

STUDENTS' UNIVERSITY PERFORMANCE AND ITS INFLUENCE FACTORS

Emanoil MUSCALU¹

Abstract: *This paper aims to determine the influence factors on students' university performance and to highlight the importance of extracurricular activities on it. Also the student's involvement in extracurricular activities and the factors that determine their lack of implication are analyzed. The research was conducted using quantitative research methodology, through primary sources and the data were collected through the questionnaire method. This study includes a survey based on a questionnaire developed within the "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu, Politehnica University Timișoara, Babeș Bolyai University Cluj, Bucharest University of Economic Studies and Politehnica University Bucharest, in which 728 students were questioned, in the period from June to September 2014.*

Keywords: university performance management, extracurricular activities, influence factors

JEL classification: I23 – Higher education. Research institutions

Introduction

In order to train students, to increase their academic results and to develop their motivation to study and thus to increase the performance of university management, the integration of students in the academic environment, the students' community development prove to be very important. Particular attention should be paid to extracurricular activities in order to ensure university performance management.

The paper is based on a research by means of the questionnaire method through which five universities from Romania, "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu, Politehnica University of Timișoara, Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj, Bucharest University of Economic Studies and Politehnica University of Bucharest are analysed, were 728 respondents are questioned.

¹"Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu, e-mail: emanoil.muscalu@ulbsibiu.ro.

In the first part of the paper the research objectives and the methodology are presented and the data gathered through the questionnaire method are analyzed by means of the univariate and bivariate analysis based on the statistical program SPSS. Thus, the factors influencing students' university performance are determined. The last part of the paper includes general conclusions, contributions and own opinions.

From the author's point of view, the study on the determination of influence factors on students' university performance is necessary and opportune, bringing new contributions to the knowledge field and in the development of the specialty literature.

The research objective is to determine the influence factors on students' university performance, capturing also the importance of the extracurricular activities' offer on it. Thus, it is also wanted to determine the students' involvement in extracurricular activities and to point out the reasons that cause them not to engage in such activities, also determining how they usually allocate their time.

1. Research methodology

As a methodology of research the work is based on quantitative research from primary sources, the data collected being analyzed using univariate and bivariate analysis.

The primary research is based on the questionnaire method, through which 728 students from five universities in Romania were surveyed, "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu, Politehnica University of Timișoara, Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj, Bucharest University of Economic Studies and Politehnica University of Bucharest. The data was collected between June to September 2014 and the questionnaire was developed following an extensive study of various works from this research field. (Cătoiu, 2009, pp. 493-526) (Raab, Poost, Eichhorn, 2009, p. 97)

The data collected provide, in general, a large amount of information. By their assessment, the data is sorted, analysed and verified. For data analysis the SPSS statistical software is used, resorting to different methods of analysis, univariate analysis and bivariate analysis.

Univariate analysis is characterized by the analysis of the individual variables. Univariate analysis includes frequency numbers, position and dispersion parameters. (Dannenber, Barthel, 2002, p. 215), (Raab, Poost, Eichhorn, 2009, p. 97)

Bivariate analysis is defined by the relationship between two variables. The main types of methods are the bivariate analysis of possibility, correlation analysis, linear regression analysis and simple variation. (Kamenz, 2001, p.176)

2. Sample description

The sample is composed of students of the "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu, Politehnica University of Timișoara, BabeșBolyai University Cluj, Bucharest University of Economic Studies and Politehnica University of Bucharest, and it was chosen randomly, consisting of students from all study years and several specializations. A total of 728 students were surveyed, of which 151 from the University "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu, 165 from the Politehnica University of Timișoara, 134 from the Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj, 137 from the Bucharest University of Economic Studies and 141 from the Politehnica University of Bucharest. Of the respondents, 46% are female and 54% male. (See Figure no.1.) The collected data are identifiers that enable the collection of information relating to the classification of the sample respondents, helping to develop correlations between variables.

The average study grade of students from the "Lucian Blaga" University from Sibiu is 8. That of the Politehnica University of Timișoara is 7.71. The respondents from BabeșBolyai University Cluj and from the Bucharest University of Economic Studies have both 8.04, and the students of the Politehnica University of Bucharest 7.99.

