## 3.1 Methodology of research and survey execution

PL IV activity, "System analysis: the quality of Romanian higher education system", provided the results of a sociological research on the *measurement of the respondents perception regarding the policies and the quality of Romanian higher education system level.*

These perceptions were identified and quantified (up to possibilities) from a double approach perspective: quantitative research (questionnaires) and qualitative research (interviews).

In this respect, the team of WP IV experts drafted three questionnaires and three interview guides for students registered in bachelor programs[63], university teachers[64] and employers of higher education graduates[65].

### *3.1.1 Selection criteria of the survey respondents*

The first stage consisted of the drafting of the sampling methodology. Thus, the team of experts considered ensuring the ***sample representativeness*****,** determining the volume of the sample[66] at the level of the three categories of respondents with a P = 95% probability of guaranteeing the results and a maximum allowed error of Δw = ± 2.5%.

***Volume of the sample***: *1533 students, 1454 teachers and 1572 employers.* ***Sample***: layered, probabilistic.

***Layering criteria:*** 8 development regions (coinciding with the university centres throughout the country), size of the institution, inclusion of all fundamental and bachelor fields, as well as the both types of ownership (state and private).

***Data collection period:*** During April-June 2015, surveys and interviews addressed to students and teachers were carried out by the operators in a face-to-face manner within higher education institutions, as for employers – within their own organizations.

The sampling of students, teachers and employers upon development regions and universities is presented in QUALITAS Sampling Plan. (*Annex III.7)*

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[63] *Annex III.1 – Questionaires addressed to students and Annex III.4 – Interview Guide Addressed to Students*

[64] *Annex III.2 – Questionaires addressed to teachers and Annex III.5 – Interview Guide Addressed to Teachers*

[65] *Annex III.3 – Questionaires addressed to employers and Annex III.6 – Interview Guide Addressed to Employers*

[66] *Calculations based on the data presented by NIS and Ministry of Education and Scientific Research for school year 2014-2015*

*Table III. 1. Volume of the representative sample at HES and labour market levels*

| No. | Development regions | No. of Bachelor fields | No. of FTS programs | Students sample | Teachers sample | Employers sample |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | NORTH-WEST | 180 | 442 | 268 | 309 | 221 |
| 2 | CENTRE | 119 | 179 | 138 | 118 | 186 |
| 3 | NORTH-EAST | 135 | 236 | 212 | 185 | 167 |
| 4 | SOUTH-EAST | 111 | 160 | 100 | 76 | 182 |
| 5 | SOUTH-MUNTENIA | 69 | 80 | 71 | 60 | 171 |
| 6 | BUCHAREST - ILFOV | 209 | 371 | 494 | 450 | 385 |
| 7 | SOUTH-VEST OLTENIA | 83 | 126 | 77 | 76 | 115 |
| 8 | WEST | 125 | 228 | 173 | 180 | 145 |
| **Total** | | **1031** | **1822** | **1533** | **1454** | **1572** |

*Source: Calculations according to NIS https://statistici.insse.ro/shop/?lang=ro accessed in March 2015; Calculations according to MECS, university year 2014-2015*

### *3.1.2 Development and implementation of surveys*

**Development of surveys**

The survey addressed to students was structured into a logical succession over 5 fields, had 44 questions, to which corresponded 55 items. (Annex III.1)

The survey addressed to teachers was structured in 6 parts, had 41 questions, to which corresponded 148 items. (Annex III.2)

The survey addressed to employers was structured by 5 parts, contained 17 questions to which correspond 83 items. (Annex III.3)

Among **students,** field operators applied the survey directly to those registered for *full-time study (FTS) bachelor programs,* at the level of all study programs existing into the university.

The respondent students have been chosen by each field operator, so as to meet the following structure related conditions:

**I. For three years study programs:**

a. 10% of the respondents in the first year of study
b. 35% in the second year of study
c. 55% in the third year of study

**II. For four years study programs:**

a. 10% of the respondents in the first year of study
b. 20% in the second year of study
c. 30% in the third year of study

d. 40% in the fourth year of study

**III. For six years study programs:**

a. 5% of the respondents in the first year of study
b. 10% from the second year of study
c. 15 % from the third year of study
d. 20% from the fourth year of study
e. 25 % from the fifth year of study
f. 25% from the sixth year of study

**Respondent teachers** were selected by each field operator, according to their didactic degree, so as to meet the following structure related conditions:

a. 25% of the respondents to be research assistants
b. 25% of the respondents to be lecturers
c. 25 % of the respondents to be associate professors
d. 25 % of the respondents to be professors

**Selection of employers.** Based on *The Sampling Plan QUALITAS*, the operator used their own data base of employers and/or asked the universities the contact data of employers/partners.

**Processing of database of students:** Following the verification of the data base and sample representativeness, we reached the conclusion that its distribution upon student financing method (budgeted, tuition) differs significantly in the total student population, from statistical viewpoint. This inconsistency might have led to getting inappropriate estimators and, upon the recommendations of the Database Validation Commission, we carried out a sample rectification through the post-layering method. Upon calculating the rectification coefficients, the real percentages of budgeted-tuition students within the public universities were taken into account.

## 3.2 Quantity and quality related study on students perception

### *3.2.1 Demographic aspects of the responding students*

Knowing the perception of students, subjects of the educational process concerning the quality of the higher education system in Romania is the key to develop the quality assurance policies within the system. A deep understanding implies a complex statistical analysis of the students' perceptions regarding the defining aspects of the teaching-learning-evaluation process, their professional perspectives upon graduation and the ways they can contribute to increasing the quality of Romanian higher education system.

The object of the research is represented by student population registered to bachelor study programs, full-time study, within state and private higher education institutions in Romania.

Within the study, there have been observed the following representativeness conditions:

- ✓ *The sample used ensures the representativeness for the population studied (population included in the Romanian higher education system, registered for bachelor programs full-time study, aged 18 and over); with a tolerated data error of ± 2,5 % for a reliability level of 95%;*
- ✓ *The sampling was made upon ratios so as to comply with the socio-demographic structure in Romania, based on the last NIS data;*
- ✓ *Layering criteria used in developing the sample were: development region, state and private university environment, study year and bachelor programs;*
- ✓ *Probabilistic selection in the final layer.*

According to the sampling plan settled by the team of experts, the volume of students sample was 1556 individuals registered in the bachelor programs for full-time study, for which we are presenting the following aspects:

- ✓ *They come from the 8 development regions, the sample being structured proportional with the total number of students population in the country. The highest share of 32,9% is registered in the Bucharest area Ilfov, followed by the North-West region with 17,2% (*Annex III.8*);*
- ✓ *From the ownership viewpoint of the education institution where they study, 86,7% of respondents come from state HEIs, and the rest of 13,3% - from private HEIs (*Annex III.9*);*
- ✓ *The respondents come from 19 university centres (*Annex III.10*);*
- ✓ *Distribution of students upon HEIs is featured* Annex III.11;
- ✓ *From the gender viewpoint, the sample contains 46% male subjects and 54% female subjects;*
- ✓ *87% are aged between 19-25, followed by the 26-30 years old group with a ratio of 5%;*
- ✓ *As it was desired the knowledge of the phenomenon as real as possible, the sample contained a high percentage of senior year students. As a result, 43,9% are third year students, 16,1% fourth year and 5% V-VI year students;*

Form the sample analysis, other students characterization elements also resulted:

- ✓ *Education level of parents;*
- ✓ *The place of secondary school graduation;*
- ✓ *Living conditions;*
- ✓ *Study type of financing;*
- ✓ *Faculty admission method;*
- ✓ *Occupational status;*
- ✓ *Consistency between the study field and work place;*
- ✓ *Revenue source and monthly revenue;*
- ✓ *Level of the salary expected upon graduation of university.*

### 3.2.2 Aspects regarding the educational process

In the survey included in the Barometer 2015 (improved comparing to the previous ones), evaluation questions where drafted for assessing the didactic behaviour from the teaching methods viewpoint, feedback to and from other teachers, correctness of student evaluation, as well as aspects related to the infrastructure.

#### 3.2.2.1 Teaching Activity Evaluation

Regarding the **teaching activity**, all the followed aspects got an average grade of over 7 (*Table III.2*). In 2015, compared to 2011, for the first 3 dimensions, in both barometers, improvements were found on two dimensions: „*Teachers explain the subject delivered so as we can understand"* and „*Teachers know how to make the subject interesting".* In both cases, the positive differences registered in 2015 compared to 2011 are statistically significant, with a probability of over 99%.

***Table III. 2.*** *Evaluation of the teaching activity*

| Evaluated dimensions | Average grade | |
|---|---|---|
| | Barometer 2015 | Barometer 2011 |
| Teachers explain the subject delivered so as we can understand | 7,69 | 7,5 |
| Teachers know how to make the subject interesting | 7,16 | 6,9 |
| Courses are stimulating from the intellectual viewpoint | 7,41 | 7,3 |
| Teachers use multimedia channels to send the informational content (Power Point presentations, movies etc.) | 7,99 | |
| Teachers teach by permanently connecting the teaching content and practical reality (where appropriate) | 7,41 | |
| Study material provided/presented by teachers are of quality and updated | 7,63 | |
| I am satisfied with the level of competencies gained during the study program I attend to | 7,69 | |
| Students are stimulated to develop research subjects/projects | 7,42 | |

An important aspect worth mentioning is the fact that private universities students gave higher grades for all evaluated aspects (differences are statistically significant with a probability of 99.99%). The average disparity is of 1.5 points on average in the favour of private universities. (Table III.2)

*Table III. 3. Evaluation of the teaching activity upon ownership type*

| Evaluated dimensions/Ownership type | State | | | Private |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | total | budget | tuition | |
| Teachers explain the subject delivered so as we can understand | 7,48 | 7,43 | 7,58 | 8,98 |
| Teachers know how to make the subject interesting | 6,93 | 6,90 | 6,99 | 8,60 |
| Courses are stimulating from the intellectual viewpoint | 7,19 | 7,15 | 7,27 | 8,78 |
| Teachers use multimedia channels to send the informational content (Power Point presentations, movies etc.) | 7,88 | 7,85 | 7,93 | 8,65 |
| Teachers teach by permanently connecting the teaching content and practical reality (where appropriate) | 7,19 | 7,14 | 7,27 | 8,74 |
| Study material provided/presented by teachers are of quality and updated | 7,43 | 7,41 | 7,45 | 8,92 |
| I am satisfied with the level of competencies gained during the study program I attend to | 7,48 | 7,50 | 7,46 | 8,96 |
| Students are stimulated to develop research subjects/projects | 7,21 | 7,27 | 7,12 | 8,69 |

In public universities, the way students evaluate the teaching activity for all examined dimensions is not significantly different statistically from those who take up a budgeted place and those who pay tuition (*Table III.3*).

Analyzing the correlation between teaching and learning items evaluated by the students (*Matrix III.1*), it can be concluded that the connections are direct, generally of mild to strong intensity (coefficients were statistically significant for α = 0.01). This shows that those who appreciate a dimension of the teaching process also appreciate to the same effect and closely, other dimensions too.

*Matrix III. 1 Correlation coefficients of the "teaching" dimension*

| Item | | Q23 | Q24 | Q25 | Q26 | S1 | S2 | S3 | S4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q23 | Teachers explain the subject delivered so as we can understand | 1 | | | | | | | |
| Q24 | Teachers know how to make the subject interesting | *,765* | 1 | | | | | | |
| Q25 | Courses are stimulating from the intellectual viewpoint | *,731* | *,751* | 1 | | | | | |
| Q26 | Teachers use multimedia channels to send the informational content (Power Point presentations, movies etc.) | ,509 | ,553 | ,548 | 1 | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S1 | Teachers teach by permanently connecting the teaching content and practical reality (where appropriate) | *,714* | ,694 | ,659 | ,529 | 1 | | | |
| S2 | Study material provided/presented by teachers are of quality and updated | ,678 | ,666 | ,666 | ,552 | *,740* | | | |
| S3 | I am satisfied with the level of competencies gained during the study program I attend to | ,686 | ,673 | ,669 | ,560 | *,748* | *,741* | 1 | |
| 4 | Students are stimulated to develop research subjects/projects | ,580 | ,602 | ,599 | ,485 | ,636 | ,618 | ,688 | 1 |
| | Correlation is significant on 0,01 level (bilateral test) | | | | | | | | |

### *3.2.2.2 Evaluation and feedback*

For the grading method and feedback received by students from teachers, the average score of the analysed dimensions is between the ranges [7-8]. Except "The evaluation system used by teachers measures the actual level of knowledge" item, wherefore it is not possible to make a comparison because it was not included in the barometer in 2011, there were improvements for all other dimensions (Table no. 3.3). The increases are statistically significant for a probability of 99.99%.

*Table III. 4. Evaluation of the grading method and feedback*

| Evaluated dimensions | Average grade | |
|---|---|---|
| | Barometer 2015 | Barometer 2011 |
| Grading criteria are clear from the beginning | 8 | 7,7 |
| The evaluation system used by the teachers measures the actual level of knowledge | 7,4 | |
| Examination grades is always correct, without disadvantages towards anyone | 7,53 | 6,9 |
| I always receive feedback for papers/reports I have to draft | 7,38 | 7 |
| The received feedback helps me understand better the studied field | 7,73 | 7,2 |

Including for this aspect, between the perceptions of students from the two university types there is a gap of about 1.5 points, students in public universities proving to be more critical (table III.5).

Budget students from public universities appreciate in a greater measure the feedback they receive from teachers for papers/reports they must draft, compared to

those who occupy a tuition covered position (significant difference for a probability of 99,5%).

