

RESEARCH ON THE PROFESSIONAL TRAJECTORY OF THE HIGHSCHOOL AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS FROM THE FIELDS OF GEOGRAPHY AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Grigore Vasile HERMAN*

Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning, University of Oradea, Oradea, Romania
University Street, no.1, Bihor County, Romania, e-mail: grigoreherman@yahoo.com

Vasile GRAMA

Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning, University of Oradea, Oradea, Romania
University Street, no.1, Bihor County, Romania, e-mail: vasile.grama2014@gmail.com

Raluca BUHAŞ

University of Oradea, Department of Sociology and Social Assistance,
1 University st., 410087 Oradea, Romania, e-mail: ralubuh@gmail.com

Dorina Camelia ILIEŞ

Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning, University of Oradea, Oradea, Romania
University Street, no.1, Bihor County, Romania, e-mail: iliesdorina@yahoo.com

Lucian STANCE

PH.D. School in Geography, University of Oradea, Oradea, Romania
University Street, no.1, Bihor County, Romania, e-mail: lucistance@yahoo.com

Abstract: The present study is meant to monitor the professional trajectory of highschool and university students who benefited from professional counselling and guidance in order to identify the occupational niches and to improve the educational behaviour present in the professional training process of the future graduates. We used the method of the sociological survey (questionnaire based) and the quantitative method of collecting and analysing data.

Key words: transition, work, internships, school, students

* * * * *

INTRODUCTION

The structure of the Romanian society suffered profound changes during the last decades, given the transition from an industrial-type society to a global society, based on knowledge. These changes required the identification of optimal adaptation and integration mechanisms. Within these, some special attention should be given to the process of integration of young people into the labour market. Even if the specialized literature widely covers this subject (Angelopoulos, 1987; Bădulescu, 2006; Ciucur, 2004; CNP, 2012; Constantinescu, 2000; Doray & Maroy, 2010; Ilieş et

* Corresponding Author

al., 2014; Gyorfy et al., 2008; Ianoş, 2010; Iova, 2005; Vasile & Zaman, 2005), the identification of the unique approach at a local and regional level is required. Given the context, a particular aspect is constituted by the monitoring of the professional trajectory of the university and highschool students from the fields of geography and physical education.

Unlike *"other countries (Great Britain and New Zealand, for example) where the number of students in geography has decreased dramatically, or other countries where the periods of growth and decline alternated (Le Heron and Hathaway, 2010), in Romania, when compared with the number of total applicants to higher education, geography is still very well placed"* (Ianoş et al., 2014).

A relatively similar situation is also specific to the field of study Physical Education and Sport. In this context, due to the large number of graduates looking for a job, the studies on the professional traceability constitute an essential prerequisite meant to contribute to the optimization of the process of integration of graduates into the labour market.

Starting from two of the major roles of the educational institutions to convey and shape the skills and competencies, but also to facilitate the access of graduates into the labour market, this study has the general objective of identifying and capturing the professional paths of the students that studied in the fields of Geography, Physical Education and Sport in the Bihor County.

In this sense, the analysis was focused on the pursuit of four specific research objectives:

- OS1. Identify the social-demographic profile of the students in the mentioned fields of study;
- OS2. Analyse the employability of the students in the mentioned fields of study;
- OS3. Identify the social-demographic profile of the students from the relevant fields;
- OS4. Analyse the employability of the students from the mentioned areas.

DATA AND METHODS

This analysis is based on data obtained during the project POSDRU / 161 / 2.1 / G / 133 169 *"Facilitating the transition from school to work for students in the fields of Geography and Physical Education and Sport"*.

The project aims at encouraging the continuation of education and at increasing the employability in the labour market of students in the fields of Geography, Physical Education and Sport by carrying out counselling / guidance activities and by developing the working skills through internships. The sociological investigation of the project was carried out in September 2015 and it was conducted in the Bihor County. The subjects included in the study were represented by pupils and students involved in the target group of the above mentioned project. The target group comprises a total of 350 people, including 190 students from the University of Oradea and 160 students from the *"Bihorul"* Oradea Sports Highschool. Therefore, the investigation was carried out in parallel on two samples: highschool students and university students. All subjects were selected from the fields of study of Geography, Physical Education and Sport and they benefited, through this project, from professional counselling and guidance for further education and integration into the labour market. In order to pursue the defined research objectives, this study drew upon the sociological survey method based on questionnaires, and the quantitative method of collecting and analysing data (Chelcea, 2007; Bryman, 2012; Babbie, 2010). In what concerns the data collected from the highschool students, the questionnaire included items referring mainly to the evaluation of the counselling and vocational guidance activities, the importance of conducting study visits and the employment situation of the subjects. The data collection instrument for the university students sample included items on the evaluation of the counselling and vocational guidance activities, of the partnerships between the universities and the labour market representatives, the evaluation of internships and the employment status of the respondents. Moreover, both questionnaires captured the social-demographic data. The questionnaires were electronically sent to the selected students, and their responses were recorded automatically.