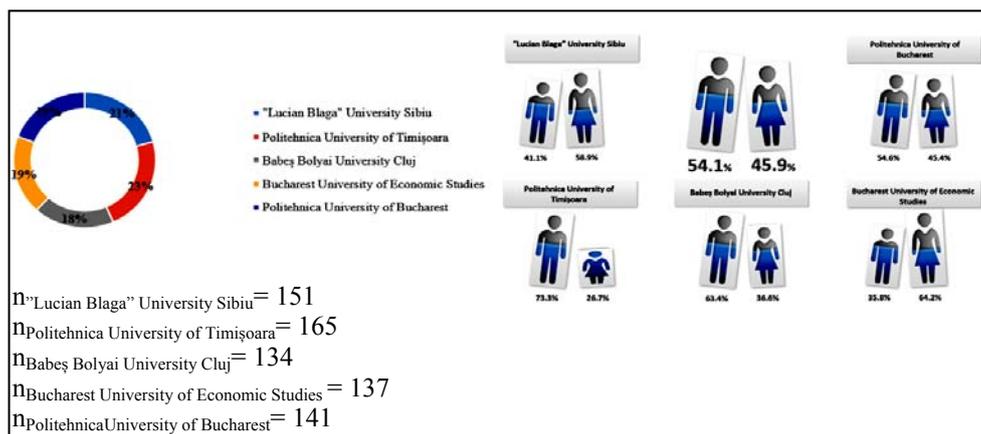


Figure no. 1 - Sample split according to gender and university

Source: own creation

3. Students' university performance

In general, students believe that their university performance is positively influenced mainly by the communication between professor and student and by students' integration into student community. More than a third of them consider that factors like the way the professors teach, courses' atmosphere, balance between theory and practice, interest in learning, communication between students, students' participation in career guidance activities, teamwork and time management influence in an extremely positive manner their academic performance. Involving students in extracurricular activities lead to their integration into the academic environment, to the improvement of social and communication skills, to the development of specific skills like team spirit, organizational skills and time management, preparing students for the economic environment integration, issues that lead to increased academic performance of students. (See Figure no. 2.)

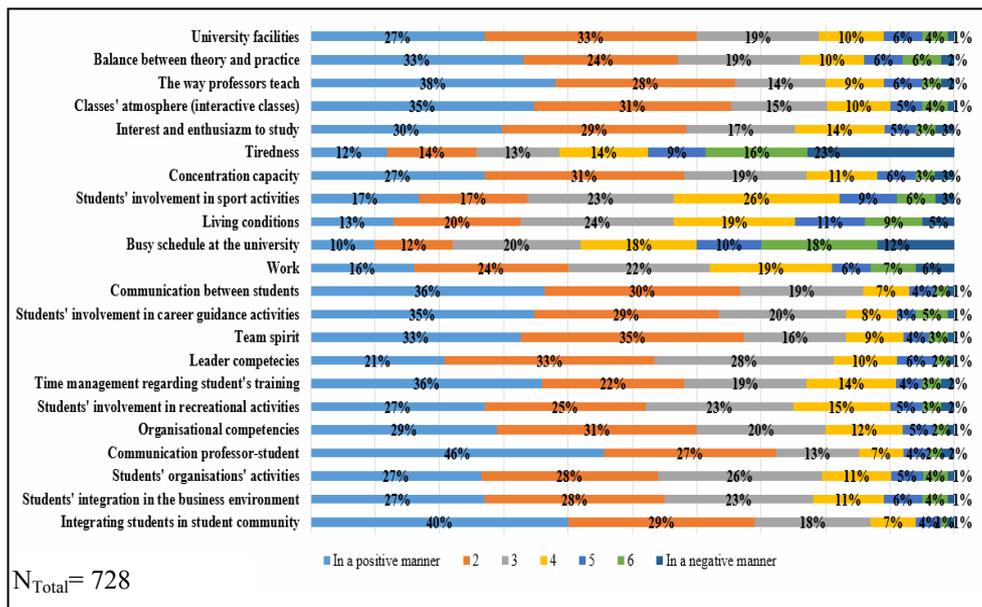


Figure no. 2 - Factors influencing students' university performance?

Source: own creation

More than 80% of respondents recognize the benefits of the involvement in extracurricular activities and are aware of the fact that this help them to their personal and professional training through various seminars, trainings, workshops and research projects that develop leadership skills, time management, teamwork, organizational skills, helping students in their integration in the business environment, increasing the chances of employment. Almost all respondents were totally agree with the fact that sport activities, excursions, parties, games or contests develop friendships and improve the tonus. The overall involvement in extracurricular activities helps newcomers to integrate in the student community and improves the communication between students, but also between professors and students. (See Figure no. 3.)