*Table III. 5. Evaluation of the grading method and feedback according to the ownership type*

| Evaluated dimensions/Ownership type | Public | | | Private |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | total | budget | tuition | |
| Grading criteria are clear from the beginning | 7,81 | 7,79 | 7,85 | 9,19 |
| The evaluation system used by the teachers measures the actual level of knowledge | 7,17 | 7,15 | 7,21 | 8,82 |
| Examination grades are always correct, without disadvantages towards anyone | 7,31 | 7,24 | 7,42 | 8,92 |
| I always receive feedback for papers/reports I have to do | 7,17 | 7,31 | 6,90 | 8,67 |
| The received feedback helps me understand better the studied field | 7,54 | 7,59 | 7,45 | 8,89 |

For the other analyzed dimensions there were no significant differences.

Regarding the evaluation and feedback, between the analyzed dimensions there are direct connections with moderate to strong intensities. The highest intensity connection (r = 0.804) was recorded for the items "*I always receive feedback for papers/reports I have to draft*" and "*The received feedback helps me understand better the studied field*".

***Matrix III. 2 Coefficients of dimension correlation "assessment and feedback"***

| Item | | S.5 | S.6 | Q.27 | Q.28 | Q.29 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S.5 | Grading criteria are clear from the beginning | 1 | | | | |
| S.6 | The evaluation system used by the teachers measures the actual level of knowledge | ,745 | 1 | | | |
| Q.27 | Examination grades is always correct, without disadvantages towards anyone | ,685 | ,734 | 1 | | |
| Q.28 | I always receive feedback for papers/reports I have to draft | ,574 | ,673 | ,651 | 1 | |
| Q.29 | The received feedback helps me understand better the studied field | ,612 | ,634 | ,643 | ,804 | 1 |
| | Correlation is significant on 0,01 level (bilateral test) | | | | | |

### *3.2.2.3 Academic support*

Academic support given by teachers by their availability and flexibility, but also by the university, in general by offered facilities, is evaluated with grades ranging from 7 to 8 (Table III.6). Highest grades are obtained for the items: "*Teachers are available for consultation within convenient scheduled hours*" and "*Teachers offer me quality advice on decisions related to my career*", which confirms that the main academic

support comes from the teaching staff. For these items, statistically significant increases were also recorded in 2015 compared to the Barometer from 2011 (for a probability of at least 96,5%).

*Table III. 6. Evaluation of the academic support*

| Evaluated items | Average grade | |
|---|---|---|
| | Barometer 2015 | Barometer 2011 |
| Teachers are available for consultation within convenient scheduled hours | 7,91 | 7,6 |
| Teachers offer me quality advice on decisions related to my career | 7,63 | 7,2 |
| The schedule of syllabus, seminars, laboratories etc. is a convenient one | 7,57 | |
| The study program offers a wide range of optional subjects | 7,08 | |
| The administrative staff (secretaries) is helpful and efficient in relation to students | 7,38 | |

Table III.6 features separately, upon ownership type and financing method, the average grades obtained for items defining academic support. Students in state universities are much more critical. Even if grades given by students in private universities are higher, the hierarchy obtained based on the students' evaluation is the same regardless of the ownership type. The lowest grades were obtained for the items: "*The study program offers a wide range of optional subjects*" and "*The administrative personnel (Secretaries) is helpful and efficient in relation to students*." At the same time, there are no statistically significant differences regarding academic support evaluation between budgeted students and those who pay tuition.

*Table III. 7. Evaluation of academic support according to ownership type*

| Evaluated dimensions/Ownership type | State | | | Private |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | total | budget | tuition | |
| Teachers are available for consultation within convenient scheduled hours | 7,71 | 7,76 | 7,63 | 9,13 |
| Teachers offer me quality advice on decisions related to my career | 7,42 | 7,50 | 7,28 | 8,92 |
| The schedule of syllabus, seminars, laboratories etc. is a convenient one | 7,36 | 7,38 | 7,33 | 8,85 |
| The study program offers a wide range of optional subjects | 6,88 | 6,91 | 6,81 | 8,34 |
| The administrative staff (secretaries) is helpful and efficient in relation to students | 7,14 | 7,10 | 7,22 | 8,83 |

Within the "academic support" dimension, the intensity the items are correlated with is moderate or medium. This is because the items measure the contributions of different components (teachers, program, and administrative staff). The strongest intensity is between the two items concerning the role of teachers as academic support (r = 0.769).

***Matrix III. 3*** *Correlation coefficients of "Academic support" dimension*

| Item | | Q.31 | Q.32 | S.7 | S.8 | S.9 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q.31 | Teachers are available for consultation within convenient scheduled hours | 1 | | | | |
| Q.32 | Teachers offer me quality advice on decisions related to my career | 769 | 1 | | | |
| S.7 | The schedule of syllabus, seminars, laboratories etc. is a convenient one | ,555 | ,550 | 1 | | |
| S.8 | The study program offers a wide range of optional subjects | ,503 | ,568 | ,515 | 1 | |
| S.9 | The administrative staff (secretaries) is helpful and efficient in relation to students | ,557 | ,535 | ,513 | ,495 | 1 |
| | *Correlation is significant on 0,01 level (bilateral test)* | | | | | |

### *3.2.2.4 Material base*

The items whereby the material base was evaluated have similar average grades. The only dimension standing out is "*I can currently use the specialized equipment from the laboratories*" as having a significantly lower grade than all others. The dimension evaluated with the maximum grade is "*The library and the services provided are of quality and updated"* (Table III.8).

*Table III. 8. Evaluation of the material base*

| **Evaluated dimensions** | Average grade | |
|---|---|---|
| | Barometer 2015 | Barometer 2011 |
| The library and the services provided are of quality and updated | 7,98 | 7,70 |
| I can access IT resources (within the faculty) whenever I need to | 7,48 | 7,20 |
| I can currently use the specialized equipment from the laboratories | 7,19 | 6,80 |
| The university owns and provides a sufficient number of rooms for seminaries/laboratories | 7,89 | |
| The university owns and provides modern equipment in the teaching process and professional training | 7,48 | |
| The university has a campus and adequate accommodation | 7,45 | |
| The university uses a competitive students notification system | 7,46 | |
| Easy access to online didactic materials is provided | 7,49 | |

Regarding the comparison with the Barometer 2011, an improvement for all items allowing the comparison: "*The library and the provided services are of quality and updated"*, "I can access IT resources (within the faculty) whenever I need" and "I can currently use the specialized equipment from the laboratories" (Table III.9).

*Table III. 9. Evaluation of the materials base according to the ownership type*

| Evaluated dimensions/Ownership type | Public | | | Private |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | total | budget | tuition | |
| The library and the services provided are of quality and updated | 7,81 | 7,74 | 7,95 | 8,99 |
| I can access IT resources (within the faculty) whenever I need to | 7,26 | 7,27 | 7,22 | 8,86 |
| I can currently use the specialized equipment from the laboratories | 7,00 | 6,97 | 7,04 | 8,42 |
| The university owns and provides a sufficient number of rooms for seminaries/laboratories | 7,69 | 7,70 | 7,66 | 9,15 |
| The university owns and provides modern equipment in the teaching process and professional training | 7,26 | 7,14 | 7,47 | 8,86 |
| The university has a campus and adequate accommodation | 7,37 | 7,44 | 7,23 | 8,07 |
| The university uses a competitive students notification system | 7,23 | 7,30 | 7,10 | 8,86 |
| Easy access to online didactic materials is provided | 7,24 | 7,28 | 7,18 | 9,01 |

The evaluation of items related to the material base is more severe for students in public institutions than for students at private universities.

The students in the public system have given the highest grade to the dimension: "The library and services provided are of quality and updated" (the differences are statistically significant), while their colleagues in the private universities gave a higher grade to the item "*The university owns and provides a sufficient number of rooms for seminaries / laboratories*."

Upon the funding method, students enrolled on tuition gave a higher grade than budgeted students to "The University owns and provides modern equipment in the teaching process and professional training" item. The difference is statistically significant for a probability of 98.5%.

Among the items that are used in the analysis of the dimension "*Material base*" there are direct connections of mild to strong intensity. If students can use routinely the specialized equipment from laboratories to a greater extent, then they can access IT resources (within the faculty) whenever they need (r = 0.75). Also, if the university owns and provides a sufficient number of rooms for seminaries/laboratories to a

larger extent, than the university owns modern equipment in the teaching process and professional training (r = 0.74).

***Matrix III. 4 Correlation coefficients of the „Material base dimension"***

| Item | | Q33 | Q34 | I13 | S10 | S11 | S12 | S13 | S14 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q33 | The library and the services provided are of quality and updated | 1 | | | | | | | |
| Q34 | I can access IT resources (within the faculty) whenever I need to | ,66 | 1 | | | | | | |
| I13 | I can currently use the specialized equipment from the laboratories | ,63 | ,75 | 1 | | | | | |
| S10 | The university owns and provides a sufficient number of rooms for seminaries/laboratories | ,56 | ,61 | ,65 | 1 | | | | |
| S11 | The university owns and provides modern equipment in the teaching process and professional training | ,58 | ,62 | ,75 | ,74 | 1 | | | |
| S12 | The university has a campus and adequate accommodation | ,48 | ,52 | ,58 | ,56 | ,57 | 1 | | |
| S13 | The university uses a competitive students notification system | ,60 | ,64 | ,72 | ,65 | ,73 | ,69 | 1 | |
| S14 | Easy access to online didactic materials is provided | ,54 | ,55 | ,61 | ,59 | ,63 | ,56 | ,75 | 1 |
| | Correlation is significant on 0,01 level (bilateral test) | | | | | | | | |

### *3.2.2.5 Global evaluation*

Global evaluation is generally good, the students considering the university they go to trustworthy (an average of 8.3), and the major they follow is one of high social prestige (an average of 8.16). The least appreciated dimension refers to *efficient management/control of university (7.62)*.

*Table III. 10. Global evaluation for the total of universities and ownership type*

| **Evaluated dimensions/Ownership type** | Total | Public | Private |
|---|---|---|---|
| The university is trustworthy | 8,30 | 8,14 | 9,33 |
| The university provides study programs correlated to the socio-economic realities | 7,81 | 7,60 | 9,09 |
| Efficient management/ control can be found in the university | 7,62 | 7,41 | 8,94 |
| The major followed is one of high social prestige | 8,16 | 8,00 | 9,13 |

According to the correlation matrix made up by the university global items evaluation, should the university be considered trustworthy, than the management is also appreciated as being efficient (r=0,771), and the study programs as being correlated to the socio-economic realities (r=0,778). Correlations to item "The major specialization followed is one of high social prestige" are direct, but of low intensity.

***Matrix III. 5** Correlation coefficient of the „Global evaluation" dimension*

| | Item | Q.37b | S.15 | S.16 | Uq.51 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q.37b | The university is trustworthy | 1 | ,778 | ,771 | ,629 |
| S.15 | The University provides study programs correlated to the socio-economic realities | ,778 | 1 | ,783 | ,641 |
| S.16 | Within the university, there is an efficient management/control | ,771 | ,783 | 1 | ,604 |
| Uq.51 | The major specialisation followed is one of high social prestige | ,629 | ,641 | ,604 | 1 |
| | Correlation is significant on 0,01 level (bilateral test) | | | | |

### *3.2.2.6 Universities classification upon the educational process*

Students' perception of the dimensions that are part of the educational process can be used to develop a classification of the universities by using the K-means cluster analysis (Table III.11). Thus we have three groups of universities, each one with its particular characteristics.

**The first group** consists of universities that have achieved scores above 8.5 for all the analysed dimensions. This category includes mainly the private universities and several small size universities.

**The second group** is made up of higher education institutions with an average level of appreciation from students, while **a third group** consists of universities that have obtained lower scores for all dimensions of the educational process.

This classification may seem unusual considering that universities that have entered the third group are institutions with tradition in the higher education system, wherein students were/are admitted based on a difficult exam for admission, and over the years exams have had a high degree of difficulty.

Note that this classification is based on perceptions, which can be subjective. We believe it is possible that high scores given by students from universities in the first group to be over-rated, either due to "*local patriotism*" of those who have an inferiority complex or fear that a lower appreciation level could affect the accreditation of such universities.

*Table III. 11. Classification of the higher education units in the sample*

| Dimensions | Cluster 1 | Cluster 2 | Cluster 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Reliability** | 9.32 | 8.51 | 7.08 |
| **Prestigious specialisation** | 9.12 | 8.06 | 7.49 |
| **Teaching** | 8.73 | 7.66 | 6.59 |
| **Feedback grading** | 8.84 | 7.80 | 6.44 |
| **Academic support** | 8.75 | 7.57 | 6.49 |
| **Material base** | 8.78 | 7.69 | 6.38 |
| | University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Banat Timisoara | Bucharest University of Economic Studies | "Carol Davila" University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Bucharest |
| | University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Cluj-Napoca | National School of Political Science and Public Administration of Bucharest | University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Craiova |
| | "Constantin Brâncoveanu" University of Pitești | University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest | "Grigore T. Popa" University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Iași |
| | "Dimitrie Cantemir" Christian University of Brașov | "Babeș - Bolyai" University of Cluj-Napoca | "Iuliu Hațieganu" University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Cluj-Napoca |
| | "Dimitrie Cantemir" Christian University of Bucharest | „Constantin Brâncuși" University inTârgu Jiu | "Iuliu Hatieganu" University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Cluj-Napoca |
| | Danubius University of Galați | "Dimitrie Cantemir" Christian University in Cluj Napoca | "Alexandru Ioan Cuza" University of Iași |
| | „Vasile Goldiș" West University of Arad | West University of Timișoara | "Ion Mincu" University Architecture and Urbanism of Bucharest |
| | University of Oradea | University of Craiova | University of Bucharest |
| | "Dunărea de Jos" University of Galați | "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu | Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiești |
| | Ecologic University of Bucharest | University Politehnica of Timișoara | "Petru Maior" University of Târgu Mureș |
| | "Eftimie Murgu" University of Reșița | "Ştefan cel Mare" University of Suceava | University Politehnica of Bucharest |
| | Ovidius University of Constanţa | Techical University of Cluj-Napoca | |

| Dimensions | Cluster 1 | Cluster 2 | Cluster 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Romanian-American University | Constructions University | |
| | Valahia University of Târgoviște | Universitatea Tehnică "Gheorghe Asachi" University of Iași | |
| | | Transilvania University of Brașov | |
| | | "Vasile Alecsandri" University of Bacău | |

Perceptions related to the global evaluation of universities reflect an attitude of fidelity towards the affiliation to the university world. Students registered into public universities evaluate them with higher scores, respectively by an average grade of 8.2, and the students into private ones with lower scores, respectively a much lower grade of 6.11. The difference of over 2 points is significant for a probability of 99,99% (Table III.11).

