CHOOSING AN ACADEMIC PATH, A TRUE ACT OF RESPOSIBILITY

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Abstract:*This paper aimes to investigate the degree of satisfaction with the training offered by the academic path, the main reasons why young people choose a certain faculty and the impact of people with authority over young people, when it comes to choosing the academic path. The research group included 221 students (1st, 2nd, 3rd year of university study- undergraduate level). A very large number of students, 215 (97.3%) say they are satisfied with the professional skills formed by the study program they attend. A percentage of 50.7% students say they are satisfied, 25.8% are very satisfied and 20.8% are relatively satisfied. The main reason why young people turned to college were personal passions and inclinations (26.2% - 58 subjects), and most young people, almost half, said they made the choice on their own (41.18% - 91 subjects). Concerning those who influenced the young people in choosing the academic path, it was observed that: 32.58% - 72 subjects stated that "someone in the family (parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts)" were the people who had an influence on their decissionmaiking.*

Key words*: students; competences; skills; degree of satisfaction; reasons involved in choosing the faculty; academic path; people who influenced the choice of the academic path.*

1. Introduction

The choice of college by the young people of Z generation is and will be one of the main problems of adolescence. When choosing the academic path a group of four major factors are to be considered: the reputation of the institution, personal development, accessibility and social pressure. Reputation refers mainly to the brand of the institution and its teachers; personal development captures career aspects and passions; accessibility

implies taxes and the pressure is represented by parents and the diploma to be obtained afterwards. (Golu&Gorbănescu, 2013).

2. Background

Decisions that favors towards a particular Hong Kong youth university focus on infrastructure, prestige and culture (Ho, Tse, & Sum, 2020). The Job opportunities and the reputation of the institution are mentioned by other researchers, as the most important and also those represent the factors that managers should take into account, when trying to increase the competitive advantage of their institution (Henriques et al., 2018). The requirement of employability on the job market has led universities to make changes in their curricula (Jaradat, 2017). Aligning the early work experiences of future graduates with the oportunity to continiously ongoing the university studies, can have a positive impact on the confidence and professional development of graduates, which in turn, can lead to greater job satisfaction and retention on the job market (Evans et al., 2010). Factors related to professional stability and flexible schedule have influenced the career choices of medical students (Subait et al., 2017). The facilities offered at a high standard are perceived as having an important influence in the choice of the institution by the future students (Price, Matzdorf , Smith, &Agahi, 2003). The results of other research suggest that performance in the evaluation phase, courses at a private institution prestige, fear of debt can affect young people's decisions (Mangan, et al., 2010). The information provided by universities and the cost of the study package are factors that heavily weigh on the choices made by young people (Briggs & Wilson, 2007). In Ghana, the courses offered, the prestige of teachers, the library and the presence of the Internet, the flexible schedule of lectures and the recognition of qualifications by employers were the main factors influencing students' choices towards a university (Fosu&Poku, 2014).

We will begin our analysis taiking into account the sources of satisfaction declared by young people when it comes to choosing their future academic path. If we refer to the three components of a university's image: affective, cognitive and the global image in corelation with the level of satisfaction, we see how the cognitive component of the image is an antecedent of the affective component (Azoury, Daou, & Khoury, 2014). The results of a Portuguese study confirms that a strategy focused on sustainable development (promoting a responsible university) influences the positive perceptions of future students, as a precedent for the educational services quality and their satisfaction (Santos et al., 2020). In Romania, a modern material base, many classrooms, cleaning the campus, fulfilling all commitments, correct communication of information, trust in the university programs are the elements with a visible contribution towards achieving

students satisfaction (Negricea, Edu, & Avram, 2014). In the UK, the quality of lectures and seminars, where direct contact between student and teacher is involved, it is considered to be the most important factor of satisfaction. This is followed by: the degree to which course elements are integrated as well as the usefulness of online materials (Sutherland, Warwick, & Anderson, 2019). Teacher's expertise is considered to be the most influential aspect among the factors that are taken into account in the decision to choose a university in Pakistan (Butt, Rehman, 2010). The image and reputation of the institution, academic program and teaching methods influence student satisfaction in Kuwait as well (El-Hilali, Al-Jaber, Hussein, 2015). For universities offering online courses it was found that: the strength of the relationship between social presence and satisfaction was moderated by the length of the course, discipline and the relationship between social presence and perceived learning was moderated by the duration of the course, discipline and the targeted audience. (Richardson, et.al. 2017).

