

The Importance of Vocational Training Courses for the Careers Development of Students and Graduates

Bianca-Nicoleta STOCHITA¹, Ruxandra CACIULAN², Cristina BUICA³, Ilie TAUCEAN⁴

Abstract: To facilitate the professional training of students, more and more companies offer training programs and courses to help students who want to deepen certain areas or simply acquire certain skills or knowledge that will help them in their careers, which he outlines. The present paper addresses at the theoretical level the concept of vocational training, as well as the applicative part - a questionnaire applied among the students, to see their perception of the vocational training courses and what are the criteria underlying the choice of such a course. The recommendations following the analysis are for students, on the one hand, for those who are interested and attend these courses, what kind, of course, to choose, depending on the expected results, and for those interested in attending such a course, to know which are the main axes of skills development that employers want to see a potential candidate.

Keywords: vocational training, skills, skills development axis

I. INTRODUCTION

What does vocational training mean? It is a form of continuous, non-formal education that comes to complement the formal education system. It aims to increase the level of professional competence of students, fresh graduates or employees, through various courses and training programs. At the same time, other objectives are pursued [6]:

- A better adaptation to the demands of the labor market;
- Promotion in work and professional development;
- Professional conversion;
- Preventing the risk of unemployment;
- Stimulation of labor mobility.

People who attend continuing education programs have an advantage over the competition when applying for a job, adapt more easily to changes within an organization and gain a competitive advantage in the labor market. Only authorized providers can offer such

training programs because vocational training is regulated by law.

The vocational training programs are authorized and certified by the National Council for Adult Vocational Training (NCAVT) and are developed in collaboration with the Ministry of Labor and the Ministry of Education. They can take many forms:

- Participation in courses organized by the employer or by the providers of vocational training services in the country or abroad;
- Internships of professional adaptation to the job and job requirements;
- Internships and specialization in the country and abroad;
- Organized apprenticeship at work etc.

Individuals can also consider individual training through coaching, mentoring, training, postgraduate academic studies, conferences, webinars, volunteering, research, internship programs, scholarships or participating in competitions held within the industry. The vocational training programs are carried out only at the premises of the authorized providers, at the employer's premises or at the offices of the County Agencies for Employment. A condition for these premises is to be equipped with study materials, supplies, audio-video equipment, materials for practical exercises. These courses are held by trained NAQ (National Authority for Qualifications) trainers.

II. CURRENT SITUATION OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING COURSES

We are in the century of speed, and that means adapting rapidly to the demands of the market when we are at the beginning of our career or have already ventured on a certain path.

The current education system is very much based on the theory underlying all the trades, but one very important thing is neglected: at the end of university

¹ Universitatea Politehnica Timișoara, Romania, bianca.stochita@student.upt.ro

² Universitatea Politehnica Timișoara, Romania, caciulan.ruxandra@student.upt.ro

³ Universitatea Politehnica Timișoara, Romania, cristina.buica@student.upt.ro

⁴ Universitatea Politehnica Timișoara, Romania, ilie.taucean@upt.ro

studies, employers want to see practical concepts coming out of the hands of future employers, the diploma having a very important importance into the detriment of the practical knowledge that the student / fresh graduate can prove.

There are more and more articles on the internet about how you can earn big money/month, even if you did not complete the maturity exam and even less, you did not go to college. This should give us some question marks, as it is not so important to higher education or, even worse, even if you follow them, you still cannot reach the threshold of an attractive salary because the experience required so often employers are missing. Consequently, for a fresh student/graduate, whose experience is measured in extra-curricular activities and internship/internship programs, the focus should be on self-study, which is not included in the faculty program and which demonstrates the proactive candidate, with initiative and the desire to accumulate knowledge. This is where these training courses come in. If in the beginning, the main courses were those for the trades such: electrician, confectioner/ cook, mechanic, locksmith, nurse, etc., with the evolution of the market, the courses of information technology, leadership, marketing, management, entrepreneurship, foreign languages were initiated, and so on

Of course, they are within the reach of any person, but for the students, they are extremely important, because they have the opportunity to practice exactly what they want and at the end of the course they will receive a certification which, together with a complex Curriculum Vitae, will differentiate it from the students who summarize it. only at the faculty courses. In addition, employers are very focused on what candidates know when they give various tests at the interview, and not so much on the field they study at the time of recruitment, respectively the area in which they graduated. If they have solid knowledge certifications, they can be easily hired. Access to these courses is unlimited, with a simple Google search you can access numerous sites that lead the users to the identified platforms.