*Table III. 12. Evaluation of public=private universities*

| | Ownership type | |
|---|---|---|
| | public | private |
| **What grade do you give to private universities?** | 6.11 | **8.82** |
| **What grade do you give to public universities?** | **8.20** | 7.76 |

Similarly, students in private universities evaluate by a higher grade their own universities and a lower grade the public ones, the difference being approximately of one point, which demonstrates a higher intransigency of state universities students.

### *3.2.2.7 Pedagogic methods used*

As in the previous barometers, students were asked about the importance attached to memorization and emphasis on applicability in the learning process. The given grades are higher in 2015 for almost all types of activities (the differences are statistically significant for a probability of at least 99,99%). The only exception is the item "Team work, role playing", whose importance has not changed significantly (Table III.13).

*Table III. 13. Perception of the use of pedagogic methods*

| During didactic processes, how frequent are the following activities encouraged? (1 means very little and 10 means very much) | Average | |
|---|---|---|
| | 2011 | 2015 |
| Memorization and reproduction of information | 6,5 | 7,28 |
| Analysis of actual situations | 7,4 | 7,71 |
| Critical assessment of information, arguments and featured | 7,4 | 7,61 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| methods | | |
| Implementation of theories and concepts in practical situations | 7,3 | 7,63 |
| Team work, role playing | 6,9 | 7,03 |

From the hierarchy resulted from the grades given to the importance of these activities it is found that the most popular teaching methods are "Analysis of actual situations", " Critical evaluation of information, arguments and presentation methods" and " Implementation of theories and concepts in practical situations." (Figure III 1).
In both barometers, 2011 and 2015, the importance given to "*Memorization and reproduction of information*" is placed on the third position. As negative aspect, in 2015 students perception reflects that less importance is given to activities such as „*Team work, role playing*". The probability ensuring the significance of differences is of 99,99% for all items.

*Perception of the importance of pedagogic methods*

| | Position 1 | Position 2 | Position 3 | Position 4 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2011** | Analysis of actual situations | | | |
| | Critical evaluation of information, arguments and presentation methods | Team work, role playing | Memorization and reproduction of information | |
| | Implementation of theories and concepts in practical situations | | | |
| **2015** | Analysis of concrete situations | Critical assessment of information, arguments and featured methods | Memorization and reproduction of information | Team work, role playing, |
| | | Implementation of theories and conceptions in practical situations | | |

*Diagram III. 1 Perception of the importance of pedagogic methods*

The Barometer of 2015 introduced a set of questions to evaluate the seriousness the educational process is addressed with, and the moral conduct of the teaching staff. Regardless of the ownership type of the higher education institution, students have the same behaviour towards group absenteeism in courses and seminaries. 28% of students in state universities and 24% of those enrolled in the private ones say that it often or very often happens to skip a class together with a group. Regarding Perception of the attitude of teachers towards the duty to be present in courses, even if it is not a usual practice, in state universities there is a higher frequency of absence from courses of teachers or their replacement by assistants.

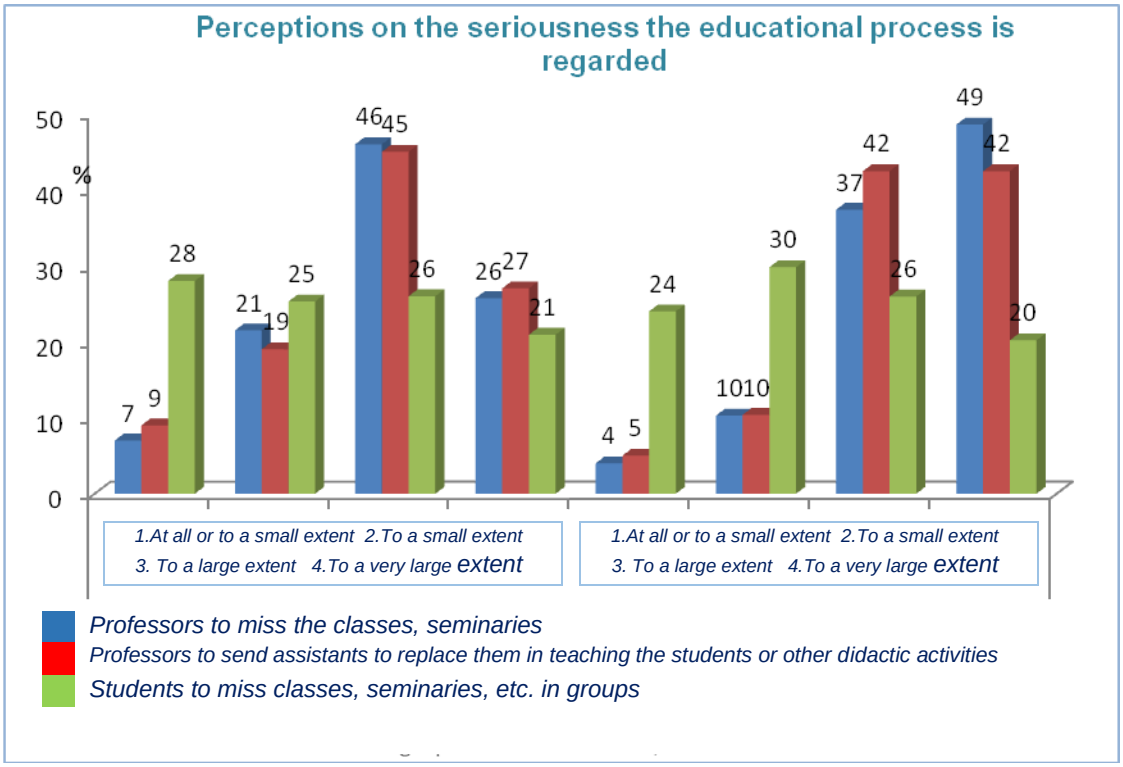



*Figure III. 2 Perception of the seriousness the educational process is regarded*

Asked if it happened that, in exchange for academic privileges, a teacher to request money, material attention or sexual favours, only 4.3% of respondents answered affirmatively. Out of these, 51.1% said the request was related to material attentions, 35.8% - money and only 13.1% sexual favours. Given the small number of students (66 respondents) who experienced such problem, we consider that this is not a real phenomenon, but only in isolated cases for the entire higher education system.

In Barometer 2011, as well as in QBHES 2015, students were asked about their favourite type of course. In 2015 the ratio of those who totally reject the classic approach of the dictation increased from 33% to 43% (the difference is significant for a probability of 99,99%). As far as the courses type the teachers is having a dialogue with students is concerned, this is preferred by almost 90%. (*Diagram III.3*).

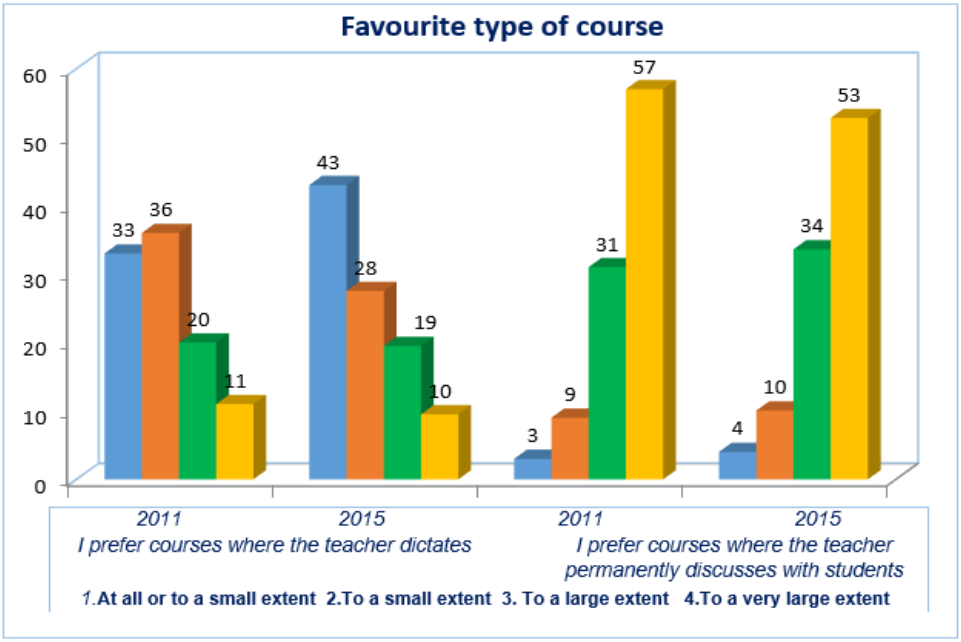



*Diagram III. 3. Favourite type of course*

The learning process also implies individual study. The students were questioned about the resources used in this activity. The extent of using classic libraries, electronic and non-academic resources was targeted at that point. By analyzing the answers featured in *Diagram III.4,* we found that individual study is based, foremost, on materials provided/ recommended by the teaching staff (80%) and on non-academic resources (76%). Classic and electronic libraries are used by approximately 55% of the students.

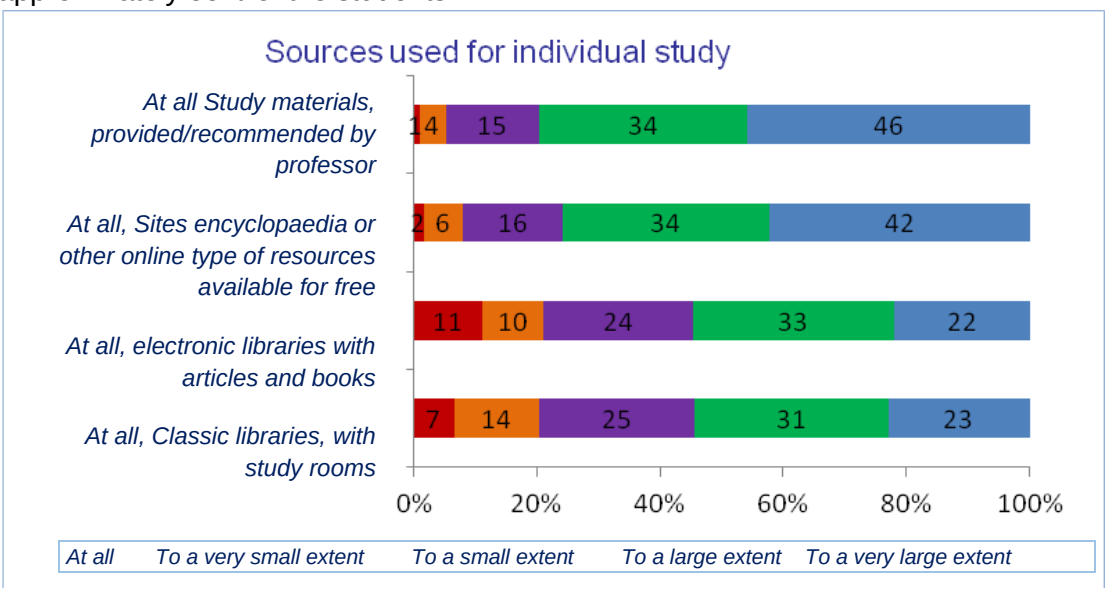



*Diagram III. 4 Sources used for individual study*

Compared to the results in 2011, there are a few changes (*Diagram III.5*) on the non-academic resources used by students in a higher ratio (76% compared to 54% - the difference is statistically significant for a probability of 99.99%).