We can take a look at students' sources of dissatisfaction towards universities and outline a clearer picture. Students are experiencing dissatisfaction towards the offer of study programs, the teaching process and the resources for scholarships (Desselle& Conklin, 2010). High-income jobs are important when it comes to students' expectations and career satisfaction. Most students in Turkey consider that the education provided to them is not enough either regarding their profession or to meet their future financial expectations (Zengin, Sen, &Solmaz, 2011). Students who do not attend the day-to-day form of university study, and experience the online learning, as the main form of interrelationship, can be subjected to anxiety (Abdous, 2019).

A research conducted in South Korea identifies a number of recommendations and areas of intervention, starting from learning experiences offered, towards support services (Alemu & Cordier, 2017). The campus is usually designed to accommodate students in the best possible conditions. In order to attract future students to universities, it is necessary to improve student satisfaction with the housing and food facilities offered by the campus (Najib, Yusof, & Sani, 2012; El-Said & Fathy, 2015).

The factors presented as having an important role in choosing the academic path are: parents, friends, teachers and the media. There are authors who support the importance of the family in the development of occupational interests, as well as in the development of academic aspirations (Bryant, Zvonkovic, & Reynolds, 2006). The profession of parents has an influence on the young peoples' choice of future careers, along with the media and the personal choices (Saleem et. al., 2014). The results of a research showed that parents, together with friends, were the most influential sources of information in the process of decision makingwhen young people

are choosing the university. Apart from personal contacts, a future student's visit to the university campus, weighed heavily in the decision-making process (Johnston, 2010). The results of a research identify the role and importance of the media in choosing the university where future Dutch students are about to study (Constantinides& Zinck Stagno, 2012).

3. TheResearchMethodology

3.1. Research objectives

The research objectives are focused on: analyzing the degree of satisfaction concerning the training offered by the faculty; identifying the main reasons why young people choose college; identifying persons with authority over young people when it comes to choosing the academic path.

3.2 Research hypothesis

The main research hypothesis was:(1) we assume that students are generally satisfied with the training provided by the faculty; if they are dissatisfied, the dissatisfaction refers to the activities related to the practical modules; (2) we assume that the main reason why students have choosen their academic path are the inclinations, even thir passion for the chosen field, a field in which they want to practice after completing their studies; (3) we assume that the persons with authority influiencing young peoples choice of the academic path are their parents and teachers.

3.3Research method

The survey was based on a questionnaire, as the main method used in the research process. The questionnaire was built on two main dimensions:competences formed according to the university specialization and competences formed by the psycho-pedagogical module (Alpha Chronbach Coefficient: 0.864).

3.4 Research group

The research group comprised 221 students (from the 1st, second, 3rd year at the university- bachelor's degree), students who have completed or were currently completing the psycho-pedagogical module (N - 221). Of these, 82.8% (183 subjects) were female, the rest 17.2% (38 subjects) were male. If we take a look at the age distribution, we notice that most of the respondents belong to the age range 21-25 years (84.2% - 186 subjects), next to a small percentage, those aged between 31-40 years (7.7% - 17 subjects), then those aged between 26-30 years (6.8% - 15 subjects) and finally, those over 41 years old (1.4% - 3 subjects). Another criteria of characterization of the researched subjects was: the faculty that they are attending. Thus, most students (33.0% - 73 subjects) were from the Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences and from the Faculty of Economic Sciences and Business Administration (25.8% - 57 subjects). Then follow the ones from the Faculty of Foreign Languages (16.7% - 37 subjects), also students from

the Faculty of Physical Education and Mountain Sports (10.4% - 23 subjects), those from Music and Law (5.4% - 12 subjects), Sociology and Communication (1.8% - 4 subjects) and the smallest percentage were from the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science (1.4% - 3 subjects). Of the investigated students, the vast majority are attending in the final university year (year 3) - 94.1% - 208 students. Only 11 students (5.0%) are from year are attending the 2nd year and there were only 2 students (0.9%) are from the 1st year.