If we talk about a decisive factor for attending a course, most students think about whether they can afford it, whether it is worth paying for something they do not have 100% confidence that it will bear fruit or will matter. To support the application to the available courses, they should be free, at least the initiation courses. In this way, out of sheer curiosity the students can follow them, and then decide if they can help the next levels.

Another factor that influences this decision to take a training course is the type of the course: physical or online. A first impression is that an online course can be much easier to follow, because you do not consider the travel time to a space, nor the resources, and everything can be done in front of your laptop at home. So, it is very practical for many of the students. On the other hand, a major advantage is the courses in physical format: direct interaction, deviation from the standard program in case of doubts or questions, the possibility

of being followed step by step in the learning process, the exchange of opinions is much more easily, productivity increases in a competitive spirit.

III. DOMAINS OF TRAINING COURSES

The types of courses that can be accessed are various - leadership, management, marketing, IT, etc. According to the Hippo platform [5], several courses should not be missing from the CV of any student, regardless of the chosen field of study, such as:

- Leadership studies - this type of study offers coordination, organization and demonstration skills that demonstrate the efficient management of tasks, delegation, and monitoring of the progress and results of a project. The advantage over others is obvious, and the opportunities for advancement are much greater.

- Accounting/finance - accumulation of useful knowledge in the case of a career in the field, but also of a type of knowledge that helps in one's personal life (taxes, taxes, budget planning, resource management). This course can reveal a responsible, analytical citizen;

- Business management - because it is never known when the opportunity to advance in the career and business management knowledge is needed in managing the new job challenges. Also, the possibility of opening your own business is great, at which point your ideas can be applied;

- Writing - the art of words must be mastered not only if the field in which it is activated is the press, PR or advertising. This must be mastered from the simplest applications to be drafted, to the composition of texts for various presentations or even proposals for the current workplace. Translating ideas into writing is not as easy for everyone, and this competence is preferable to be acquired;

- Communication - even in a technical field, the benefits of such a course must be taken into account. Contact with people is inevitable, be it the office team, superiors or clients. As most job descriptions also contain the condition that the applicant is a good communicator, a diploma attesting to his communication skills (written and oral) will position the candidate before the competition;

- Sociology - knowing the people around is very important and is a benefit. A sociology course can provide a student with knowledge about human behavior, inter-individual relationships, and analytical spirit;

- Technical studies - these studies may include the use of different technologies, platforms or programs that are always a plus. Indeed, it depends on the area in which you want to start a career, but there are a few that help regardless of the situation: using the Microsoft Office package, knowledge of photo and video editing, the use of various blogging platforms. Thus, the tasks at work can be performed with a low degree of difficulty without resorting to a specialist in the field within the company.

The promotion of these types of courses must be rigorous:

- Teams from companies that research new places where they can discuss and explain what happens in such a professional, but also personal development program;
- Teams that monitor the online environment, on all the social networking sites used, to make them known.

IV. THE IMPORTANCE OF PROFESSIONAL TRAINING COURSES

Employers appreciate the skills of the candidates and differentiate between those who come with an IT knowledge package, even if their studies are Arts and Design. If there is a certificate which attest the skills for a prospective future employee, the employment opportunity is extremely high. Take the "X" Academy of Information Technology as an example, which offers worldwide recognition of the knowledge gained in their program. This is possible because after taking the final exams and passing them, certificates are issued directly from the Cambridge, Microsoft, Adobe, Zend, Autodesk and CompTIA International Examinations Department in England, the Netherlands or the United States.

The advantage of such certificates is that they obtain a recognized authority both at home and at the international level. Access to companies that are offering well-paying jobs is guaranteed.

V. THE STUDENTS OPINIONS ABOUT TRAINING COURSES

To find out the frequency of participation, the way of promoting the training courses for the students as well as the students' opinions about their importance and usefulness, a survey based on a questionnaire has been developed and applied. Thus, there has been created a questionnaire to which 34 people answered (research sample). We choose a sample size of 34 persons, for a population of approximately 500 persons and having a confidence level of 95%. The chosen sample size has a confidence interval of 16.24. The results are presented in the following.