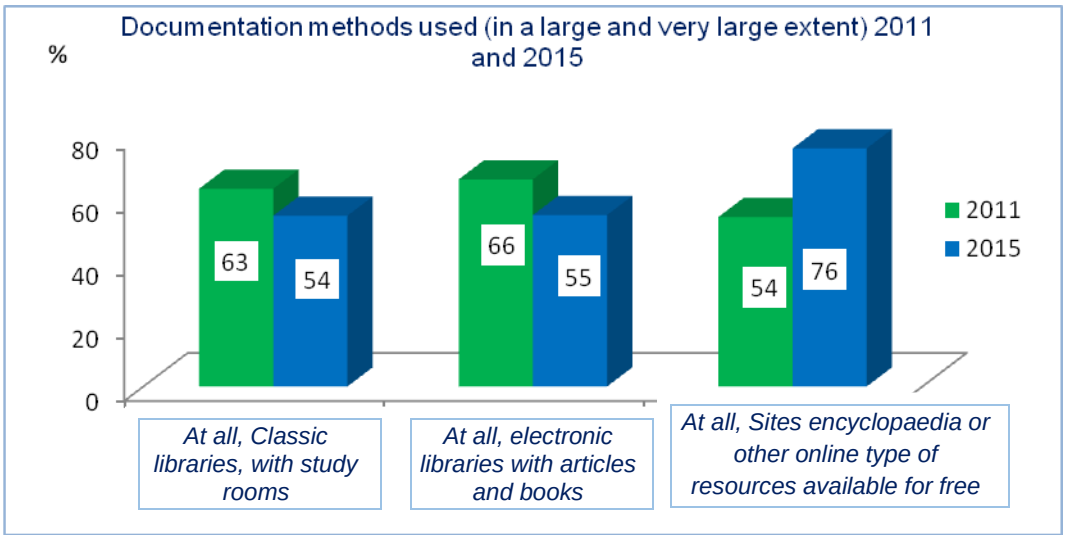
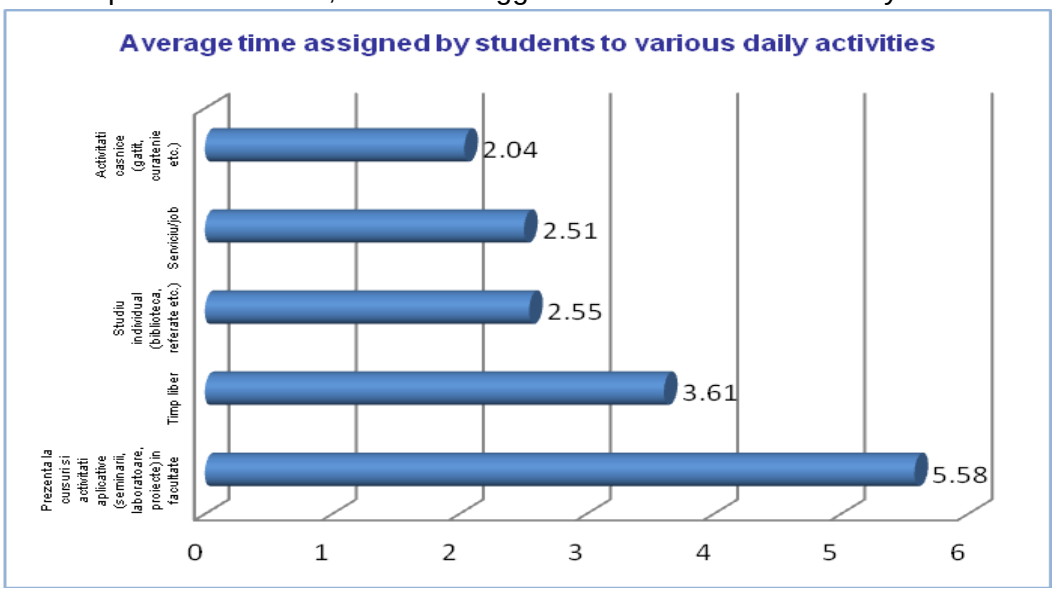



*Diagram III. 5 Documentation methods used 2011 and 2015*

As far as the time dedicated to study is concerned, an average of 5.58 hours/day is assigned to courses and seminaries attendance (*Diagram III.6*). For individual study (library, papers, etc.), the students dedicate an average of 2.55 hours/day. In the West European universities, there is a bigger accent on individual study.




*(Diagram translation)*

1. *Household activities (cooking cleaning etc.),*

2. *Employment/job*
3. *Individual study (library, papers etc.),*
4. *Free time*
5. *Presence in class and practical activities (seminaries, laboratories, projects) in college*

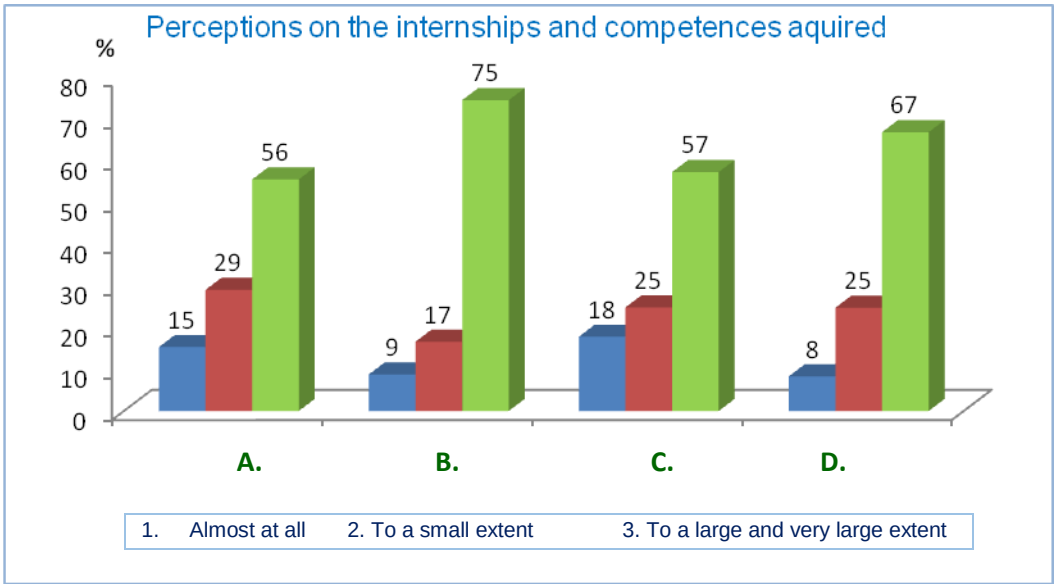
*Diagram III. 6 Average time assigned by students to various daily activities*

### 3.2.3 Abilities and competencies acquired

The internship during the studies has a significant contribution in acquiring competencies and abilities as students have a chance to gain real professional experience, learn directly from professionals, interact with them, attending theoretical and practical training sessions, to observe the working method of some competitive teams, but also the strategies of results orientation activities.

Benefits are not only for students. Employers have also the possibility to recruit valuable youngsters, after meeting and training them during the internships. They are orienting towards those who have proven to be serious, available to learn continuously, as well as the desire to achieve new professional abilities.

75% of the students consider to a large and very large extent that the internship is of a real use for their training. For this reason, the capabilities of the universities to provide a wide range of practical training must be extended and reconfigured, so as to respond to the work labour dynamic and students' option. The current offer of universities on the internships, but also the organization of this activity determined only 56% of the students to appreciate the internships during university.(*D.nr. III.7*).




*(Diagram translation)*

*A. The University offers a wide range of internships*
*B. Internships are a real help for my training.,*

*C. I don't believe there will be difficulties in finding a job upon graduation*
*D. During my studies I acquire the abilities and competencies required for employment*

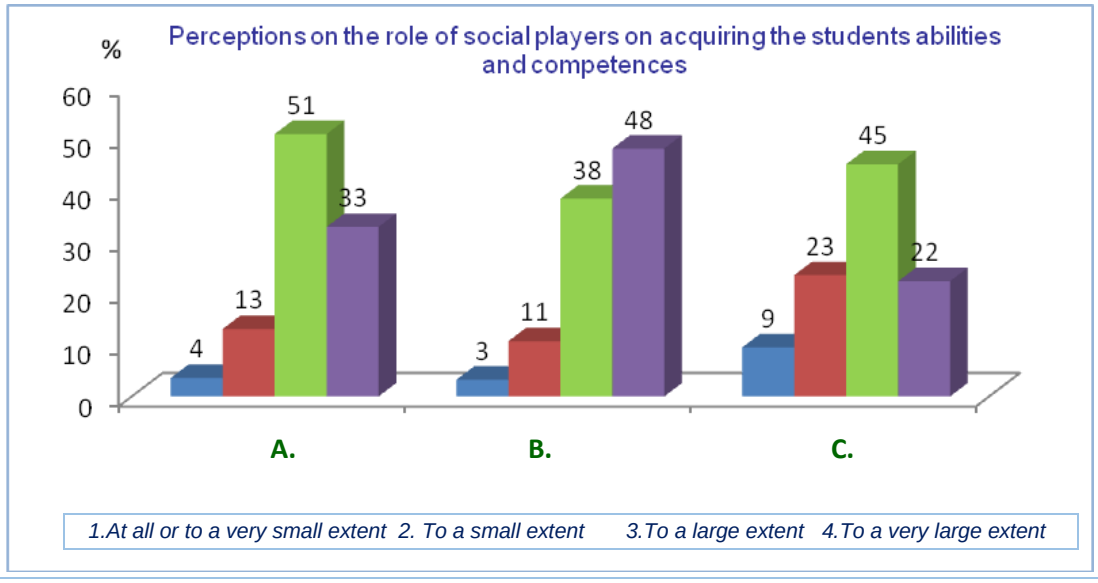
*Diagram III. 7 Perception of internships and competencies acquired*

Students' perception regarding the ability of universities to provide internships is not homogeneous, with differences between developing areas. $X^2$ test (Chi square calculated) shows that, for a probability of 99.99%, there are significant differences between development regions, for both state and private universities. For state institutions, the South (73%), the South West (60%) and Bucharest-Ilfov (55%) regions are in the outmost unfavourable circumstances (over 50% of the students appreciate to a small extent that diversified internships are provided). For private universities, students' perception is better, with only the Central region registering 55%. Interestingly enough, in the South, where state universities are rated the lowest in terms of internships, private universities are best rated (93% are positively evaluating the diversity of internships available to students).

In terms of practical utility of the internship, 84% of students in private universities are considering them helpful in a large and very large extent compared to 72% of the students in state institutions.

In terms of employment upon graduation, 57% of students think they will not encounter any problems. 55% of those enrolled in state universities think this and those from private institutions are more optimistic (70%).

67% of students appreciate the skills and competencies acquired during college. They believe that the responsibility for acquiring skills and competencies required on the job is theirs and of universities in the same extent (*Diagram III.8*).




*(Diagram translation)*

A. *Universities, because it is their duty to prepare graduates for employment*
B. *Graduates, because it is in their interest to find a good job,*
C. *Employers, because each of them has their own requirements and needs*

*Figure III. 8 Perception of the role of the social players on acquiring abilities and competencies by students*

Students were asked to assess, on a scale from 1 to 10, the items concerning the awareness of the importance of education, learning and knowledge. Maximum scores were obtained for the statement "*The more you learn while studying in college, the chances of getting the job you want are higher*" for both forms of ownership of the higher education institutions. By approximately 0.5 points less was obtained for the statement "*Upon employment it always matters what you know and not relationships*." The answers reveal seriousness, attitude and an accurate perception. Young people are motivated to acquire knowledge to achieve a job that suits their desires. The lowest score was obtained by the statement "*Those who achieve good grades in college succeed in life*".

*Tabel III. 14 Perception of importance of learning*

| Statements | Average grade on ownership | |
|---|---|---|
| | state | Private |
| *The more you learn while studying in college, the chances of getting the job you want are higher* | 7,65 | 8,39 |
| *Those who achieve good grades in college succeed in life* | 6,27 | 6,69 |
| *Upon employment it always matters what you know and not relationships* | 7,07 | 7,93 |

### *3.2.3.1 Aspects concerning personal development*

Regardless of the ownership of the higher education institutions, students appreciate the educational offer and consider that the university studies are providing better chances to find employment. In what concerns the comparison with education institutions in western Europe, those in the private institutions consider, to a higher extent, that the Romanian education system is as good as the West-European one (*Diagram III.9*).

The quality of the educational offer results from the skills and competencies required on the job that this can generate. To justify this hypothesis, one of the questions in the questionnaire for students referred to this aspect. Students indicated on a scale of 5 points (from 1 = "very little" to 5 = "very much"), **to what extent does college form the following skills and competencies**: *the ability to convincingly argue a point of view, the ability to draw up a written argument in a concise and focused manner, analytical thinking, critical thinking, creativity, the ability to use the computer / modern*

*technology, the ability to write and speak in a foreign language, the ability to work in a team, the ability to lead a team, the ability to organize effectively, positive attitude towards work and entrepreneurship*.

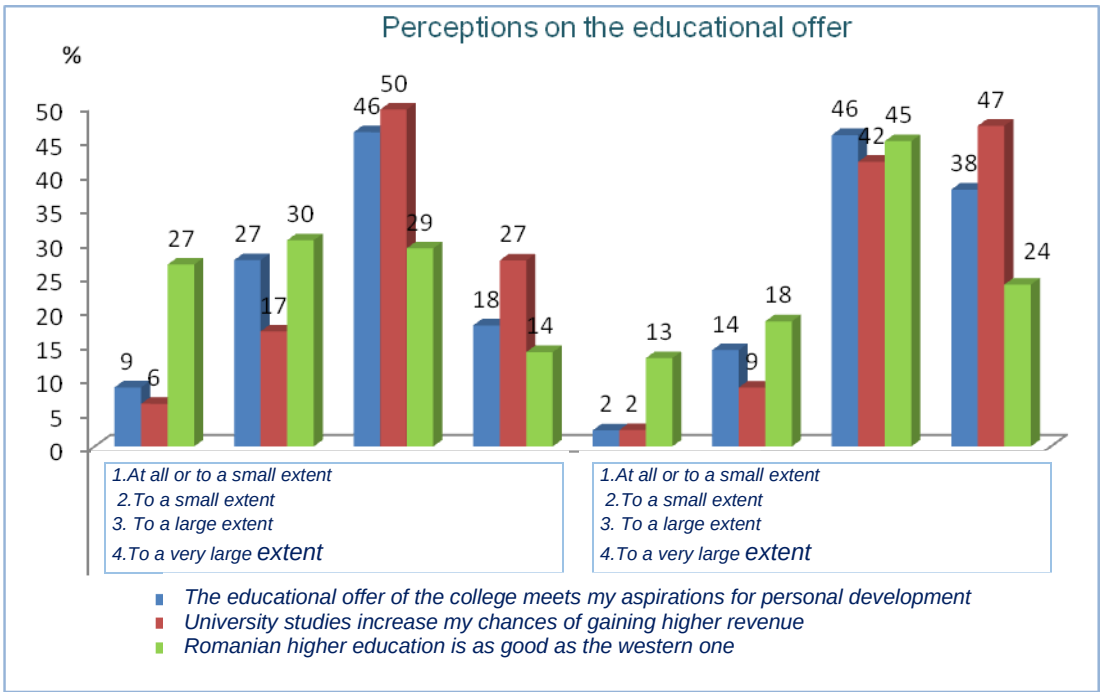



*Diagram III. 9 Perception on the educational offer*

The database showed that students in state universities are generally more demanding, the average scores ranging between 3.54 and 3.96. In private universities, the minimum score is 3.93 and the maximum 4.28. By applying the *Student* test for pair comments within each sub-sample constituted upon ownership, we obtained the hierarchy shown in Table III.14. For state universities, according to statistically significant differences between average scores obtained, there were formed 4 groups, and in case of private universities, 3 groups.