4. Results

We will begin the results analysis with the first hypothesis: we assume that students, in general, are satisfied with the training offered by the faculty; if they are dissatisfied, this refers to the activities related to the practice modules. On item 5 of the questionnaire which refers to the degree of student's satisfaction concerning the study program, more precisely concerning the training and development of professional skills, there is an average of 3.94 with a standard deviation of .817 (on a scale from1 to 5). A very large number of students, 215 (97.3%) say they are satisfied with the professional skills formed by the study program. Of these, 50.7% say they are satisfied, 25.8% are very satisfied and 20.8% are relatively satisfied. The few dissatisfied students (2.7%) are from the following faculties: Psychology and Educational Sciences - 1.35% (3 subjects); Economic Sciences - 0.9% (2 subjects) and Physical Education and Mountain Sports - 0.45% (1 subject). The specializations where they are dissatisfied are: Psychology 1.35% (3 subjects), respectively Finance-Banking, Management, Physical Education and Sports by 0.45% (1 subject). All 6 dissatisfied students (2.7%) are aged between 21-25 years old. If we refer to the interpretation by gender, girls and boys register a value of the mean values significantly equal: 4.02 with a standard deviation of .752 boys and 3.96 with a standard deviation of .831, girls. The students were asked in another item of the questionnaire if they would have the opportunity to give time back "to which faculty they would enroll". Their answers, for the most part, were that yes, they would also opt out for the same academic path and the same specialization (study program): 78.3% - 173 subjects. Only 7.7% (17 subjects) would opt out for the same academic path, but in another specialization (study program) and 31 of the subjects (14%) consider that the first time they were misdirected and the second time they would opt for a different faculty. If we look at the satisfaction towards faculty from the perspective of professional training and the opportunity to be able to hire immediately after graduation, the positive attitude decreases, only 66.1% of students (146 subjects) say they feel professionally trained and skilled. An item of the questionnaire investigates the competencies formed by the faculty (see Table no.1).

Table no. 1. Percentage values concerning students' competencies formed by the faculty

No.	Skills	Percentage	Students	
1	Computer skills	94.6%	209	
2	Research skills	66.1%	146	
3	Interpersonal and communication skills	55.7%	123	
4	Managerial skills	55.7%	123	
5	Assessment skills	47.1%	104	
6	Psychosocial skills	43%	95	
7	Entrepreneurial skills	38.5%	85	
8	Teaching skills	32.1%	71	

It can be observed how on top of the skills trained by the faculty, students have choosen the computer skills, in a very high percentage: 94.6% - 209 subjects. These competencies are followed by the research ones, in a percentage of 66.1% - 146 subjects and next ones are the relationship and communication skills, followed by the managerial ones, with a percentage of 55.7% - 123 subjects. It is gratifying to see computer skills in the first place, especially if we consider that the faculty forms superior computer skills: the use of programing languages, and computer programing skills specific to different specializations, advanced statistical processing, etc. Students state that at least the faculty consists of: teaching skills (32.1% - 71 subjects), entrepreneurial skills (38.5% - 85 subjects) and psychosocial skills (43% - 95 subjects). It is sad to see that entrepreneurial skills are rated on the last places, skills that would need to be trained for 21st century society.

Most of the students' dissatisfactions (34.4% - 76 subjects) are registered towards the practical activities, activities that should be well programmed and planned, linking the theoretical aspects to the applied ones. Other dissatisfactions are directed towards the insufficient specialized subjects (projects, optional courses) (15.4% - 34 subjects) and towards the insufficiency or lack of language courses, pedagogy / psychology, public speaking, teamwork, career development (10% - 22 subjects). If we look at the correlations between variables, we notice that there are positive correlations of a medium level: between managerial skills and entrepreneurial skills (.444 ** with a p - 0.01), between managerial skills and assessment skills (.422 ** with a p - 0.01) and between managerial skills and research skills (.476 ** with a p - 0.01).