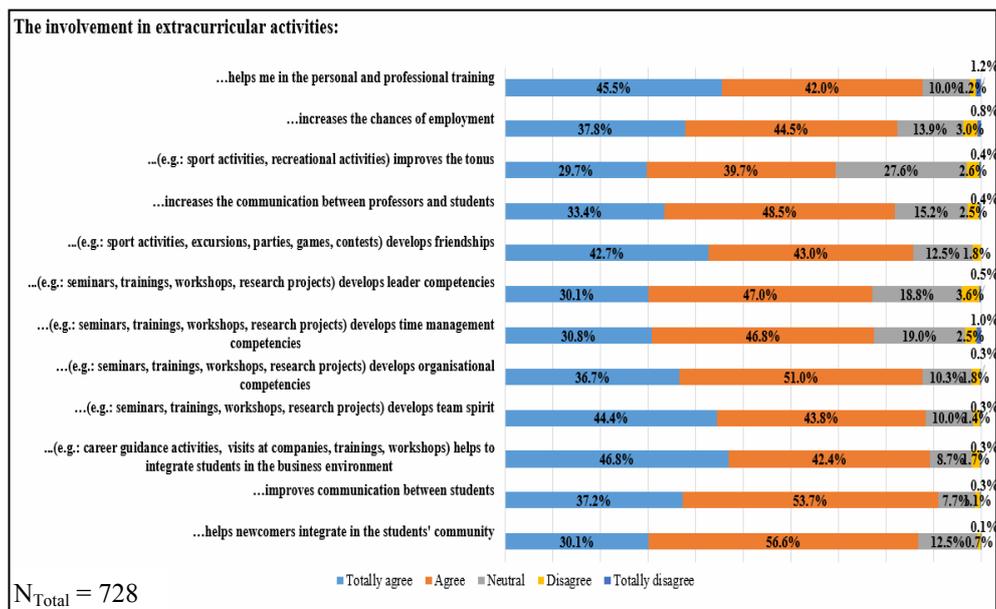


Figure no. 3 - Agreement / disagreement regarding these statements

Source: own creation

Analyzing the collected data, it can be stated that the majority of respondents realise the importance of the involvement in extracurricular activities with benefits on the improvement of their university performance, leadership skills' development, time management, team spirit, organizational skills, their personal and professional training, their integration in the

academic community and business environment, improving the communication between students, between professors and students and encouraging further integration in the economic environment.

After analyzing the collected data the importance of the students' involvement in extracurricular activities on their university performance can be noticed. Thus, the need to evaluate students' involvement in extracurricular activities and the factors that determine the non-involvement in such activities is surprised.

4. Assessment of students' involvement in extracurricular activities

More than half of the respondents spend on average less than 10 hours attending courses and laboratories. Almost 70% of the respondents practice less than 6 hours sports per week, while for more than 54% of the respondents, socialization covers 6 to even more than 40 hours a week. The majority of respondents do not work and do not participate in volunteer activities. For more than 38% of the questioned students, entertainment, meeting friends, TV, theatre, music, or other hobbies occupies more than 11 hours of their time each week. As often some concerns of students, such as social networking, TV, phone have as determinant factor the boredom, improving the attractiveness of the extracurricular activities' offer, might increase the time allocated to those activities, with great benefits on the personal development of the students, occupying in a more interactive manner the students' time.

Students' involvement in extracurricular activities is higher at the Politehnica University of Bucharest, where 62% of the students participate in such activities. More than half of the respondents from "Lucian Blaga" University Sibiu were also involved in extracurricular activities, while at the Politehnica University Timișoara, 43% of the respondents were involved in such activities. 56% of the students of Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj were involved in extracurricular activities, while the involvement of the students from Bucharest University of Economic Studies rises up to 45%. In the case of the students from Sibiu, the reasons which have led them not to get involved in extracurricular activities were mainly the lack of information about existing extracurricular activities, the low diversity of the extracurricular activities' offer and the low interest. At the Politehnica University of Timisoara, the schedule, the work and the lack of information about existing extracurricular activities have led respondents to not participate in such activities. The respondents from Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj were mainly influenced not to attend extracurricular activities because of their

schedule at the university, their work and the lack of information about existing extracurricular activities. Students of the Bucharest University of Economic Studies were not involved in extracurricular activities mainly due to their schedule, the lack of information related to extracurricular activities' offer, its low attractiveness, while those from the University Politehnica of Bucharest due to their schedule, homework or lack of interest.