For both groups we observed that "entrepreneurship" and "the ability to write and speak in a foreign language" are on the last position in the hierarchy. In the case of private universities, even the ability to use the computer and modern technology ranks last in the hierarchy.

Neither "creativity" nor "ability to lead a team" are stimulated enough. For state universities, the "analytical thinking" and "critical thinking" are distinguished as the main skills and competencies acquired.

*Table no. 3.14. Hierarchy of acquired abilities and competencies in public and private universities*

| Items/ownership | public | | private | Items/ownership |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Analytical thinking | 3.96 | | 4.28 | Analytical thinking |
| Critical thinking | 3.89 | | 4.25 | The ability to write a concise and pointed argument |
| The ability to efficiently organize oneself | 3.87 | | 4.23 | The ability to convincingly argument a point of view |
| The ability to work in a team | 3.84 | | 4.22 | The ability to efficiently organize myself |
| The ability to convincingly argument a point of view | 3.82 | | 4.22 | Positive attitude towards work |
| The ability to edit in writing a concise and pointed argument | 3.82 | | 4.21 | The ability to work in a team |
| Positive attitude towards work | 3.82 | | 4.14 | Creativity |
| The ability to use the computer / modern technology | 3.81 | | 4.14 | Criticism |
| Creativity | 3.77 | | 4.12 | The ability to lead a team |
| Team leadership | 3.71 | | 4.02 | The ability to use the computer/modern technology |
| Entrepreneurship | 3.56 | | 4.02 | Entrepreneurship |
| The ability to write and speak in a foreign language | 3.54 | | 3.93 | The ability to write and speak in a foreign language |

Another area developing competencies and abilities among the most complex ones is represented by internal and international students' mobility, considered by most students (89%) useful and very useful. It is distinguished the North-East region (*Diagram III.10*) with a slightly lower percentage of those appreciating the opportunity to benefit from such mobilities.

**Perception of the utility of students' mobility according to development regions**

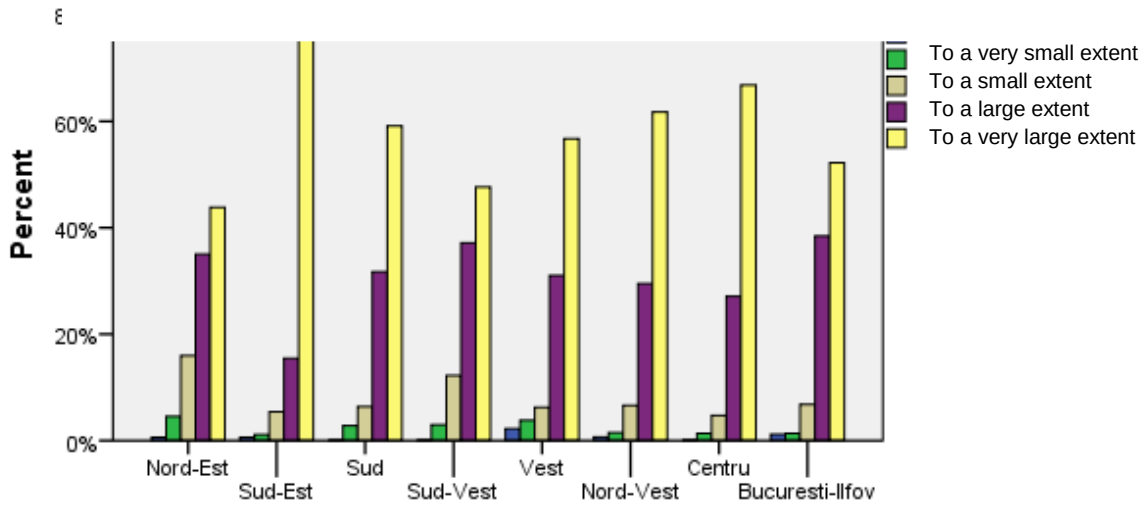



*Diagram III. 10 Perception of the utility of students' mobility according to development regions*

With all the favourable appreciation concerning mobility, only 15.5% of the students had the opportunity to benefit from mobility stages, and the main type was the Erasmus scholarship.

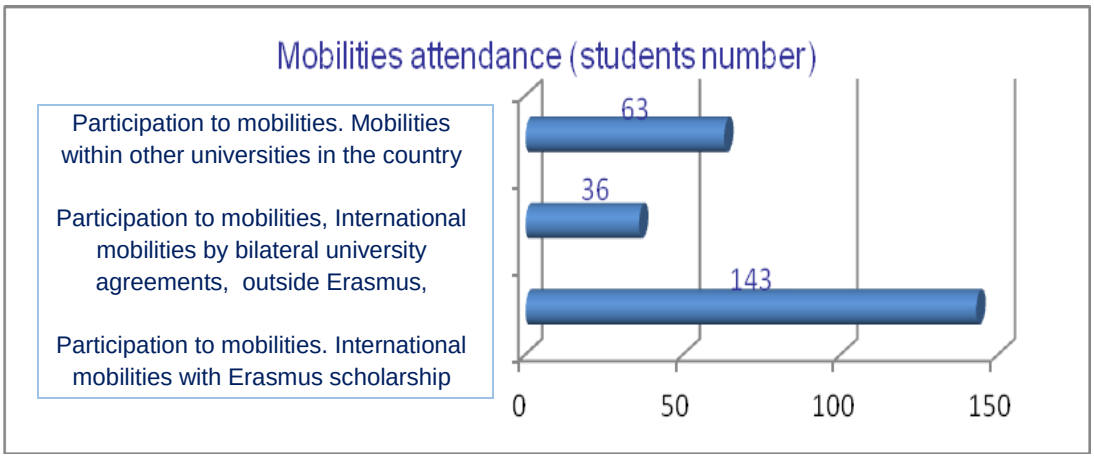



*Diagram III. 11 Participation to mobilities*

### *3.2.3.2 Professional path upon graduation*

In this sub-chapter the analysis is focused on the way students imagine their professional trajectory and the extent they want to move forward with the university education.

Most students (78%) intend to continue their studies by attending a master program (64% in the country and 14% at masters abroad). In what concerns the Ph.D., 37% of the students state that they intend to continue their studies at this level. (*Diagram III.12).*

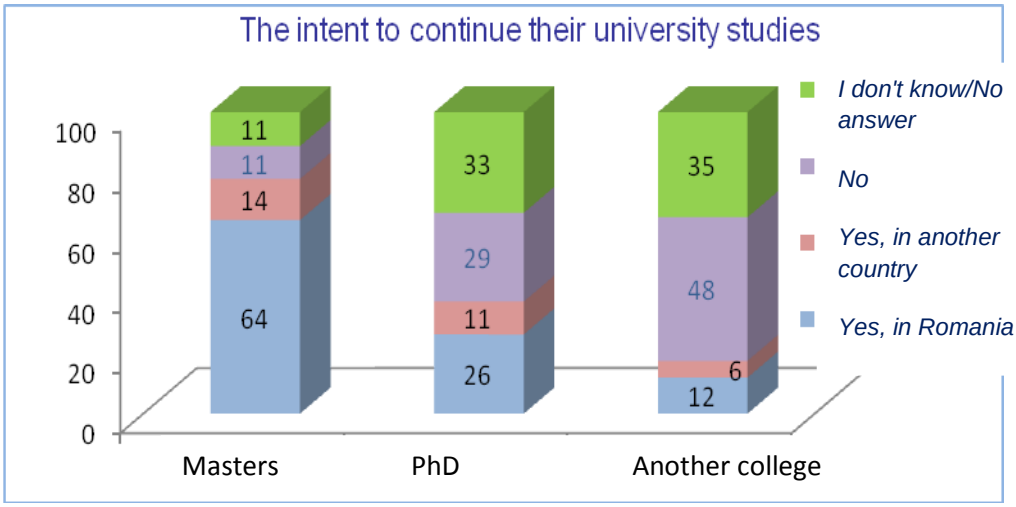



*Diagram III. 12 Intention to continue academic studies*

In this part of the questionnaire was followed the intention of students to emigrate, known being the desire of young people to grow professionally and personally. 66% of respondents declare their wish to practice in Romania, which means a large percentage of future graduates who do not intend to leave the country (*Diagram III.13*). This intention is not influenced by the ownership of the higher education institution.

Since the question allowed multiple answers, even the 66% who said they have a plan, in a large or very large extent, to work in Romania, do not exclude the other possibilities also. 24% consider that they could also practice abroad, and 40% intend to carry out an internship of study / research or to work in order to gain experience in another country.

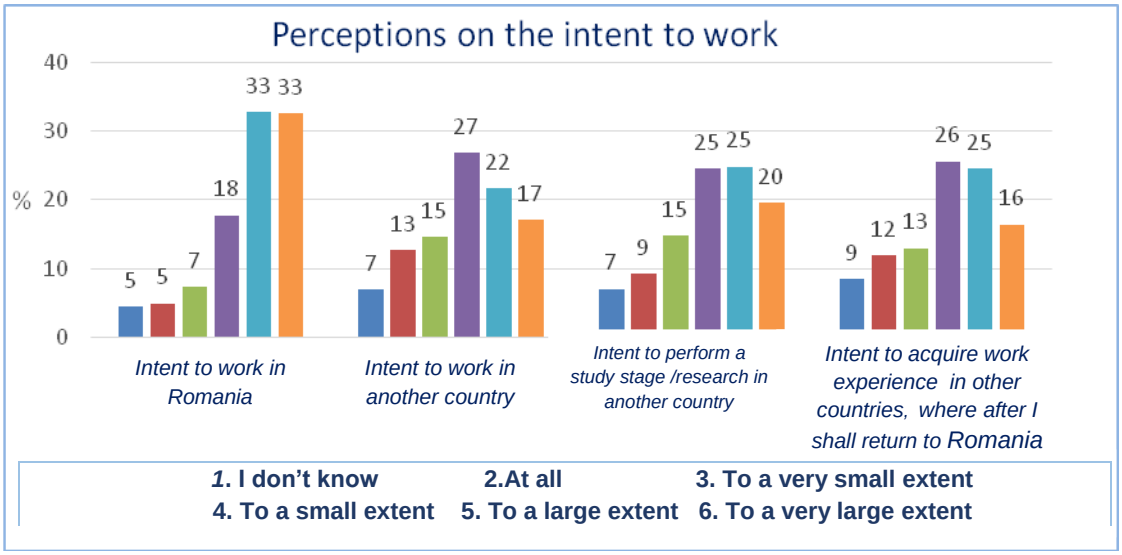



*Diagram III. 13* ***Perception on the intent to work***

Concerning the consistency between the study options and professional future, most students (72%) consider building a career based on the major they are attending in college. A good part of them (60% of the 72%) does not exclude also the possibility to work in a similar field. (*Diagram* III.14).

**Perception on the intent to work**

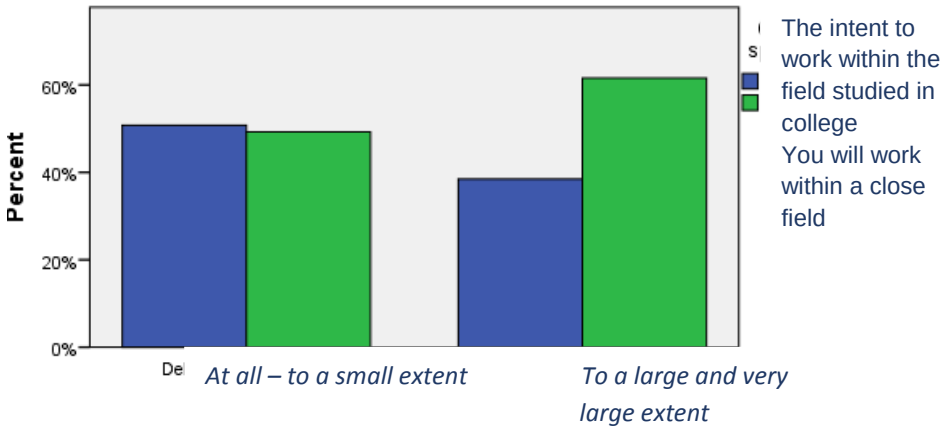



*Diagram III. 14 Perception on the intent to work*

### *3.2.4 Quality assurance of higher education*

*Evaluation of courses and seminaries by students* is an important tool whereupon the teaching staff could modify their structure and content. Nonetheless, students' involvement into the evaluation process decreased, in the state as well as private universities.

If in 2011 almost 50% of them declared that they participated in the evaluation of all courses and seminaries, in 2015 this percentage halved. Thus, if in 2011 47% of the students in private universities stated that they participated in the evaluation of all learning activities, in 2015 only participated 38% (*Diagram III.15).*

We consider this situation to be alarming as we cannot speak of higher education quality assurance without a permanent feedback from students.

