for a job application, presentation techniques and rhetoric.

The increased respondents' interest from Sibiu for German language courses is highlighted. Many of the students surveyed are generally willing to pay a fee between 30 and 100 lei for attending such courses. It is recommended to increase the diversity of the language courses, in order to increase the students' involvement in such activities.

Improving the attractiveness and diversity of the extracurricular activities' offer in the field of career guidance has positive effects in increasing the university's attractiveness, making it possible to attract prospective students and to improve the university's image.

Acknowledgment

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