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Improving University Management for Increasing the Relevancy of Higher Education on the Labor Market

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Abstract: The changes in the Romanian higher education scenery have imposed essential changes of the educational process. The improvement of the university management has a major role in the process of attending to the needs of the current society and creating the premise of a relevant education which is also open-minded to the specific needs of our economy. The aim of the paper is to analyze the ways of improving the quality and efficiency of educational systems in Romania. It will also be intended to increase the visibility of university-oriented service activities for society and the socio-economic environment. The current paper covers an analysis of the results coming from a poll related to the evaluation of the educational quality. This attribute was reviewed in relation to the students, the teaching staff and the current economic status of the workforce market in Romania. The results of the poll were carefully analyzed and interpreted, conclusions and solutions defined. The people surveyed are students, master students, doctoral students and teachers from the technical faculties of the university.

Keywords: University management, Educational quality, Labor market

Introduction

A relevant and quality higher education allows students to acquire the skills, knowledge and skills they need to succeed after graduation, in a high-level, e-learning environment. Higher education graduates have more chances to find a job than people with a lower level of qualification. But often, higher education institutions are adapting too hard to the changing needs of the economy and fail to anticipate or contribute to modeling labor market trends.

Increasing transparency allows students and researchers to better decide where they want to study and work. Greater transparency also helps decision-makers make strategic choices on reforming higher education systems. The main objective of the paper is to improve the management of the university through the development of managerial skills and strategic planning in order to increase the relevance of higher education on the labor market.

Starting from this goal, an important effort is directed towards ways to improve the quality and efficiency of educational systems in Romania. Also, an important role is played by encouraging and improving the

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involvement of higher education institutions, fostering excellence and improving the visibility of service-oriented academic activities for society and the socio-economic environment.

Research Method

An important task is to organize a focus group. Its main objective is to obtain profound social data, information on the "infrastructure" of the attitudes and opinions expressed by the subjects.

The data obtained are aimed at identifying the mechanisms of training and expressing attitudes and opinions (Anghelache, 2008).

Focus the group studied consists of students, master students and PhD students from "Dunarea de Jos" University of Galati. The size of the target group is proportional to the number of faculties and university students. The structure of the focus group is presented in Table 1

Table 1. The focus group structure

Female				Male			
Doctorate	Bachelor studies	Master	Postdoctoral	Doctorate	Bachelor studies	Master	Postdoctoral
9	25	14	2	6	40	10	2

The "Dunarea de Jos" University of Galati activates with 15 faculties, educating approximately 15300 students in 46 fields of full-time, distance and low-frequency education.

The results of the research refer to the development of an action plan, a questionnaire with closed questions addressed to the persons selected in the focus group. The questionnaire covers the academic program, personal support and opportunities for professional development and insertion into the labor market.

In order to fill in the questionnaire, the respondents chose from several variants of the answer, corresponding to the opinion / situation.

Results and Discussions

The questionnaires completed by the 108 selected focus group respondents were collected and the results were centralized and statistically processed (Mereuta, 2006).

Some of these results are presented below.

With the exception of the undecided people (less than 5% from each category), all the respondents from all the study level are satisfied with the level of information gained through the years of study and the usefulness in finding new jobs (Figure 1).

There is an overwhelming majority of students who think that the current learning plan is flexible enough to allow them also to follow a professional job: only 2 out of 108 students do not agree in this matter (Figure 2).

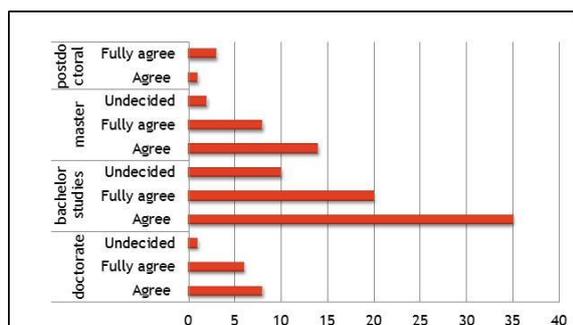


Figure 1. Utility for employment

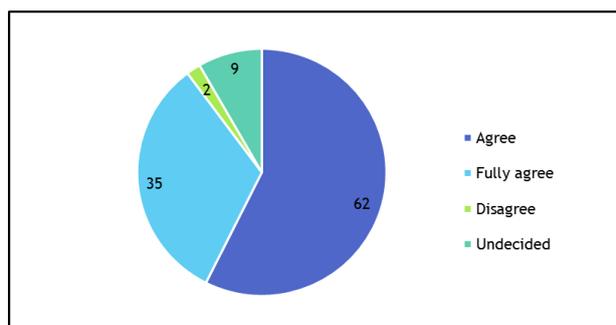


Figure 2. The learning curriculum flexibility

In regards to the development of team work and communication abilities, only 2 respondents believe that these were not developed during the years of study - interesting is that both respondents are males (Figure 3).