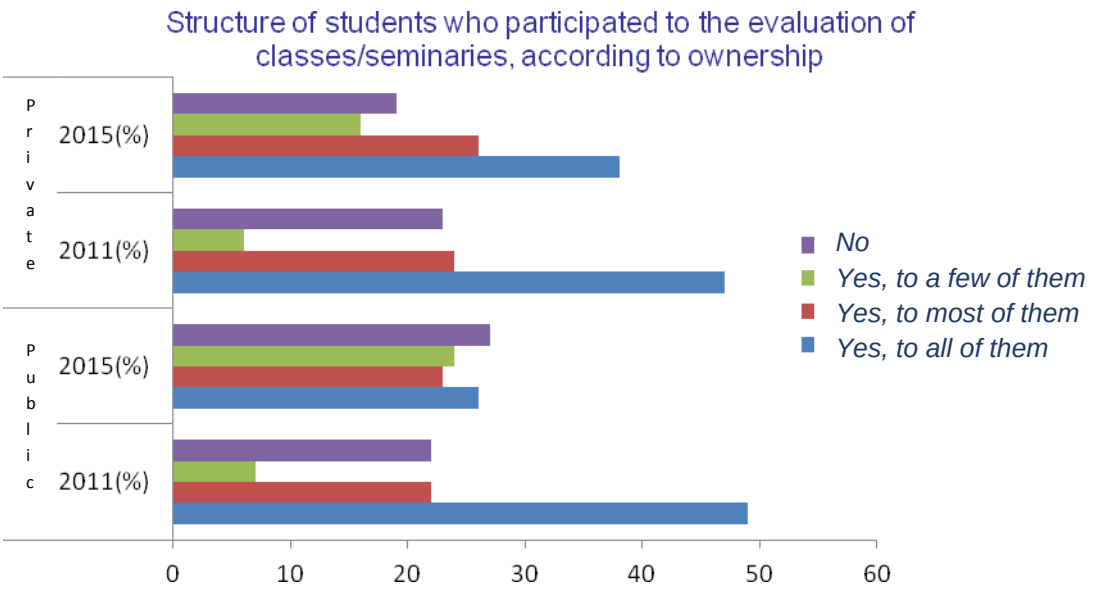



*Diagram III. 15 Structure of students who participated to the evaluation of courses/seminaries, according to ownership*

The evaluation methodology of the teaching staff implies, besides providing anonymity to the evaluator student, providing also process transparency. If the situation is not very good in what concerns the transparency of the evaluation process, such aspects are not perceived positively (*Diagram III.15.).* 47%, so almost half students in state universities and 29% of those in private higher education institutions are not notified regarding the evaluation result, not even partially.

Only 31% of the students are in a large and very large extent notified regarding the responsibilities of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (*Diagram* III.17). Once more, students statements from private universities lead to the conclusion that they are more informed than those in state institutions (49% compared to 28%).

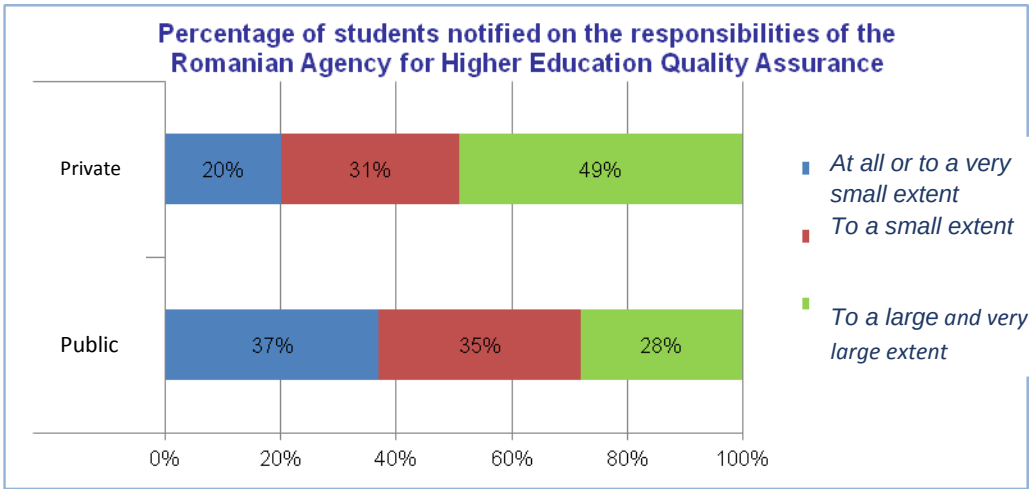



*Diagram III. 16 Percentage of students notified on the* responsibilities of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education

Regarding information sources in choosing college, the data base allowed us to build a classification, by applying the "Student for pair observations" test within each sub-sample formed according to ownership. (Table III.10). For public universities, choosing criteria are clearly limited, with significantly statistical differences for all groups. In private universities, according to the difference between average scores for each criterion, were constituted 4 groups.

*Table III. 15 Hierarchy of the information sources in selecting college for students in state and private universities*

| | public | | private | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Recommendation of somebody who studies/studied there | 4,16 | | 4,35 | Recommendation of somebody who studies/studied there |
| Attended university/ college/major website | 4,01 | | 4,19 | Attended university/ college/major website |
| Family | 3,73 | | 3,73 | Family |
| University/ college/study program printed leaflets | 3,52 | | 3,68 | University/ college/study program printed leaflets |
| Universities hierarchies | 3,49 | | 3,53 | Universities hierarchies |
| Educational fairs | 3,23 | | 3,34 | Educational fairs |
| Public authorities – Ministry of education website | 3,03 | | 3,30 | Public authorities – Ministry of education website |
| Press articles | 3,00 | | 3,16 | Press articles |
| ARACIS website | 2,83 | | 3,11 | ARACIS website |

We can see that regardless of the ownership, the most important notification sources are "*Recommendations of somebody who studied/studies there"* and "*Attended university/college/major website*". The Family has an average role and the official sources such as "*Public authorities – Ministry of education website"* and "*ARACIS website"* have the smallest influence.

### *3.2.5 Qualitative study concerning students perception – interview presentation*

Methodological considerations

There were interviewed 10 students out of 8 public universities and two private ones in Romania, and the sessions were encoded as it shows on the following table:

Table III. 16 Participants profile.

| Student identification code | Institution |
|---|---|
| **Student 1** | SNSPA Bucharest |
| **Student 2** | SNSPA Bucharest |
| **Student 3** | Polytechnic U. Bucharest |
| **Student 4** | Architecture U. Bucharest |
| **Student 5** | U in Craiova (RISE) |
| **Student 6** | U in Oradea |
| **Student 7** | Ecologic U. Bucharest |
| **Student 8** | U in Craiova (Sociology) |
| **Student 9** | U. Transilvania in Brașov |
| **Student 10** | UCDC Bucharest |

Data analysis process was the following:

1. Audio documents have been transcribed;
2. Transcripts were included into the qualitative data analysis program Maxqda version 12;
3. Based on the study categories defined a priori within the research methodology, have been drafted the analysis codes. There were set the following codes and sub-codes, as they appear in table III.17.

*Table III. 17 Codes and sub-codes system*

| Codes | Number of significant content units |
|---|---|
| Teaching-learning-evaluation system (TLE) | 8 |
| Weaknesses of TLE | 10 |
| Strengths of TLE | 8 |
| System improvement suggestions | 3 |

| | |
|---|---|
| Extracurricular activities | 6 |
| Bachelor program utility | 7 |
| Student quality | 8 |
| Teaching staff quality (TS) | 9 |
| TS – students relationship | 4 |
| University-labour market relationship | 7 |

Data have been examined by the descriptive identification and interpretation of content units, by using IT tools of the qualitative data analysis program MAXQDA12, as it appears in image III.1:

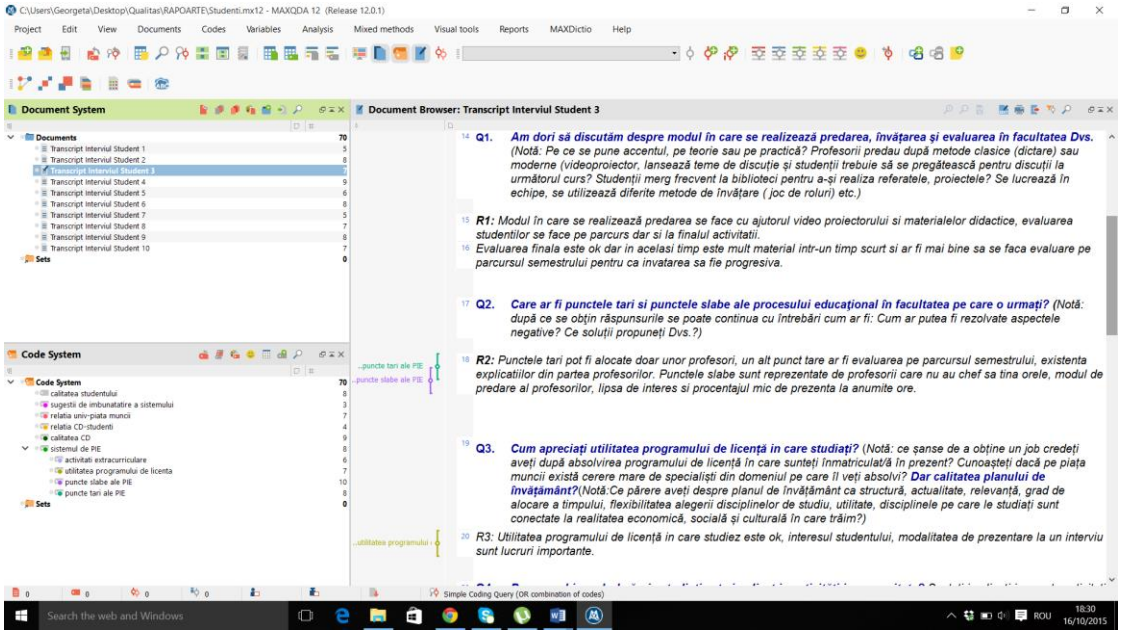


Image III.1: Data analysis by program Maxqda12.

### *3.2.5.1 Teaching-learning-evaluation system*

The first item analysed refers to the definition and characterization by the students of the teaching-learning-evaluation system (TLE).

Participants' perceptions are generally positive and articulate around the relationship between theory and practice related to the teaching process. Students appreciate positively the presence of internships within the curriculum and believe that thus one can achieve a solid partnership between the university and social environment:

> *"Teachers are focusing on the practical side, considering that this will help us on the labour market. The methods used for teaching are modern; we have internet connection which allows on the spot documentation." [T.I. Student 2; Position: 15-15]*

Students also appreciate the use of modern teaching methods, the emphasis on interactions during courses and the use of new technologies.

*"The way teaching is delivered focuses both on the theory and practice, the teaching staff using interactive methods (video projector), launching discussion subjects with students. Positive learning, students are going to library and can contact the teachers." [T.I. Student 4; Position: 15-16;]*

As far as teaching methods are concerned, they are diverse, ranging from traditional ones to modern, which implies the use of virtual campus, debates or team work.

*"The way the teaching is delivered is by loading materials on campus, by helping materials, we are using the video projector during presentations, we have conferences with professionals and ambassadors. Learning is materialized by projects, team work. [T.I. Student 5; Position: 15-16]*

*"The accent is placed 70% on theory and 30% on practice, teachers are teaching according to classic methods and in most cases, only during seminaries there are launched discussion themes with students thus the vast majority leaves pretty enlightened in what concerns the content of the delivered class. One study materials found on the Internet, requested from the library.*

Evaluation by students is an aspect whereupon was insisted during the made interviews. This is an aspect insisted upon during the interviews. It is in agreement with the Bologna directives concerning systematic evaluation, formative and continuous, which is based on theoretic exams as well as on seminary and laboratory tests:

*„Evaluation is done classically, objectively, there are checks performed also during the course of the year, but also during examination sessions. It is a classic process; there are written as well as oral examinations, and projects to make." [T.I. Student 8; Position: 15-16]*

*„Evaluation is performed periodically, the seminary comes with a small evaluation, we have partial, final examination, an essay to present, a paper." [T.I. Student 10; Position: 15-16].*

## Weaknesses of the didactic process

Although they have a positive perception on the didactic act, students identify a series of vulnerable points in the process.

Many of the respondents consider that teachers have exaggerated requirements from the quantity and quality stand point:

*„High demands in a very short period of time. The matter should be compressed in order to be covered." [T.I. Student 2; Position: 17-17]*

*„Weaknesses are represented by teachers who do not feel like teaching, their teaching method, lack of interest and small presence percentage to certain courses." [T.I. Student 3; Position: 18-18]*

Didactic style of teaching staff also appears as a vulnerability factor:

*„Learning focuses on memorization." [T.I. Student 6; Position: 15-15]*

In some situations the endowments of the university are lacking. On the same line there is also the attention received from the administrative personnel and facilities provided by colleges:

*„There is no cafeteria and no gym either" [T.I. Student 4; Position: 19-19]*

*„Administration, secretary offices with no training, overlapping examinations, intolerant teachers." [T.I. Student 7; Position: 18-18]*

**Strengths of the didactic process**

Analysis dimensions of the strengths of the didactic process are almost identical with those mentioned by the previous sub-chapter, where the weaknesses are identified.

Teaching staff and their professionalism are appreciated:

*"Strengths can be assigned only to some teachers, existence of explanations from teachers." [T.I. Student 3; Position: 18-18]*

*„Strengths are represented by dedicated teaching staff, young teachers close to students, the interactive relating way, the support offered, but also the library". Teachers are involved, they are helpful, the matter is accessible." [T.I. Student 5; Position: 18-18]*

Practical activities are performed in technically appropriately endowed laboratories representing a benchmark for students and a way to adjust to labour market realities:

*„Companies we are working with and which have created endowed laboratories, the way young teachers teach, construction laboratories for some parts, bigger study scholarships." [T.I. Student 6; Position: 17-17]*

*„The university organizes many conferences, workshops; we have the opportunity to meet renowned architects." [T.I. Student 7; Position: 17-17]*

The development of students' transversal competencies is another forte of the didactic process. The best rated skills are the communication skills, relation, and team work:

*„We learned how to have a discussion, how to encourage the topic we are discussing." [T.I. Student 9; Position: 18-18]*

*"Communication, the relationship we have with the teachers." [T.I. Student 10; Position: 18-18]*

### *3.2.5.2 System improvement suggestions*

To improve the system, students offer three major suggestions, all aligning with the practical dimension of the studies:

On one part, establishing a coherent relationship between theory and practice, capable of providing a connection to the social environment;

*„In order to increase the quality of the higher education system, it would be useful to combine theory with practice, making connections between subjects." [T.I. Student 1; Position: 33-33]*

Second it is suggested a higher focus on practice and return to 4 years study programs.