THE STRUCTURE OF THE SAMPLE

Highschool students

Of the 350 people included in the target group of the mentioned project, 160 were registered as highschool students. Of these, only 92 responded to the questionnaire (56.7%), representing the final number of the sample of students included in the analysis.

Their gender distribution is not homogeneous, the sample being represented mainly by male subjects (74 cases). The specialization areas of interest for this study - Geography, Physical Education and Sport are areas prone to a higher incidence of male gender.

In what concerns the age distribution of students who answered the questionnaire, most (43 cases) were 18, while the rest were 17 and 19 years, with only one case aged 20 years. The average age of the sample of students is 17.9.

The analysis of subjects by area of residence shows an uneven distribution, the majority (68 cases) declaring their urban origin.

In terms of ethnic distribution, the majority of the subjects stated that they belong to the Romanian ethnic group, only 4 subjects are ethnic Hungarian.

University Students

The total number of students enrolled in the project target group was 190. The total number of responses to the questionnaires was 114 (60%).

The distribution of students according to the gender of the subjects is more homogeneous compared to the sample of highschool students, although more than half of the respondents are female: 68 cases are female subjects (59.6%) and 46 cases are male subjects (40.35%).

In what concerns their age, the university students are mainly aged between 21-24 years (figure 1), with an average of 23.5 years.

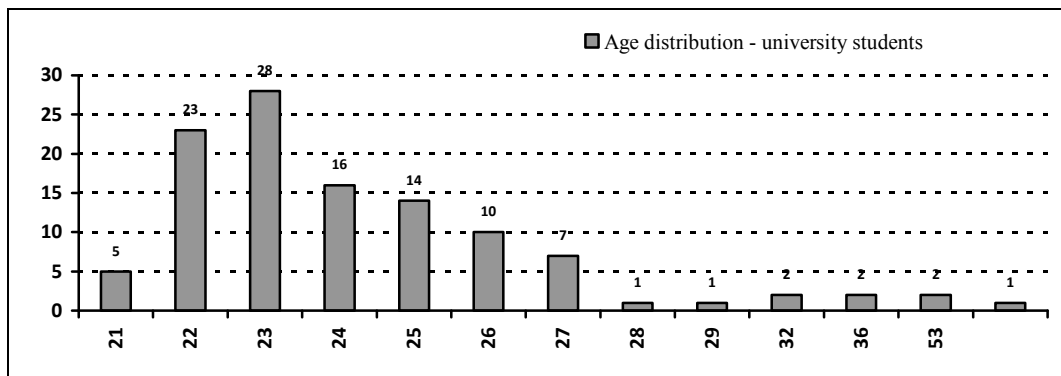


Figure 1. Age distribution - university students (absolute values)

Regarding their residence, the majority of respondents from the university students sample say they come from urban areas (83 cases).

In terms of ethnic distribution, the sample of university students is similar to that of highschool students, the majority of subjects being Romanians (103 cases), while 11 Hungarian.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATIONS

The evaluation of the actions developed to achieve the project objectives

The respondents from both sample groups were asked to evaluate if the project developed for tracking the career path of highschool and university students in the concerned fields, but also for identifying the integration into the labour market, achieved its goal of professional counselling and orientation of the target group. The feedback is positive, most of the respondents (highschool or university students) considering that that objective has been achieved to a large and very large extent. Only a few of the interviewed subjects placed their answer at the opposite extremity (figure 2).