1. The area where you live is:

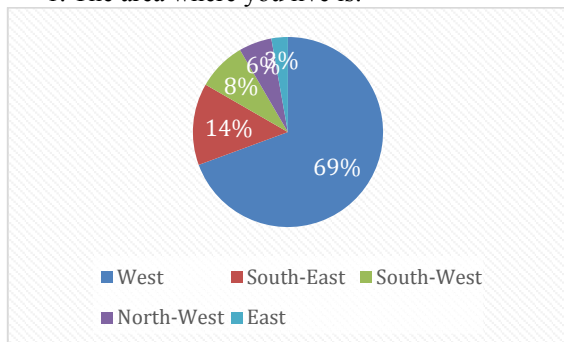


Fig. 1. The area where live the respondents

As seen in Figure 1, approximately 70% is from West, 14% is from South-East, 14% is from

South-West, 5,6% is from North-East and 2,8% from East.

2. How old are you?

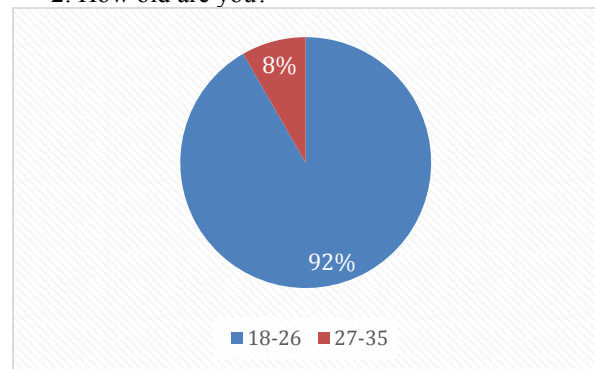


Fig. 2. Respondents age

As seen in Figure 2, 91,7% from respondents have age between 18-26 and the rest of the respondents have between 27-35 years.

3. Your occupation is:

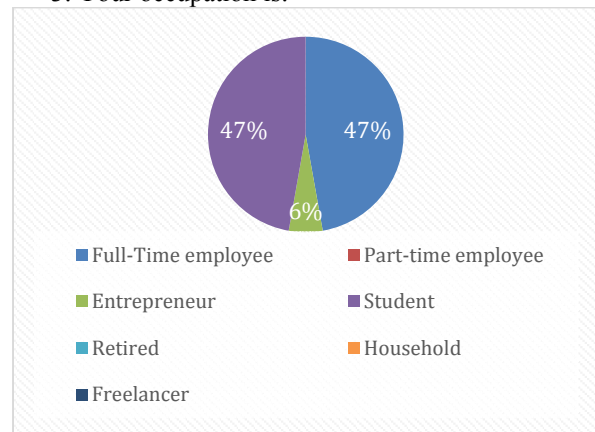


Fig. 3. Respondents occupations

Respondents in the sample are not only students because in some cases they are employees. Thus, the respondents' occupation is shown in Figure 3. On par with a percentage of 47.2% of respondents are full-time employees and students and the remaining 5.6% are entrepreneurs; 17 people are students, and only they have gone through the rest of the questionnaire.

4. The university you attend is:

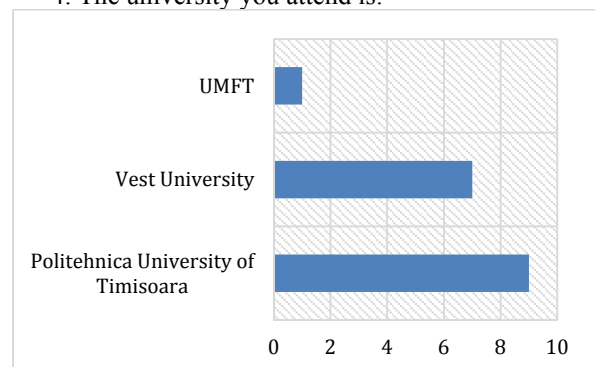


Fig. 4. Universities where are going the students' respondents

As it is seen in Figure 4, 9 respondents are students at Politehnica University of Timisoara in Romania, 7

follow studies at the West University of Timisoara, Romania and 1 respondent is enrolled at the “Victor Babes” University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Timisoara, Romania.