Analyzing of the second hypothesis: we assume that the main reason why students choose the academic path are their inclinations, even the passion for the chosen field, a field in which they want to work after graduation. The item aiming at the main reason why young people turned to college registered the following results: orientation according to personal

passions and inclinations (26.2% - 58 subjects); desire for a career in the field (19.5% - 43 subjects), acquisition or development of professional skills (11.3% - 25 subjects), the rest of the results registering percentages below 8% (to be mentioned here, the large number of undecided students: 14.9% - 33 subjects). It is very important that for university studies, the choice it is made taking into account the passions, the inclinations of each of the young subjects. It can be a prerequisite for obtaining further satisfaction in the applied profession. When asked to give a second reason for choosing the academic path, the students were quite reserved. Only 23.1% (51 subjects) stated a second reason, as "I liked the specialization or I found the specialization interesting", the rest of the results registering percentages below 6%. Here, for this second reason, it is worth observing that there are a large number of students who do not respond to this request (42.1% - 93 subjects).

The third hypothesis: we assume that the people with authoritarian influence towards their academic choice are parents and teachers. On the item regarding the people who influenced young people making the choice, most, almost half, say they made the choice, by themselves (41.18% - 91 subjects). These answers are aligned with another item that investigates whether young people have chosen their faculty according to their wishes. Most young people, 94.1% - 2 08 subjects, state that yes, they have chosen their faculty according to their wishes. Returning to the people who influenced young people in makingtheir faculty choice, it can be observed that 32.58% - 72 subjects stated that "someone in the family (parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts)" were the people who influenced them. School, through teachers is seen as a factor of lower influence: 16.3% - 36 subjects. Psychologists, friends, colleagues are the factors with the least influence, below 10% (see Chart no.1).

Chart no. 1.   The people involved in decisionmaking while choosing the academic path
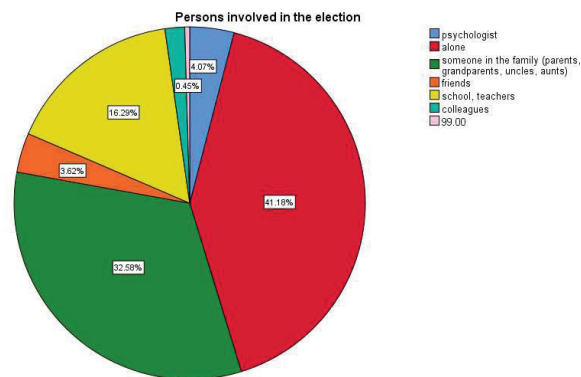
5.   Conclusions

The degree of student's satisfaction concerning the study program, more precisely with the training and development of professional skills registers an average of 3.94 with a standard deviation of .817 (on a scale from 1 to 5). A very large number of students, 215 (97.3%) say they are satisfied with the professional skills trained by the study program. Of these, 50.7% say they are satisfied, 25.8% are very satisfied and 20.8% are relatively satisfied. We notice that there are positive correlations of medium level: we can look at correlations between managerial skills and entrepreneurial skills (.444 ** with a p - 0.01), between managerial skills and evaluation skills (.422 ** with a p - 0.01) and between managerial skills and research skills (.476 ** with a p - 0.01). The analysis of the main reason why young people turned to college, recorded the following results: orientation according to personal passions and inclinations (26.2% - 58 subjects); desire for a career in the field (19.5% - 43 subjects), acquisition or development of professional skills (11.3% - 25 subjects), the rest of the results registering percentages below 8% (it is worth mentioning here, the large number of undecided students: 14.9% - 33 subjects). Asked about the people who influenced them in the academic path decision maiking process, most young people, almost half, said they made the choice by themselves (41.18% - 91 subjects). The answers are aligned with another item, that investigates whether young people chose their academic path according to their wishes: the majority of young people, 94.1% - 208 subjects, stated that yes, they chose their academic path according to their wishes. About the people who influenced the young people in the academic path choosing process, it could also be observed: 32.58% - 72 subjects state that "someone in the family (parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts)" were the people who influenced them. School, through teachers it is seen as a factor of lower influence with a share of: 16.3% - 36 subjects. Psychologists, friends, colleagues are the factors with the least influence, below 10%.

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