*„For the quality of the higher education system I am giving grade 8. In order to increase the quality we ought to have a greater orientation towards practice and a 4 year education program." [T.I. Student 2; Position: 34-34]*

Last it is suggested the promotion of a flexible option system for internships, which should contribute to the increase in students' motivation:

*„In order to increase the quality of the higher education system, I suggest that the internships to be free for each to chose, to have delivered to us the information on what we can do going forward, to be guided, discovered."[T.I. Student 9; Position: 35-35]*

Extracurricular activity

Students' professional competencies are acquired within the study programs, as well as outside of them by the involvement in extracurricular activities.

Generally it is noticeable that students are involved in extracurricular activities which complete their academic training. Sources are diverse, and the environments are those promoted by university programs, as well as external.

Conferences and seminaries provided by the higher education institutions are good learning opportunities and professional competencies promotion:

*„Conferences and scientific communication sessions are extracurricular activities. We have the career orientation Centre which deals with multiple extracurricular activities within the university." [T.I. Student 3; Position: 22-22]*

Volunteering and internship activities outside the university represent learning contexts, but also opportunities to integrate on the labour market upon studies completion:

*„I attended volunteering activities, internships at the District 3 City Hall, Pinocchio day centre, European Parliament." T.I. Student 4; Position: 23-23]*

*„We are involved in extracurricular activities; college is facilitating access to them." [T.I. Student 10; Position: 23-23]*

### *3.2.5.3 BA program utility*

Students are interviewed regarding the perception they have in relation to the utility of the BA program. Most of the time this is perceived as being related to the use of subjects or social utility of the academic content:

*"The utility of the BA program I study in is given by the utility of the subjects we are studying, correlated to the labour market, we have knowledge in the field and we are hoping to find a job subsequently"..[T.I. Student 2; Position: 19-19]*

*"The utility of the BA is related to the place of employment. The education plan has been useful, up to date, relevant, the time allocated has been sufficient, flexibility in the selection of subjects. The subjects we studied are connected to the economic, social and cultural reality". [T.I. Student 5; Position: 21-21]*

The utility of the program also depends on choosing the theme for the BA paper and also on the interaction ability between different subjects:

*"The utility of the BA program is given by the selection of the theme for the BA paper and subjects relation. I was able to relate more with some subjects than with others". T.I. Student 4; Position: 21-21]*

### *3.2.5.4 Student quality*

Student performance is seen differently by the participants. Most of them identify characteristics secondary to the didactic activity itself, activism during class, participation, involvement and fulfilment of the student role:

*„A good student has to attend courses, to take notes, to pay attention, to study after courses." [T.I. Student 3; Position: 24-24]*

*„A good or performing student has to be serious, to get involved in activities, attentive and active in class." [T.I. Student 5; Position: 25-25;]*

Other interviewed individuals consider that participating to extracurricular activities and social activism as being associated to a good student:

*„A good student or performing student is active within the faculty, participates to activities and achieves matching results." [T.I. Student 4; Position: 25-25]*

Perseverance, dedication and transversal competencies, as well as the ability to communicate effectively, to adjust to the professional context and to get involved in extracurricular activities, appear as being other clear coordinates of a performing student:

*„A good student is represented by perseverance and dedication." [T.I. Student 1; Position: 23-23]*

*„A good student should know how to organize, to be punctual in any context, responsible towards mistakes, to have linguistic competencies in the field, involvement with extracurricular activities to also know other fields." [T.I. Student 2; Position: 23-23]*

*„A good student is good at learning but also in the day to day life, is involved in activities, workshops, conferences, volunteering, studying." [T.I. Student 6; Position: 24-24].*

### *3.2.5.5 Quality of the teaching staff*

The characteristics of a performing teaching staff are the following:

1. Their professionalism is related to the knowledge owned within the professional field, their availability during courses and outside:

*„The professionalism of a teaching staff is given by the good training, knowledge within the field, to keep up to date with the actuality, to be opened to new opportunities, to be available during courses, to motivate the student." [T.I. Student 2; Position: 25-25]*

*„By the professional training they have, by the intellectual level and dedication towards the students and the teaching profession." [T.I. Student 8; Position: 26-26;]*

2. Communication abilities occur repeatedly in students' perception:

*„A teacher has to come prepared, to communicate with students permanently, to provide them with updated information, to not skip courses, grading must be objective."[T.I. Student 3; Position: 26-26]*

*„A teacher should be sympathetic, to know how to communicate with students, to regulate the aspects affecting the learning process, to help the student when finding oneself in difficulty. We have a mentor for each cycle, whom we address objections, dissatisfactions." [T.I. Student 4; Position: 27-27]*

3. The ability to stimulate students' curiosity and to motivate their learning;

*„A good teacher is the one who attracts you to go to class, who explains ways to apply the theory, to be a good mentor, to counsel.[T.I. Student 6; Position: 26-26]*

4. Correctness and correct students evaluation ability:

*„A correct teacher, who equally delivers the information, who is presenting ones evaluation criteria, who gets involved, who expects the same from us, who is not making differences." [T.I. Student 7; Position: 26-26;]*

Relationship between teaching staff and students received special attention during the interview. Most consider that such reports are positive and productive, are based on open communication and support, respect and collaboration:

*„Relationship between the teaching staff and students is extraordinary, teachers are open minded individuals." [T.I. Student 1; Position: 29-29;]*

*„Relationship between teachers and students is one of collaboration and respect, but there are also exceptions." [T.I. Student 2; Position: 29-29;]*

### *3.2.5.6 University-labour market relation*

The relationship with the labour market is one of the transverse items of students interview, occurring repeatedly and in the content of answers to other questions, such as related to the quality of the system or the utility of the degree program.

In what concerns the direct relation between the university and the labour market, students admit unanimously that practice programs and internships facilitate the connection between the two environments.

*„The faculty is accessing a POSDRU program to offer the practice we need, employment methods during college are part time so we won't miss the courses and to be able to learn.." [T.I. Student 3; Position: 33-33]*

*„Relation between the university and the labour market is very good, the faculty seeks to find the best opportunities to practice the assimilated knowledge, and there is also an ERASMUS program wherein students get to live the experiences of other students." [T.I. Student 4; Position: 33-33]*

*„We have a vice-dean who handles the professional practice which is performed during the third year in university, for 3 months. Companies are offering internships which are paid or not. The faculty provides practical projects in collaboration with other companies." [T.I. Student 6; Position: 32-32;*

## 3.3 Quantitative and qualitative study on the perception of the teaching staff

### *3.3.1 Socio-economic aspects of the responding teaching staff*

The sample is made up of 1454 teachers coming from 160 faculties, wherefore we are presenting the following aspects:

- They are coming from the 8 development regions, being proportionally structured with the total number of teaching staff in HEI[67]. The highest proportion, of 30,9%, is represented by the Bucharest Ilfov area, followed by the North Western area 21,3% and North East -12,7% (Annex III.8);
- From the ownership stand point of HEI wherein they are performing their activity, the respondents come from state HEI – 87,1%, the rest of 12,9% from private HEI (Annex III.9);
- Teaching staff is coming from the same 19 university centres as the responding students (Annex III.10);
- Teaching staff is coming from the same 39 HEI (Annex III.11);
- From the gender stand point, 46% of the sample are males and 54% females;
- The structure, according to the didactic degree, is as it follows: 23,3% - assistants, 24,6% - lecturers, 24,9% - associate professors and 21,9% - professors;
- 72% of the respondents are not in management positions within the university, 18% are in the management,
- From the subjects delivered stand point , 43,3% teach under 3 subjects, and 38% - 4-6 subjects;
- 20% of the teaching staff are performing activities outside the education institution also;
- The structure of the respondents according to monthly revenues is: under 1500 lei -14.9%; 1501-2500 lei - 32%; 2501-3500 lei -14.6 %, the rest having revenues over 3501 lei.

From the analysis of the sample, other elements of characterization of the teaching staff also resulted:

- The knowledge of the bibliometric Hirsch personal index
- Number of articles published in ISI magazines
- PhD coordinator status
- Activities outside the basic norm (projects, administration etc)
- Member of the ARACIS Evaluators Register and the number of evaluated programs.

[67] *In NIS online datbase accessed in February 2015*

### 3.3.2 General aspects of the educational process

Most respondents (70%) consider that the number of very good students is low (below 50%). In addition, 43% of teachers believe that more than 25% of students are very good. The answer to this question reveals some negative aspects of the pre-university education system which diminishes the performance of students. However, a very limited number of teachers (4%) believe that most students, namely 75%, are very good, while 16% consider that between 50-75% of the students are very good.

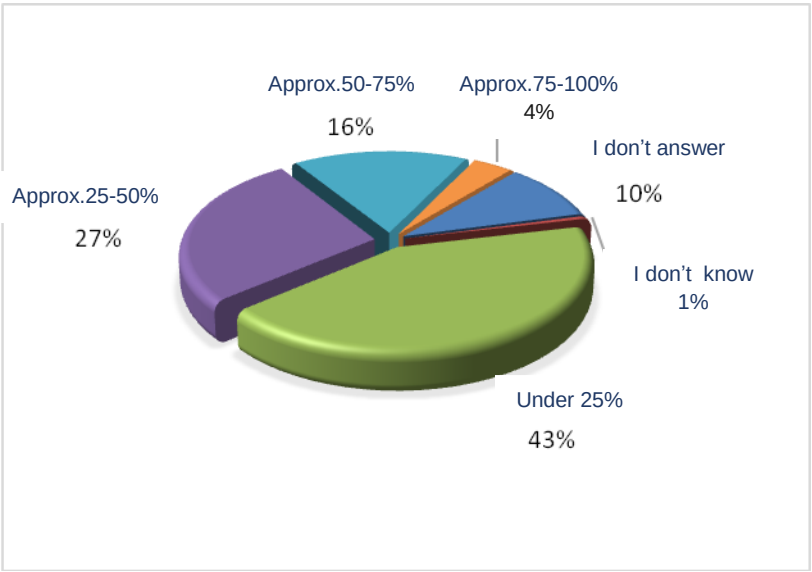


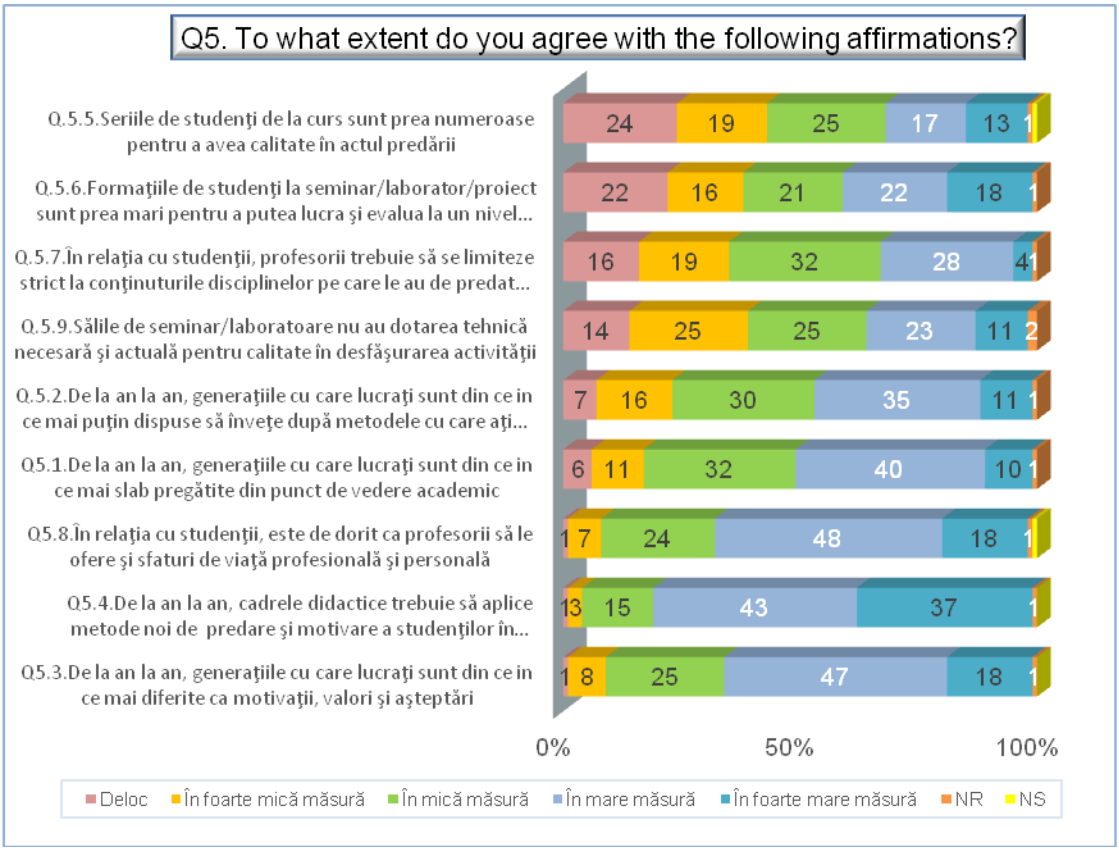

*Diagram III. 17 Q4. When thinking about your students, how many would you say that are very good?*

These teachers come from various universities, from faculties in the fields of medicine/pharmacy, technical (automation / computers/ medical engineering/ transport), constructions, agricultural and veterinary sciences as well within the artistic field. It is noted that these institutions of higher education practice a more rigorous selection of students based on entrance examinations.