5. The faculty you attend is:

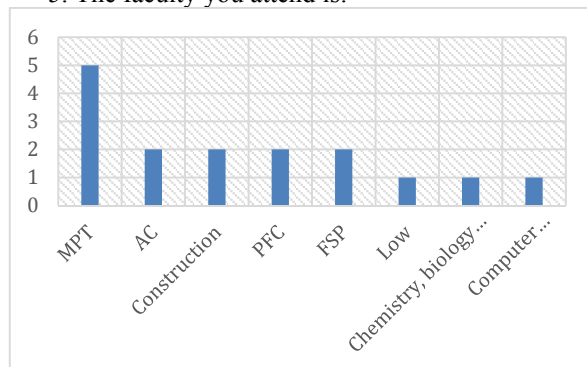


Fig. 5. Faculties where the respondents are enrolled

The analysis in detail of the respondents’ faculty where they belong is shown in Figure 5. As can be seen, 5 students from the Politehnica are enrolled at the Faculty of Management in Production and Transportation (MPT), 2 at the Computer Science Faculty (AC), 2 at the Civil Engineering Faculty (Construction). The students in the research sample from the West University of Timisoara belong at: Faculty of Political Sciences (PFC), 2 respondents, 2 are students of the Faculty of Social Sociology and Psychology (FSP) and one belong to the Law Chemistry, Biology and Geography Faculty (law) and student follow the medical school at the “Victor Babes” University of Medicine and Pharmacy, Timisoara, Romania.

6. The year of study:

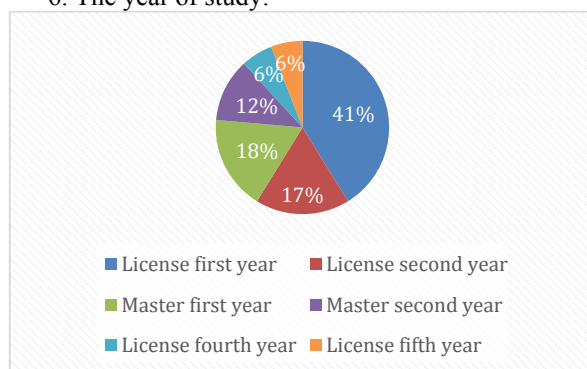


Fig. 6. Year of study of respondents

Regarding the year of study, Figure 6 is showing the research sample structure. 41.2% of the students are from first year Bachelor studies, 17.6% are in the Bachelor studies second year, 5.9% are Bachelor students in the fourth year and 5.9% of students are in fifth year of study at Bachelor level. Regarding the master students that have been considered in the research sample: 17.6% of the respondents are master students in the first year and 11.8% of the respondents are master students in the second year of study.

From the perspective of the year of study, there have been considered that the sample is equilibrate, having 70% of the respondents belonging to Bachelor studies and 30% at Master programs. The percentages reflect the usual proportion between the Bachelor and Master students in the Romanian higher education.

7. Are you part of a student organization?

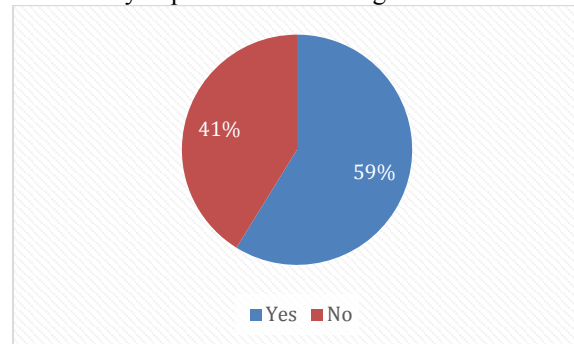


Fig. 7. Respondents’ affiliation to a student organization

As it is seen in Figure 7, more than 50% of the respondents are part of some students’ organization.