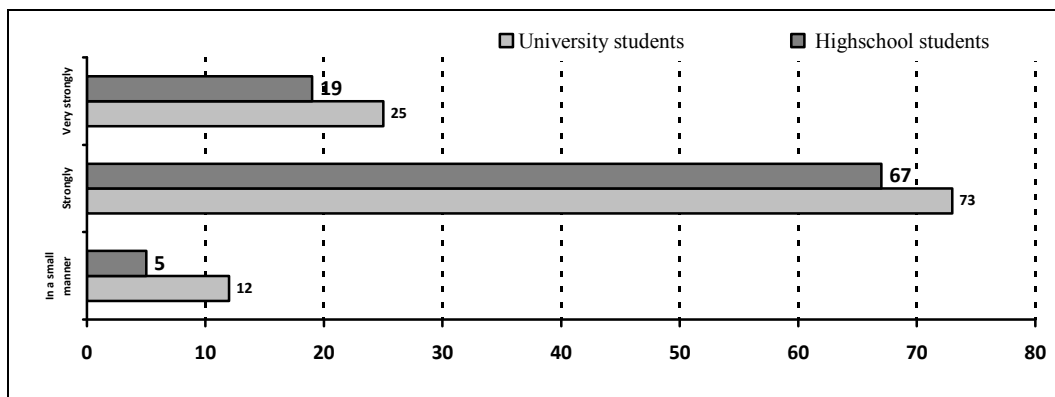


Figure 2. The objectives of the project (absolute values)
 (In which measure do you consider that the project of professional counselling and guiding reached its objective?)

The evaluation of the professional counselling and guidance services

In what concerns the vocational counselling and guidance, the respondents were asked to evaluate their usefulness on a scale from 1-10, where 1 = Not at all, and 10 = strongly. The averages of the responses received for each of the two sample groups indicate elevated values: 8.02 in the case of highschool students and 7.76 in the case of university students. Therefore, we can say that both university and highschool students consider that the services of professional counselling and guidance are useful, the average values obtained for the two samples groups being similar, with no significant differences. Most of the respondents from the highschool students sample group consider that the professional counselling and guidance activities could be improved to a large and very large extent both by introducing in the curricula certain disciplines focused on guidance and counselling and by establishing a permanent centre for counselling and guidance. Few subjects consider the usefulness of introducing such improving measures as low (figure 3).

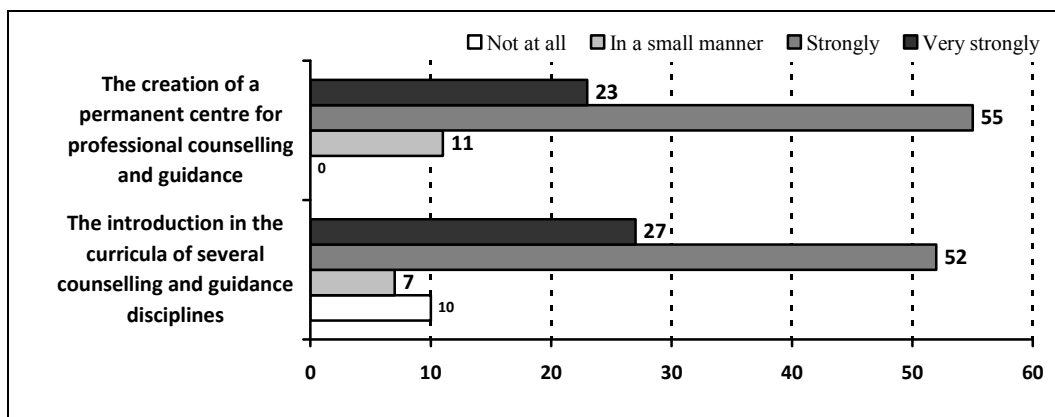


Figure 3. Methods of improving the professional counselling and guiding activities - highschool students (absolute values)

The answers given by the university students when it comes to the improvement methods that could be applied in the activities of professional counselling and guidance are similar to the answers given by the highschool students. The university students strongly and very strongly consider that the introduction in the curricula of several counselling and guidance disciplines and also the creation of a permanent centre for professional counselling and guidance can be useful (figure 4).