Most of the respondents considered the study program quite flexible and adjustable to their own learning rhythm - only 1 undergraduate student considered the other way round (Figure 4).

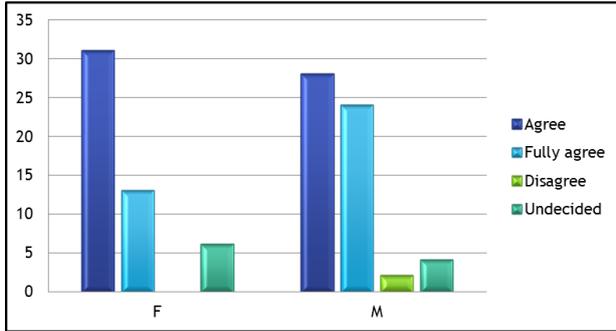


Figure 3. Developing teamwork skills

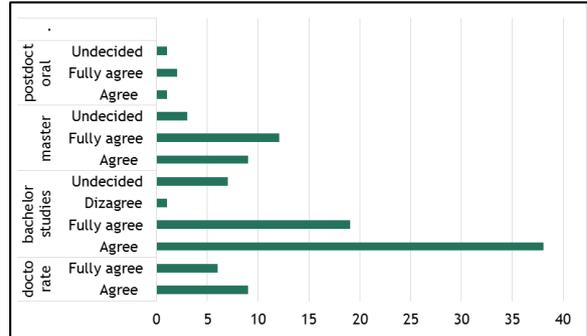


Figure 4. Learning rhythms

By checking the average ages of the respondents for this question, we notice that the older people tend to agree that the cross-border learning opportunities were significant (Figure 5).

An overwhelming number of 29 males and 23 females agree with the high standard of equipment of the learning rooms and practice laboratories in the university (Figure 6).

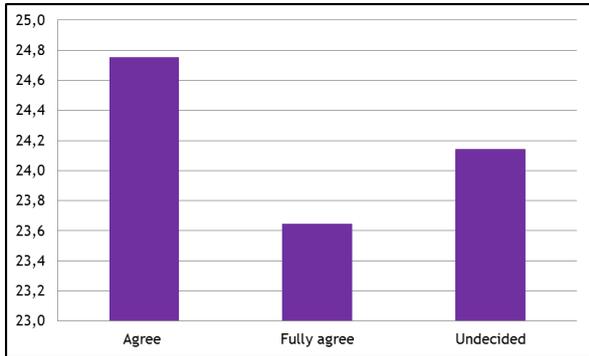


Figure 5. The cross-border learning opportunities

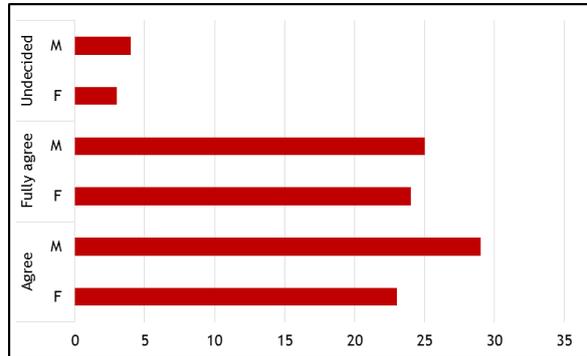


Figure 6. Equipping classrooms / laboratories

From the grand total of 108 respondents, there were 4 students who do not appreciate at all the quality of the academic advisory received during the years of study, 3 out of these respondents being females (Figure 7).

No matter the age or year of study, most of the respondents appreciate the high importance of all the career fairs organized by the university, showing their high level of implication from the early ages in the right career paths (Figure 8).