8. Have you attended training courses for students so far?

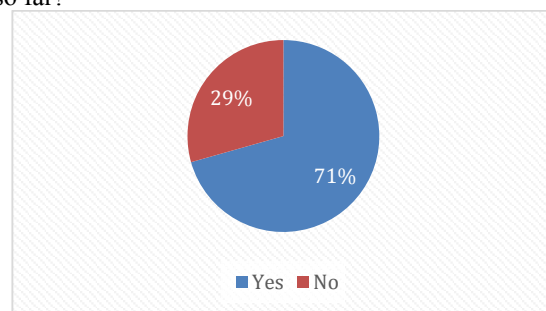


Fig. 8. Respondents participation at training courses

In Figure 8 there are presented the research results on the students’ involvement in training courses, other than the usual one of their study programs curricula. 70.6% of the respondents have recognized that they attended training courses (extra-curricular trainings) for students so far.

9. The course to which you attended were with fees or not:

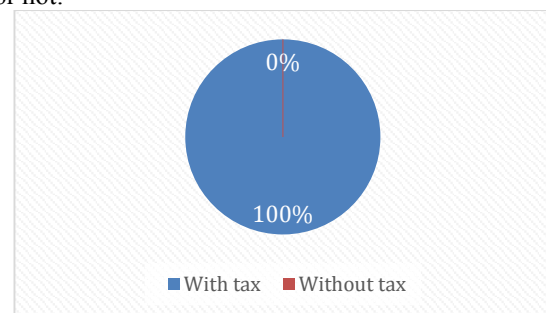


Fig. 9. The fees payed for extra-curricular training courses

As shown in Figure 9, all the extra-curricular training courses which were attended by the students were free of charge (no fees were payed) or they were

covered by the scholarships. This result proves that extra-curricular trainings are well promoted among learners. In addition, extra-curricular training which are vocational one, were find very popular by students and all universities in the research are offering diverse programs.

10. The environment in which the course has been developed:

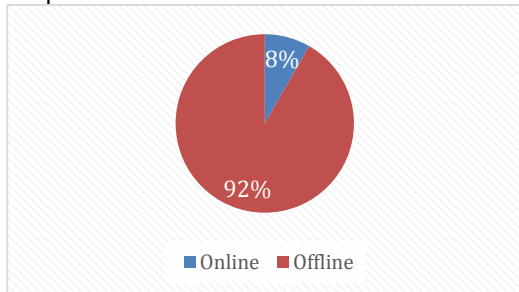


Fig. 10. Type of learning environment for vocational training courses

The investigation on the type of learning environment for vocational trainings (Figure 10) shown that: 91.7% of the trainings followed by students were organized offline (face-to-face in classes). This shows that confidence in the success of a course is higher when existing direct interaction between teacher and learners, and lower in the case of the online courses.

11. The course you attended was about:

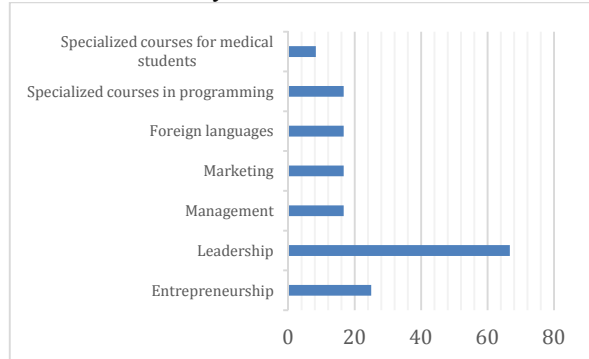


Fig. 11. Topics of the courses followed by respondents

In Figure 11 is shown the distribution of the responses regarding the topics of the vocational training dedicated to students>

- 66.7% of the students participated in leadership courses (which is the most attractive topic),
- 25% students have followed an entrepreneurship course,
- 16.7% of the respondents have attended management, marketing, foreign languages and other specialized courses in informatics and
- Only 8.3% of the respondents recognized that they followed courses specialized for medical students. Consequently, there is a gap in organized vocational trainings for medical students.