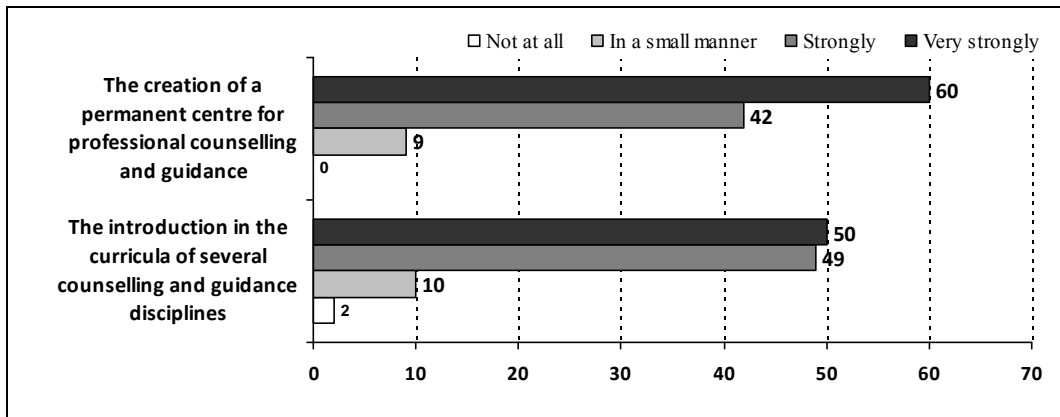


Figure 4. Methods of improving the professional counselling and guiding activities - university students (absolute values)

The evaluation of the study visits and internships

In what regards the highschool students' evaluation of the usefulness of study visits, the average value is 8.48. The answers were scored on a scale from 1-10, where 1 = not at all, and 10 = Strongly. This average suggests that students show satisfaction towards the performance of such school activities. Thus, we can hypothesize that activities such as study visits or other similar actions may contribute to the development and vocational guidance of high school graduates into the labour market. Most students who were questioned strongly and very strongly consider that the study visits could be improved through partnerships with representatives from the social-economic environment and by introducing a compulsory conduct of these study visits in the curricula (figure 5).

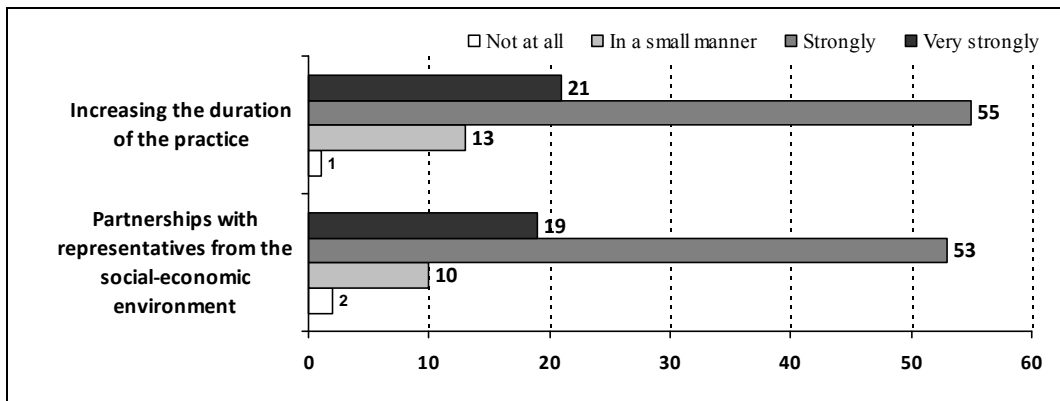


Figure 5. Methods of improving the study visits - highschool students (absolute values)

The students were asked to evaluate the usefulness of the practical training on a scale from 1-10, where 1 = not at all and 10 = strongly. The average value of this is of 8.31, which suggests a positive evaluation of the usefulness of internships. Almost like the highschool students, the university students consider that the practical training could be improved to a large and very large extent, in particular by increasing the duration of the practice, but also through partnerships with representatives from the social-economic environment. When it comes to the

extension of the apprenticeship duration, 27 of the respondents consider that this measure would hardly help improve internships (figure 6).

