

SOURCES OF INFORMATION REGARDING HIGHER EDUCATION ENTRANCE AVAILABLE TO TECHNOLOGY HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN RURAL AREAS

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Abstract. *In the age of information and communication technologies, one important aspect of the academic and professional orientation services consists in informing high school students regarding their options to continue studies at the university level. In this context, the study aims at identifying two main aspects: the types of information students consider useful in order to make a smart decision concerning the faculty to attend and the sources of information on the university educational offers. In order to achieve these objectives, an ascertaining cross-sectional research was performed upon a batch of 91 students enlisted at 3 Technology high-schools in rural areas. As an investigation tool, there was used an opinion questionnaire with closed, pre-codified answers, which provided relevant data concerning the students' sources of information. The results showed that the most useful information for the 12th grade students living in rural areas includes: faculty educational offers; job opportunities after graduation and disciplines they are going to study. As for the main sources of information used by the students following the Technology line of studies, these consist in: environment, school and mass-media. The results offer some research themes for specialists in university marketing towards the improvement in quality of services promoting educational offers. Also, the study draws attention upon the need to improve the vocational counseling and career orientation services which are active at the level of pre-university education.*

Keywords: *high school students, sources of information, higher education*

INTRODUCTION

The changes in actual society are acting upon the component of school and professional orientation by inducing in this area a series of adjustments to more and more various approaches. Those focus on the necessity to apply the latest governmental regulation and politics upon the issues of professional training, school education and economical growing; they also place an accent over globalization, demographic development, youth involvement concerning the increase of the work flow overflow, valorization of knowledge system, skills and permanent learning of those who are engaged in the process of career decision-making. (CJRAE Iași, 2016). Therefore, the educables are those who "by making adequate decisions for themselves in the sphere of education, work and community life" (JIGĂU, 2007, p. 13), bring their contribution to the proper course of the adjustment of the post modern society to these pressures; from this point of view, adolescence presents itself as a critical period of time, in which the educational paths and professional interests are crystallizing, the entire process ending with making a career decision (ZIMMER-GEMBECK&MORTIMER, 2006). In this regard, the process of making a decision regarding a future career becomes legitimate to the extent to which it is based on a lot of useful information concerning the chosen field of activity and coming from the access of various sources of data regarding the faculty educational offers taken into account during the decision-making process. Recent studies in the domain appreciate the potential of open, extrovert people, who manifest curiosity and trust. These kind of people will

easily accommodate to the requirements of any job and will be able to make relevant decisions regarding their career (ŠVERKO & BABAROVIĆ, 2016).

PRICOPIE ET ALL., 2011, in their study entitled „Access and equity in the Romanian higher education” show that the intention to attend the courses of a faculty is built based on a causative model which integrates several variables, such as: genre, family income, parents’ level of education, material values, high-school residence milieu, the support manifested by parents. As a proof, a major percentage of high-school students, precisely 84%, consider that a faculty degree brings success in life. Yet, students coming from high-school with a Technology line of studies are less interested in continuing their studies at the university level (65%). As for the sources of information which are taken into account when it’s time to make the decision to go to the faculty (parents, peers, teachers in charge, friends, teachers), the study points to the fact that students usually listen to family members’ opinions first (parents’ opinions), then they listen to their friends and last their teachers (teacher in charge mainly). (RARITA, 2014) also appreciates the social influence emerging from the students’ relationships with family members, colleagues, friends and teachers. The results of his research underline the fact that high-school students usually consult their parents first when they make a decision concerning their academic future, then teachers and finally their friends and colleagues. 67% of the participants to the study reported that they use the web sites of universities as a main source of information which can be useful in the decisional process. He identifies a lack of knowledge concerning the means to apply for and access higher education as one of the important factors which may be a barrier in the way of students’ entrance to academic studies. Other authors, (RODRIGUEZ & WAN, 2010) refer to the term of access when suggesting the removal of all obstacles that have been limiting over the years the access of all students to higher education.. ANDRONIC & ANDRONIC, 2011, mention in their research that 77% of high school students prefer the Internet as a provider of various sources of information, owing to some criteria referring to easiness, diversity and access speed, over family (72%), and friends.