12. Why have you not attended training courses for students so far?

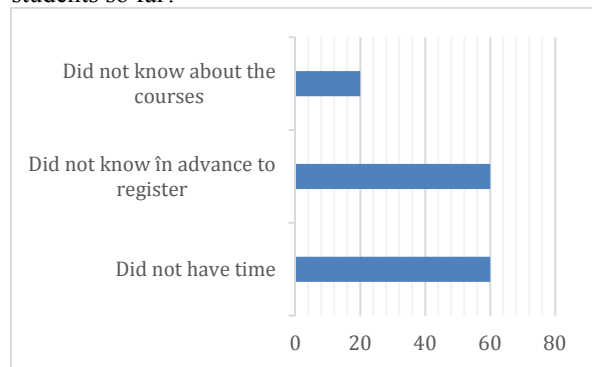


Fig. 12. Reasons for non-participation of respondents at vocational training courses

As seen in Figure 12, more than 60% of the respondents recognized that the main reason why they did not attend vocational trainings is because they did not have time to do it and because they did not know in advance to register. Only 20% of the respondents recognized that they know about this type of courses.

13. Where do you usually, find out about the courses organized for students?

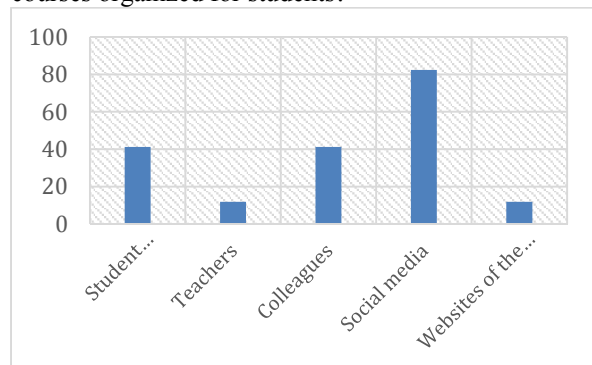


Fig. 13. Sources of information about vocational training programs

In Figure 13 are presented the responses on the sources of information about the vocational training programs. As could be seen, 82.4% of the students find out about courses on social media, 41.2% from the student organizations and colleagues, and 11.8% from the teaching staff they interact with and from the websites of the companies that organize such courses.

14. On a scale from 1 to 5, how useful do you think it is to follow and graduate vocational training courses? (1-less important, 5 very important)

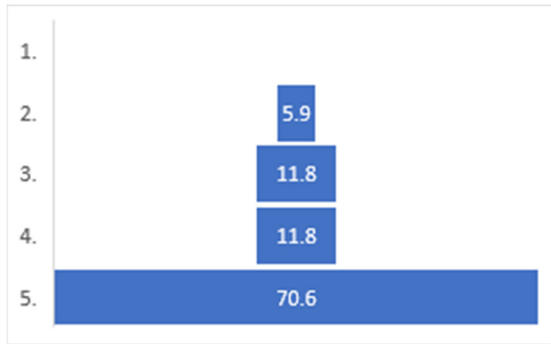


Figure 14. The importance of vocational training courses

The importance and usefulness of the vocational trainings for students in the research sample are shown in Figure 14:

- 70.6% of the students responded with a grade 5 on the the scale of importance for the vocational training courses,
- 11.8% note 4 and
- 11.8% note 3, but
- note 2 being granted only by 5.9% of students.

15. For a graduate vocational training program, do you consider that certification received is important?

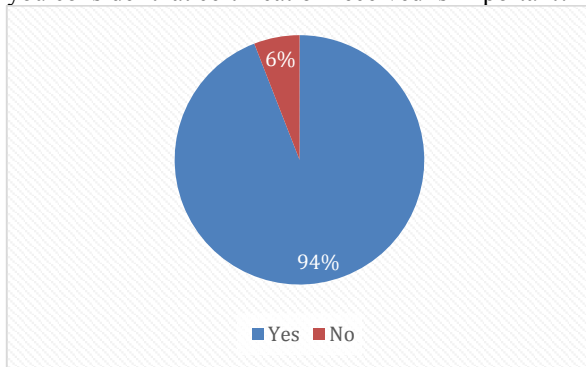


Fig. 15. The importance of certification

In Figure 15 there can be seen that 94.1% of the respondents considered that the certification obtained after they graduate a vocational training course is important, because they considered that the main purpose of the enrollment is to support them in their careers' development. There is also a small percentage of respondents who consider that the role of the courses is primarily personal and is followed simply by a passion and interest on the topic.