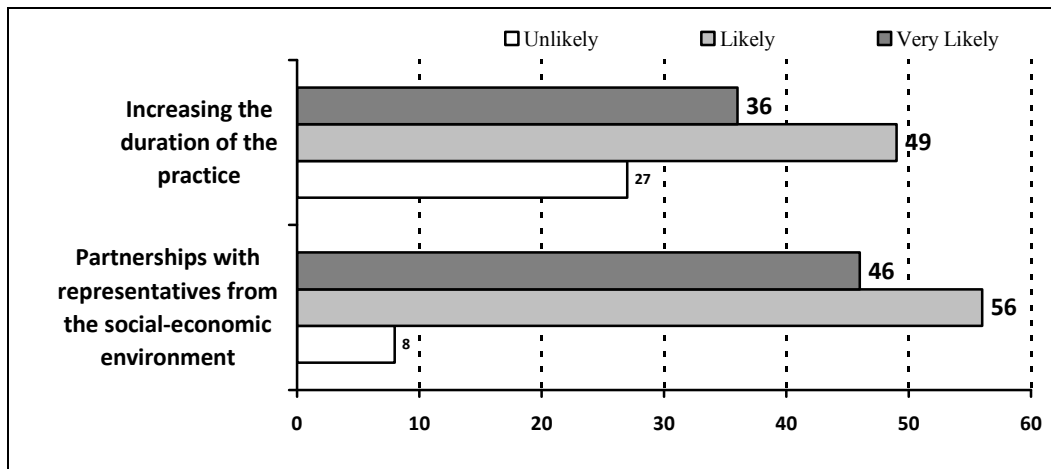


Figure 6. Methods of improving internships - university students (absolute values)

The employment status of the respondents

In what concerns the employment status of the respondents, the majority of the highschool students answered that currently they are not employees; only 7 of them are employed. The situation changes for the university students, 48 of them saying at the moment of the survey that they were employed (figure 7).



Figure 7. Occupational status (absolute values)

The following analysis is performed on sample sub-groups of students who confirmed their employment during the execution of the research. Thus, the occupational status of the two sample sub-groups is illustrated in the image below; the highschool students are mainly active as sportspeople and workers. Most of the university students (21 cases) declare that they are working in the commercial/tourism fields or other fields, while 7 students are workers and 5 students are teachers (figure 8).

In what concerns their satisfaction towards their income, the majority of the employed students (30 students) declare that their income is sufficient for a decent lifestyle but

doesn't actually allow them to buy expensive goods. The research shows the fact that the employed highschool students tend to be more satisfied with their income than university students (figure 9).

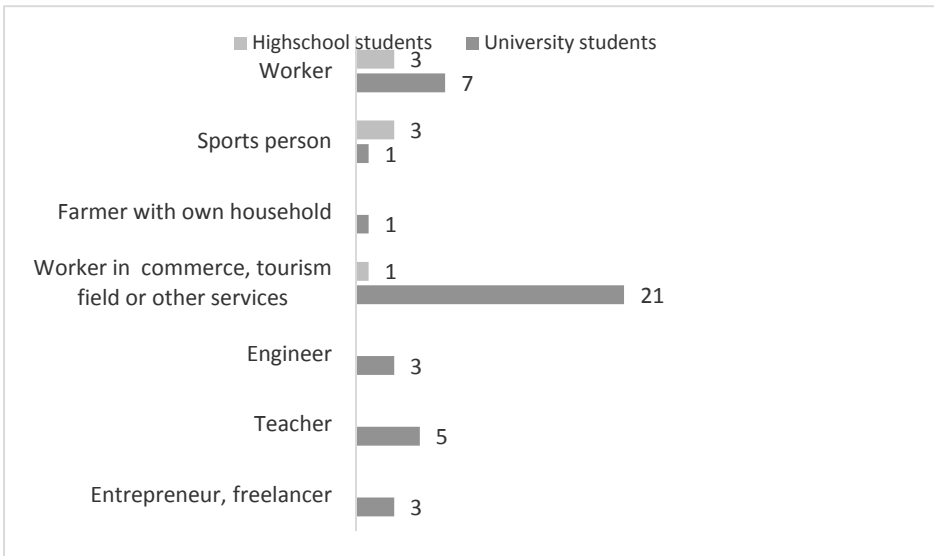


Figure 8. Main employment areas (absolute values)