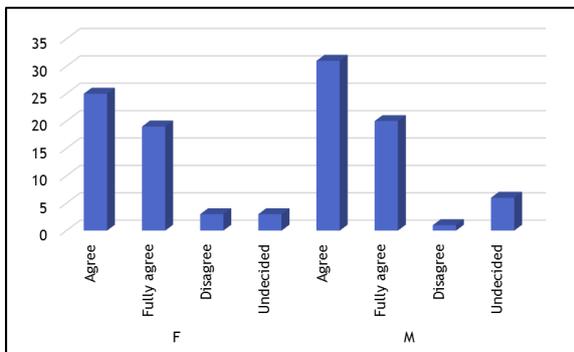


Figure 7. The usefulness of academic advisory

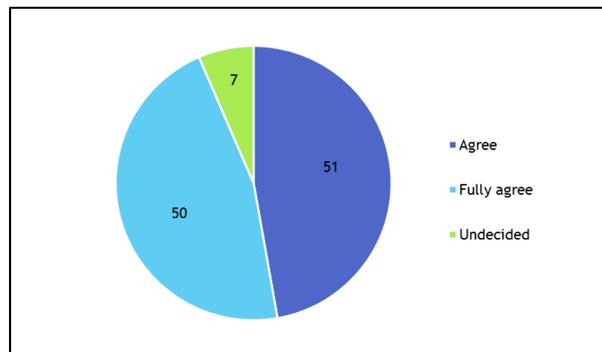


Figure 8. The importance of career fairs

There is an high percentage of respondents who are not familiarized with the activity of ARACIS: in total, 40,74% of the respondents have never heard of ARACIS or are do not know their activity. This is one of the key points that should be improved; ARACIS is one of the key organizational structures (Figure 9).

From the respondents, 13 males and 15 females do not agree or are not sure on the quality of the activities performed by their student colleagues inside the quality boards from the university. In total, this means 25% from all the respondents (Figure 10).

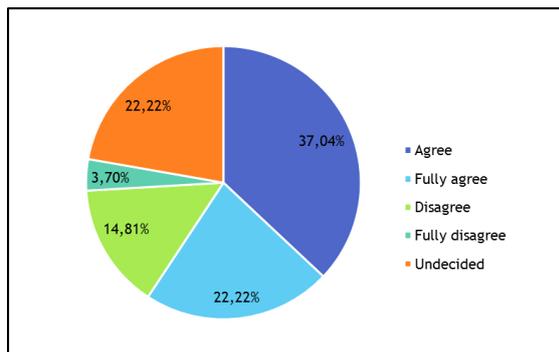


Figure 9. ARACIS activity

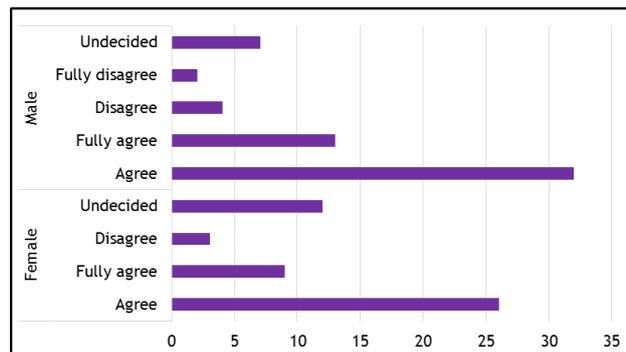


Figure 10. Activities of students in quality board

By checking the age distribution for the respondents who do not agree with the high quality of the evaluation process for the professors, we notice that the 16 people are between 19 and 32 years old - with a higher degree of older unhappy respondents, rather than younger (Figure 11).

In total, 83,33% of the respondents agree with the active measures that should be taken by the leadership regarding the professors who receive bad feedback from the students. Nevertheless, there is a surprising amount of respondent - 16,67% - who do not agree or are not sure with these kind of measures (Figure 12).

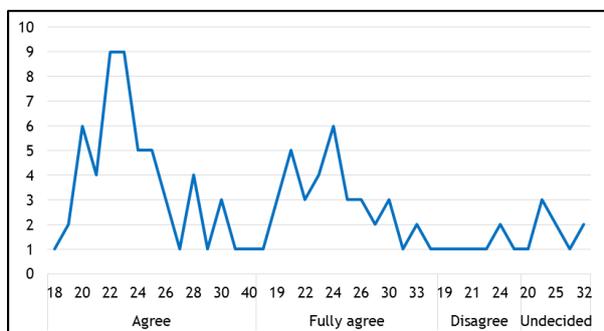


Figure 11. Teachers evaluation activity

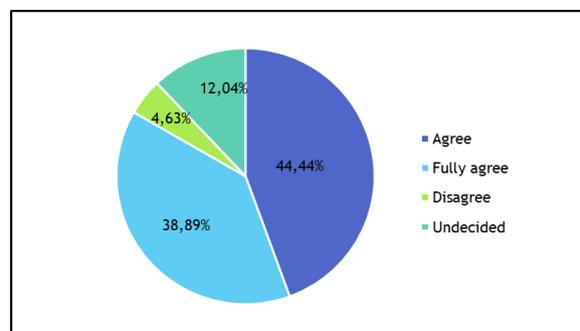


Figure 12. Active measures regarding professors

Conclusion

To improve university management to increase the relevance of higher education to the labor market, measures such as:

1. Creating partnerships between education, research and entrepreneurship.
2. Improve student counseling and career guidance by raising awareness of the benefits of career counseling.
3. Greater involvement of students in Quality Committees College / university.

Recommendations

1. The adoption of flexible approaches and innovative methods to improve the quality of higher education.
2. Rethinking education in order to enrich teaching, improve learning experiences and support personalized learning.

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