16. How relevant do you think the diploma/certification of such a course is for employers besides the experience?

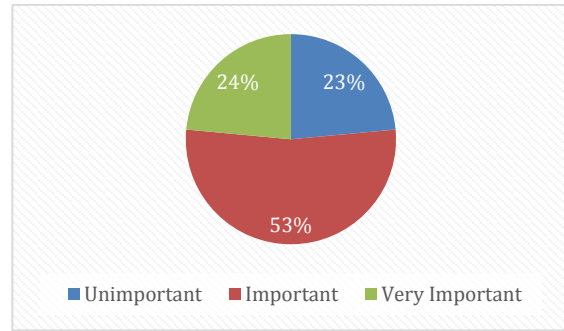


Fig. 16. Importance of vocational training courses for employers

As seen in Figure 16, half of the respondents consider that it is important for employers the diploma/certification obtained from the promotion of a training course as the knowledge gained during it brings the value of the future employees.

A quarter of the respondents do not consider them important because they think that these are superficial courses after which the knowledge package is not a solid one and which is not an advantage for the students when they are hired.

17. Would you like to attend training courses for students in the future even if they have a cost?

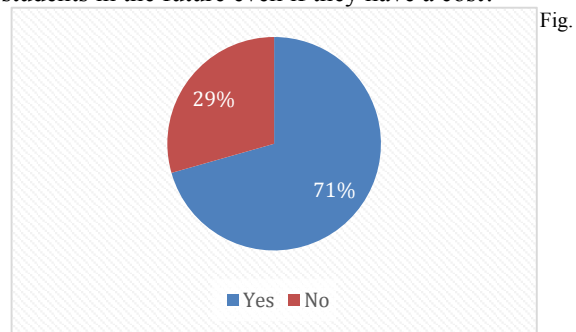


Fig. 17. Respondents willing to participate in vocational training courses

The data presented in Figure 17 shown that 70.6% of the responding students would attend training courses even if they will have a cost for participation. Thus, it can be observed that this is an important aspect that students consider when choosing to take a course. Those who do not wish to pay will apply for them when the financial balance will not be affected in any way.

18. What would be the amount of money you would be willing to pay to attend a vocational training course?

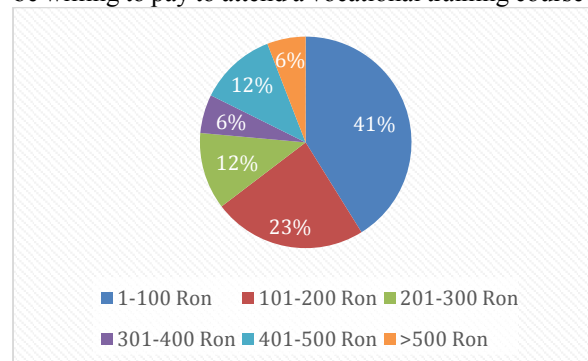


Fig. 18. The cost of a vocational training course

The research results presented in Figure 18 shown that the amount that students would be willing to pay for completing a training course is divided into several intervals, as following:

- 41.2% of students are willing to pay between 1-100 Ron,
- 23.5% between 101-200 Ron,
- 11.8% between 201-300 Ron,
- 11.8% 401-500 Ron,
- 5.9% between 301-400 Ron and
- 5.9% more than 500 Ron.

In addition, with this question, we can find out that, although over 70.6% of the respondent students are willing to pay tuition fees, the amount of money that they need to pay is very important, most opting to pay up to 100 Ron.

From these percentages, we can achieve that students cannot easily afford large amounts of money for these courses, although a higher quality course involves the allocation of an amount of over 500 Ron.

19. When would you like to take this course?

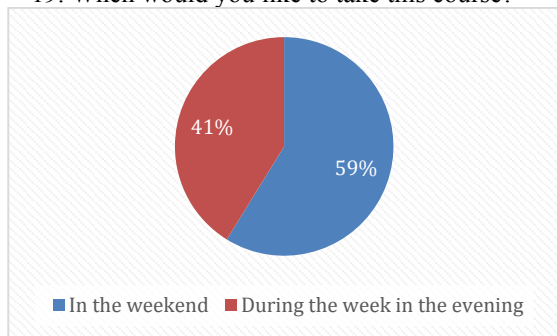


Fig. 19. The period of training course

Regarding the vocational trainings timetable, relevant data are related to the research results presented in Figure 19. As can be seen, 58.8% of the respondent students want to attend training courses that are organized in the weekend and the rest during the week but in the evening, because the participation during the day does not possible because they have courses at a faculty/master's degree.