Most respondents of the "Lucian Blaga" University Sibiu participate in student events, almost double compared to other analysed universities. Only 32% of the students from Sibiu practice sport, compared with less than three quarters of the Politehnica University of Bucharest or more than 40% of the students from Timisoara and Cluj. Approximately 40% of students questioned from Sibiu, Timisoara or from the Bucharest Politehnica University are involved in student associations or volunteer activities, compared with about 60% of the students from the other two universities. Students also participate in artistically activities, projects and workshops. However, especially the involvement in projects or workshops is very poor.

For most of the questioned students, the involvement in extracurricular activities has as determinant factor the desire to gain experience for the professional career. In the case of the respondents from the Politehnica University of Bucharest the main reason for engaging in these activities lies in the desire to get to know, interact with other students and develop friendships. (See Figure no. 4.)

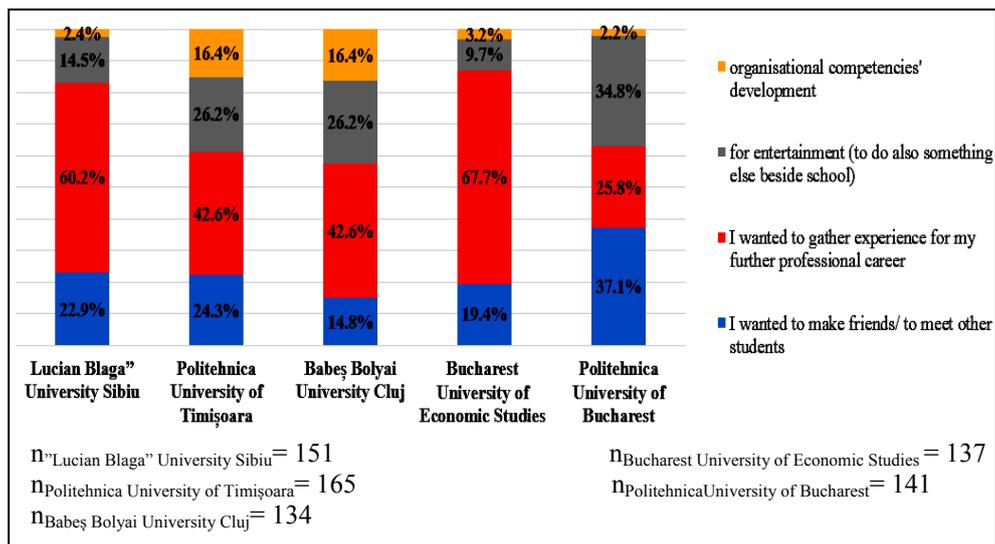


Figure no.4 - The main reason for involvement in extracurricular activities
Source: own creation

5. Conclusions and recommendations

Analysing the undertaken research, it is noticed that most of the respondents are aware of the involvement's importance in extracurricular activities, with benefits on the students' integration in the academic and business environment, on the development of organizational skills, leadership, time management and team spirit, encouraging the communication between students and between professors and students, developing friendships and improving the participants' tonus, with direct implications on students' university performance. The integration into business and academic environment can be influenced by the communication between students and could facilitate the involvement in student organizations, with influences on students' university performance. The university performance can also be influenced by the interest and enthusiasm for training, level of tiredness, the atmosphere of the courses, the balance between theory and practice, university's facilities, the way professors teach and the ability to concentrate.

The involvement of the respondents in extracurricular activities is low. Limited involvement of students in extracurricular activities is often due to low attractiveness of the extracurricular activities' offer and students' lack of information. Overall, less than half of the students is involved in extracurricular activities, while in their leisure time they often meet with friends and are occupied with social activities, telephone, and television. Most respondents are interested or very interested in participating in extracurricular activities.

Most respondents who engage in extracurricular activities are those of the Politehnica University of Bucharest, followed by those from Sibiu and those from Cluj. In order to increase students' involvement in extracurricular activities it is recommended to increase the attractiveness of the extracurricular activities' offer and to improve its promotion, with influences on improving the university's attractiveness and image and the students' university performance. Thus, we recommend increasing the attractiveness of the extracurricular activities' offer through diversification and promotion, in particular through the university's website, flyers, posters in university's buildings, dormitories and canteens, but also verbally by students' and staff's recommendations, but also by student associations.

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