RESOURCES AND METHODS

This empirical study focuses on two main objectives:

- to identify the types of information students consider useful in making a good decision concerning the choice of a faculty;
- to determine the most frequently used sources of information regarding the educational offer of the universities.

The present research was organized during the first semester of the academic year 2016-2017, and it has the form of a transversal quantitative research. A questionnaire of opinion including closed answers was applied to each student belonging to the target group. The results were processed using the statistical program SPSS 17.0 and a descriptive statistical analysis was performed.

The population included in the study represents a natural group including 91 students from the 12th grade enlisted in 3 Technology high-schools in rural areas (two from the district of Gorj, one from Timiș). Out of the total number, 34% are male subjects (N=31), and 66% are feminine subjects (N=60). The average age was 17 years old (M=17.58; SD=0.61), the minimum age being 17 years old, and the maximum age 19 years old.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Types of information that are considered useful when choosing the future faculty

By following the first direction of the research, we present in Table 1 the most useful categories of information in decreasing order of the mean scores (the lowest value is 1, the highest is 5).

Table 1

Types of useful information when choosing the future faculty

Information concerning	Mean	SD
Job opportunities	4.35	0.98
Educational offer of the faculty	4.28	0.90
Disciplines of study	4.25	0.89
Relationships teacher-students	3.85	1.06
Modern university campus	3.83	1.04

We find that from the 12th grade students' perspective, the most useful information in choosing a faculty relates to the opportunities of employment that are available after graduating the faculty, a fact positively indicating that the students have long-term targets. Also, the students consider the educational offer of the faculties, as well as the disciplines they are going to study during the academic years. Aspects belonging to the relationship between teachers and students and to the living conditions in the university campus are seen as equally important by the future students, although they are not a priority.

Sources of information concerning the educational offers of universities

The second research direction had in view the identification of the most sources of information regarding the choice of a faculty, the answers being precodified also on a scale from 1 to 5, in the increasing order of the degree of relevance. The mean results and standard deviation are displayed in Table 2:

Table 2

Sources of information regarding universities

Source of information	Mean	SD
School	3.72	1.25
Mass media	3.66	1.28
Family	3.62	1.14
Faculty graduates	3.60	1.34
Environment	2.78	1.35

As for the sources of information used by the high-school students in choosing a university path, the highest degree of credibility is placed on the school. Here intervenes the need for professional career counseling and orientation services to guide the students in a most favorable way. Another very frequently used source of information is the media; students are studying the offers of universities found in the virtual environment to gain a perspective over the faculties they are interested in. On the 3rd place, very close to the first two, there is also the family, an important pillar in choosing the career. Here comes the necessity for parents' counseling in order to support them towards a correct professional orientation of their children. Also, the students place a lot of trust in graduates' opinions, to get relevant information about the entire university environment. The lowest scores were granted to the environment aspects, a fact indicating that, although the reference group is very important during the adolescence

period, when it comes for the future profession, most of the students put their trust in people having more life experience.

CONCLUSIONS

According to our study, the graduating high-school students are interested mainly in job opportunities and future disciplines of study; they are searching for information preponderantly provided by schools, media or family. The educational offers of faculties are carefully considered, especially in the online environment, the media being a large and relevant source of information. Faculty graduates gain great credibility in the eyes of the high school students interested in building a career based on higher education. Having in view the major differences between different categories of students in terms of living environment, interests and level of training, the differentiated instruction and counseling could represent a solution for a successful insertion in higher education (TULBURE, 2010).

The study draws the attention upon the constant need for improvement in the area of professional counseling and orientation services offered by specialized centers in pre-university education. Teachers in charge should be trained in order to offer adequate guidance to the future students. Universities should also promote up-to-date, conclusive educational marketing, in order to support the correct university path of the future students.

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