20. How much time are you willing to give to complete such a course?

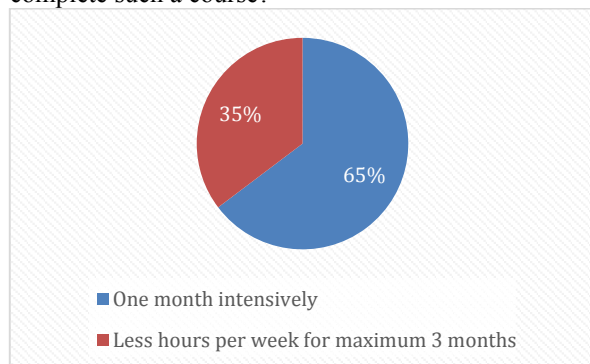


Fig. 20. Time to complete a training course

As seen in Figure 20, about 65% of the respondent students want to attend courses that have a maximum period of one month intensively, beside of the courses that have fewer hours per week but have a total period of 3 months.

21. What is the the reason why you would not want to attend vocational trainings for students for which you should pay?

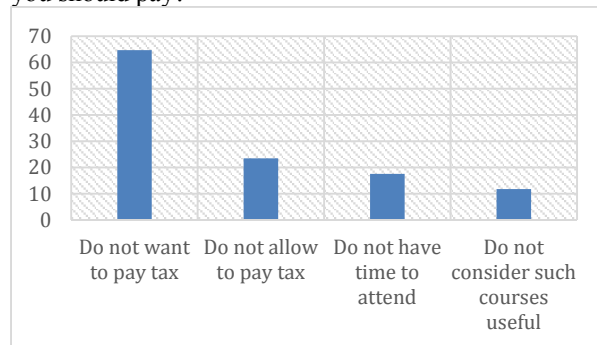


Fig. 21. Reasons why respondents would not like to participate in vocational training courses

The research results presented in Figure 20 shown that 64.7% of the students who do not want to attend training courses for which they have to pay to have the reason that they do not consider as a student must to pay for such courses, 23.5% do not allow to pay tax, 17.6% do not have time to attend such courses and 11.8% do not consider such courses useful.

VI. FINAL REMARKS ON THE RESEARCH RESULTS GATHER WITH THE SURVEY

Most of the respondents who have completed the whole questionnaire are students in Timisoara so they study at the Politehnica University, the Vest University and the University of Medicine and Pharmacy.

With the help of the questionnaire we found out that about 60% of the respondent students are part of a student organization thus being aware of its usefulness in a faculty.

Approximately 70% of the students have so far participated at training courses for students who have been free and whose domain is leadership in the largest proportion, then marketing, management, entrepreneurship, foreign languages and IT. Those who have not participated at such courses so far have not done so because they did not have time or did not find out in time for registration.

The students find out in a large proportion about at training courses on the social media with a percentage of 82.4%, from the student organizations and from the colleagues in the proportion of 41.2% and 11.8% from the teachers.

Over 90% of students consider it important to obtain certification both for them and for employers.

Only 70% of the respondent students are willing to participate in training courses that will have a participation fee, but most are willing to pay up to 200 Ron. Those who do not wish to participate in the training courses who have a participation fee consider

that they should not pay for such courses at 64.7% and others do not allow themselves to pay the fee or do not have time.

Most students want to take intensive courses who will be organized during the week or at the weekend.

VII. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the questionnaire applied, we can observe the increasing interest of the students regarding vocational training courses, as well as the main directions that they want to develop. The main area of interest of the students is to develop their leadership skills, but they also do not neglect the development of marketing or entrepreneurship skills. A major impediment to attending the courses, however, is the cost of attending it. It seems that, on average, students do not want to spend, on average, more than 500 RON, which is not beneficial to them, because a complete vocational training course can reach several thousand Ron. Our advice is that they go beyond the material aspect and invest in training courses designed to shape their future careers. Also, another recommendation for students wishing to participate in

such courses is to allow enough time to search for possible courses, because, unfortunately, this niche, as well as its promotion is an underdeveloped one in Romania, unfortunately.

We also recommend the more intense promotion of vocational training courses both in universities through posters and with the help of teachers.

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