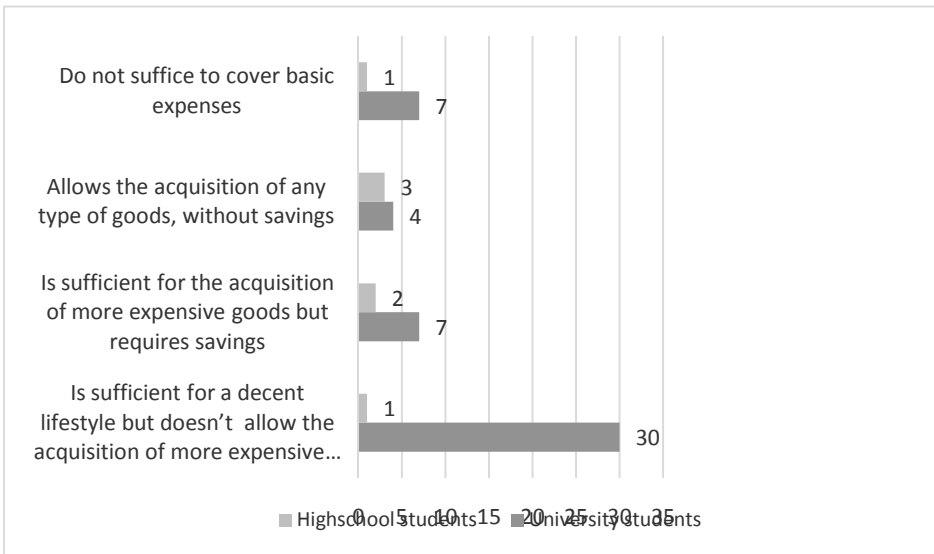


Figure 9. Satisfaction towards the income (absolute values)

The major differences between the two sample sub-groups are noticeable in the way in which the two categories evaluate their current workplace. Highschool students are more satisfied with their workplace as it corresponds to their professional expectations, while university students declare that their current workplace hardly corresponds to their professional expectations. Moreover, many students declare that their current working place is only a temporary compromise (figures 10 and 11).

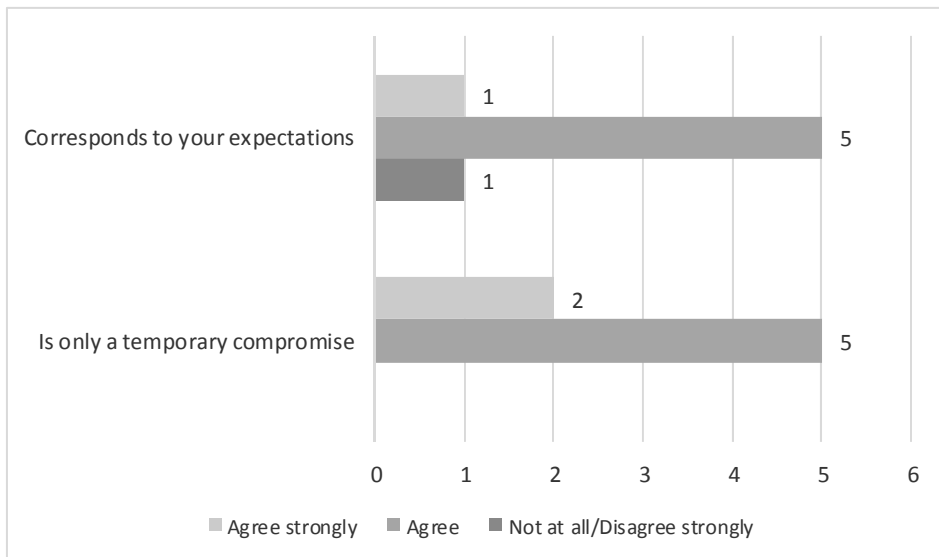


Figure 10. Evaluation of the current workplace - highschool students (absolute values)

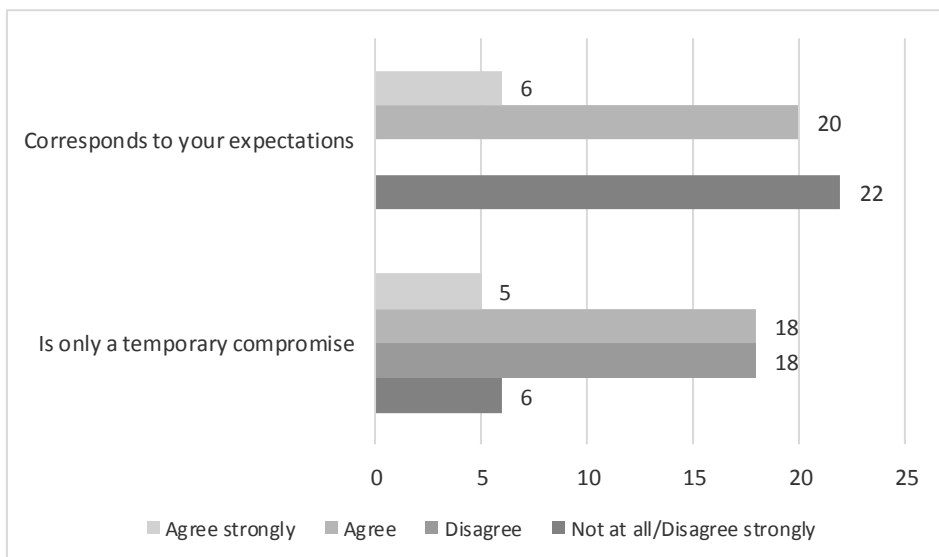


Figure 11. Evaluation of the current workplace- university students (absolute values)

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis conducted for the two groups indicates the fact that the developed project is considered a success in the opinion of both highschool and university students as they consider that the objectives of the project have been successfully reached. The professional counselling and guiding services received positive feedback, as respondents from both groups appreciated the usefulness of the carried out study visits and internships Nevertheless, an improvement of these

services and activities is required, through partnerships with actors from the social-economic system and through an obligatory extension of the internship period. As a general conclusion in what concerns the occupation profile of the respondents from both sample groups, we can highlight the fact that university students are employed in a larger number than the highschool students (which can also be explained by the difference in age), but their current working place is considered a temporary solution because it does not correspond to their professional expectations.

Aknowlegments

This paper is a result of research made possible by the financial support of the Sectoral Operational Programme for Human Resources Development 2007-2013, co-financed by the European Social Found, under the project POSDRU/161/2.1/G/133169 - “Facilitarea tranziției de la școală la viața activă a studenților și elevilor din domeniile Geografie și Educație Fizică și Sport”.

REFERENCES

- Angelopoulos A. (1987), *Un plan mondial pentru ocuparea forței de muncă. Pentru un Keynesism la scară internațională*, Editura Politică, București.
- Babbie E. (2010), *Practica cercetării sociale*, Editura Polirom, București.
- Bădulescu A. (2006), *Ocuparea și șomajul – între abordări teoretice și realități contemporane*, Editura Universității din Oradea, Oradea.
- Bryman A. (2012), *Social Research Methods*, 4th edition, Oxford University Press, USA.
- Chelcea S. (2007), *Metodologia cercetării sociologice. Metode cantitative și calitative*, Editura Economică, București.
- Ciucur D. (2004), *Piața muncii în condițiile aderării României la Uniunea Europeană, "Raporturi de Muncă"*.
- Comisia Națională de Prognoză (2012), *Perspective asupra pieței de muncă din România în contextul strategiei UE 2020*, <http://www.cnp.ro>
- Constantinescu N.N. (2000), *Probleme ale tranziției la economia de piață în România*, Editura Fundației România de Măine, București.
- Doray P., Maroy C. (2001), *La construction des relations entre économie et éducation: l'exemple de la formation en alternance*, Dossier Entre éducation et travail: les acteurs de l'insertion, Éducation et Sociétés, n° 7/2001/1.
- Gyorfy L.Z, Nagy A., Pete St., Matias D., Benyoeszki A., Petru T.P. (2008), *Monitorizarea globală a Antreprenoriatului, Raportul de tara al României*, Editura Abel, Cluj-Napoca.
- Ianos I. (coord) (2014), *Reforma curriculara si piata fortei de munca pentru domeniul Geografie*, Editura Universitara Bucuresti, ISBN 978-606-28-0149-6.
- Ianoș I. (coord), (2010), *Inserția teritorială a universităților din România*, Editura Universitară, București.
- Ilieș Al., Baias Șt., Herman G.V. (2014): *cap.V.5.4: Universitatea din Oradea* în: Ianos I. (ed.), *Reforma curriculara si piata fortei de munca pentru domeniul Geografie*, Editura Universitara Bucuresti, 171 p, ISBN 978-606-28-0149-6.
- Iova C. (2005), *Strategia europeană în domeniul forței de muncă*, în: “Economie României și Uniunea Europeană”, volumul 2, Academia de Studii Economice, București.
- Le Heron R., Hathaway J.T. (2010), *An Inter national Perspective on Developing Skills through Geography Programmes for Employability and Life: Narratives from New Zealand and the United States*, Journal of Geography in Higher Education, 24, 2, 271-276.
- Vasile V., Zaman G. (2005), *Migrația forței de muncă și dezvoltarea durabilă a României*, Editura Expert, București.

Submitted:
December 17, 2015

Revised:
February 12, 2016

Accepted and published online
March 24, 2016