#### 3.3.2.1 Teaching/learning process

Regarding the teaching process, 80% of the respondents say that: "*Each year, teachers have to apply new teaching methods and students' motivators in the learning process*", while 65% say that "*Each year, the generations that you work with are increasingly different as motivation, values and expectations are concerned.*" At the same time, teachers recognize that students are dissatisfied with the current series of students in courses and seminaries/laboratories because they are too

numerous to hold quality in the act of teaching - 43% (course), respectively 38% (seminaries).




*(Diagram translation)*

| | |
|---|---|
| *Q5.5* | *Students series in class are too numerous to maintain quality of the teaching act* |
| *Q5.6* | *Students formations in seminaries/laboratories/projects are too large to work and evaluated at a high quality level* |
| *Q5.7* | *In relation to students, teachers have to limit strictly to discipline contents they have to teach the students* |
| *Q5.9* | *Seminaries/laboratories do not have the required technical and updated endowment for quality in activities performance.* |
| *Q5.2.* | *Each year, generations you teach are less inclined to learn according to methods you are used to* |
| *Q5.1.* | *Each year, generations you teach are less prepared from the academic viewpoint* |
| *Q5.8* | *In relation to students, it is desirable that teachers to also offer personal and professional life advice.* |
| *Q5.4* | *Each year, teachers have to apply new teaching methods and students motivators in the learning process* |
| *Q5.3* | *Each year, generations you teach are more different as far as motivations, values and expectations are concerned,* |

***At all or to a very small extent  To a small extent  To a large extent  To a very large extent***

*Diagram III. 18Q5. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?*

From the analysis of the presented indicators, there was a correlation between the item “Each year, generations you teach with are less inclined to learn according to methods you were used to” and the item “Each year, generations you teach are less prepared from the academic viewpoint, correlation which is tighter in case of private universities.

*Matrix III. 6 The analysis of the correlation concerning the evaluation of the teaching/learning process in HEI*

| | Item | Q5.1. | Q5.2. | Q5.3 | Q5.4 | Q5.5 | Q5.6 | Q5.7 | Q5.8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q5.1. | Each year, generations you teach are less prepared from the academic viewpoint | 1,00 | | | | | | | |
| Q5.2. | Each year, generations you teach are less inclined to learn according to methods you are used to | 0,431 | 1,00 | | | | | | |
| Q5.3 | Each year, generations you teach are more different as far as motivations, values and expectations are concerned, | 0,405 | 0,417 | 1,00 | | | | | |
| Q5.4 | Each year, teachers have to apply new teaching methods and students motivators in the learning process | 0,139 | 0,253 | 0,365 | 1,00 | | | | |
| Q5.5 | Students series in class are too numerous to maintain quality of the teaching act | 0,219 | 0,253 | 0,186 | 0,201 | 1,00 | | | |
| Q5.6 | Students formations in seminaries/laboratories/projects are too large to work and evaluated at a high quality level | 0,141 | 0,210 | 0,154 | 0,145 | **0,743** | 1,00 | | |
| Q5.7 | In relation to students, teachers have to limit strictly to discipline contents they have to teach the students | 0,141 | 0,096 | 0,065 | 0,070 | 0,111 | 0,090 | 1,00 | |
| Q5.8 | In relation to students, it is desirable that teachers to also offer personal and professional life advice. | 0,058 | 0,097 | 0,047 | 0,099 | 0,062 | 0,083 | -0,21 | 1,00 |
| Q5.9 | Seminaries/laboratories do not have the required technical and updated endowment for quality in activities performance. | 0,194 | 0,163 | 0,119 | 0,079 | 0,294 | 0,325 | 0,104 | 0,065 |

*Source: QUALITAS data base processing. National sample (N =1454)*

Analyzing in correlation the teaching and learning process items evaluated by the HEI teaching staff, one can find that the intensity of links is very moderate, with correlation coefficient under 0.5, only for items Q5.5 and Q5.6 the intensity is increased by 0.743.

*Matrix III. 7* Descriptive statistics of items Q5

| | Q5.1. | Q5.2. | Q5.3 | Q5.4 | Q5.5 | Q5.6 | Q5.7 | Q5.8 | Q5.1. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Mean** | 3,374 | 3,283 | 3,741 | 4,152 | 2,760 | 3,010 | 2,855 | 3,749 | 2,899 |
| **Median** | 4 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 3 |
| **Maximum** | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 5 |
| **Minimum** | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| **Std. Dev.** | 1.008 | 1.073 | 0.903 | 0.811 | 1.350 | 1.417 | 1.132 | 0.884 | 1.222 |
| **Skewness** | -0.565 | -0.394 | -0.605 | -0.857 | 0.181 | -0.079 | -0.206 | -0.591 | 0.066 |
| **Kurtosis** | 2.961 | 2.554 | 3.183 | 3.770 | 1.871 | 1.711 | 2.116 | 3.181 | 2.022 |
| **Sum** | 4828 | 4695 | 5339 | 5967 | 3913 | 4329 | 4077 | 5368 | 4131 |
| **Sum Sq. Dev.** | 1453.0 | 1644.3 | 1163.6 | 943.6 | 2583.0 | 2886.8 | 1829.0 | 1119.5 | 2125.4 |
| **Observations** | 1431 | 1430 | 1427 | 1437 | 1418 | 1438 | 1428 | 1432 | 1425 |

### *3.3.2.2 Global evaluation*

Form the analysis of data related to the quality of didactic activities, one can notice the positive opinion of the teaching staff regarding the position of the higher education institution where they work in relation to the national university environment. Thus, as it can be seen in Diagram III.20, 57% of the respondents consider that higher education institutions where they are employed are very well placed, respectively they are placed among the 10 HEI in the country.

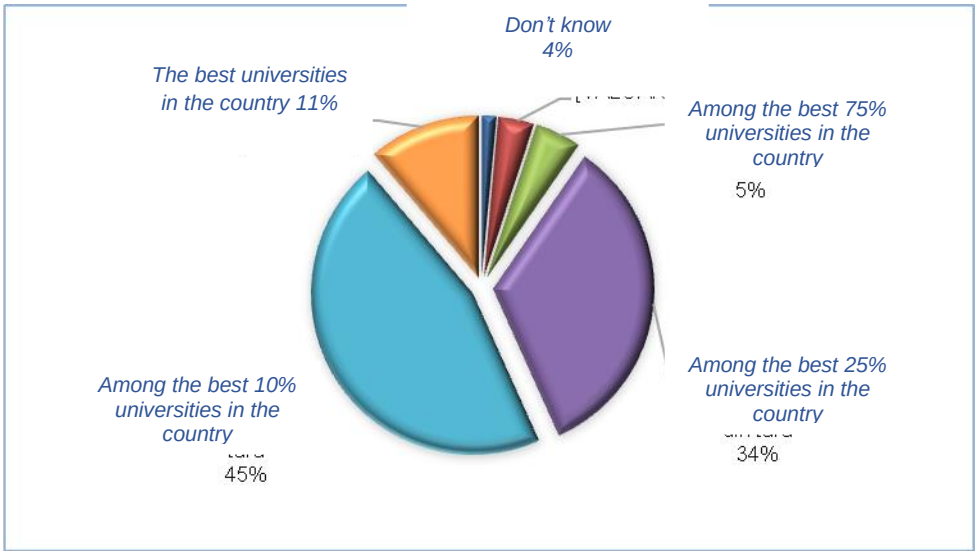



*Diagram III. 19 Evaluation of the quality of didactic activities*

Fathoming the study was found that the representatives of the 38 universities out of the 41 consider that their institutions are among the 10 on national level. Still, the percentage of respondents with a positive vision (position within the 10 HEI) is not in all cases high enough for the expressed opinion to be relevant, as illustrated by Table III.18.

*Table III.18 The percentage of respondents appreciating that their university is placed among the first 10 in the respondents' total %*

| No. | University name | Total respondents – teaching staff | Respondents appreciating that their university is placed within the first 10 | Percentage of respondents appreciating that their university is placed within the first 10 in the respondents total % |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4=3/2*100 |
| 1 | Technical University of Cluj Napoca | 21 | 14 | 66.7 |
| 2 | University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Cluj Napoca | 73 | 56 | 76.7 |
| 3 | „Babeş - Bolyai" University in Cluj Napoca | 92 | 50 | 54.3 |
| 4 | University of Medicine and Pharmacy of „Iuliu Haţieganu" in Cluj Napoca | 43 | 24 | 55.8 |
| 5 | University of Oradea | 58 | 22 | 37.9 |
| 6 | „Transilvania" University of Braşov | 41 | 22 | 53.7 |
| 7 | "Lucian Blaga" University of Sibiu | 36 | 19 | 52.8 |
| 8 | "Petru Maior" University of Târgu Mureş | 29 | 6 | 20.7 |
| 9 | "Vasile Alecsandri" University of Bacău | 30 | 5 | 16.7 |
| 10 | "Gheorghe Asachi" Technical University of Iaşi | 40 | 30 | 75.0 |
| 11 | „Al. I. Cuza" University of Iaşi | 50 | 19 | 38.0 |
| 12 | "Gr. T. Popa" University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Iaşi | 45 | 21 | 46.7 |
| 13 | "Ștefan cel Mare" University of Suceava | 20 | 9 | 45.0 |
| 14 | „Ovidius" University of Constanţa | 35 | 20 | 57.1 |
| 15 | "Dunarea de Jos" University of Galaţi | 31 | 10 | 32.3 |
| 16 | "Danubius" University of Galați | 10 | 4 | 40.0 |
| 17 | Petroleum-Gas University of Ploieşti | 17 | 3 | 17.6 |
| 18 | "Valahia" University in Târgovişte | 15 | 8 | 53.3 |
| 19 | "Constantin Brâncoveanu" University of Pitești | 28 | 11 | 39.3 |
| 20 | University Politehnica of Bucharest | 82 | 75 | 91.5 |
| 21 | Technical University of Civil Engineering of Bucharest | 22 | 16 | 72.7 |
| 22 | "Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urbanism | 25 | 21 | 84.0 |
| 23 | University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Bucharest | 32 | 18 | 56.3 |
| 24 | University of Bucharest | 82 | 51 | 62.2 |
| 25 | "Carol Davila" University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Bucharest | 40 | 21 | 52.5 |
| 26 | Bucharest University of Economic Studies | 48 | 35 | 72.9 |
| 27 | National School of Political Science and Public Administration of Bucharest | 33 | 26 | 78.8 |
| 28 | "Dimitrie Cantemir" Christian University | 32 | 28 | 87.5 |
| 29 | Romanian-American University in Bucharest | 22 | 14 | 63.6 |
| 30 | Ecological University of Bucharest | 32 | 15 | 46.9 |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 31 | University of Craiova | 45 | 30 | 66.7 |
| 32 | University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Craiova | 23 | 16 | 69.6 |
| 33 | “Constantin Brancuşi" University of Târgu Jiu | 8 | | 0.0 |
| 34 | Politehnica University of Timisoara | 37 | 31 | 83.8 |
| 35 | University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Banat Timisoara | 18 | 6 | 33.3 |
| 36 | West University of Timisoara | 38 | 32 | 84.2 |
| 37 | “Victor Babeş" University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Timisoara | 37 | 18 | 48.6 |
| 38 | “Eftimie Murgu" University of Resita | 20 | 6 | 30.0 |
| 39 | “Vasile Goldiş” Western University of Arad | 30 | 13 | 43.3 |

*Source: Data processing from BD QUALITAS*

Although answers are obviously subjective, in case of higher education institutions wherein the percentage of respondents at HEI level is higher than 60%, there are the conditions for great objectivity. Thus, in this case the placement is more realistic, without representing a ranking of HEI.

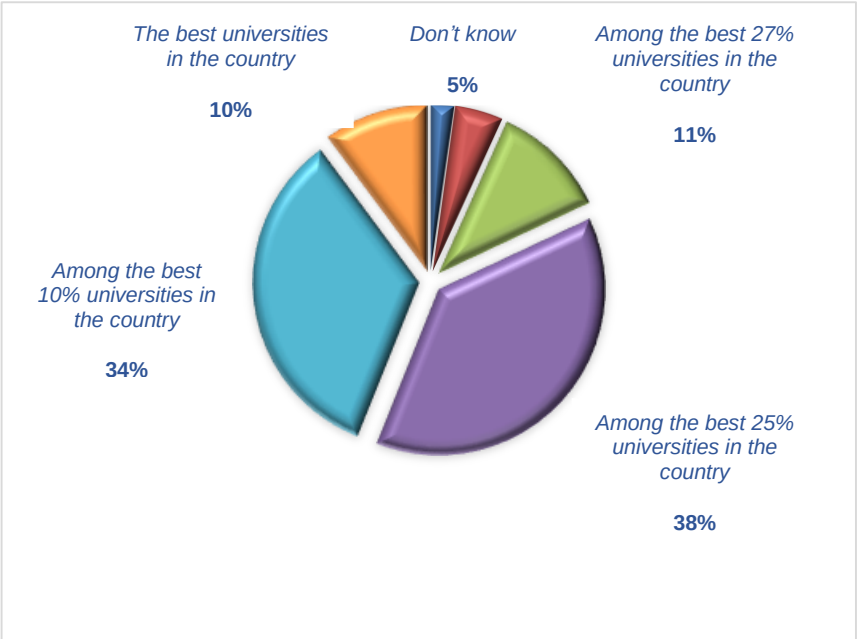



*Diagram III. 20 Evaluation of the quality of the research activities*

Regarding the quality of the research activity, 82% of the respondents believe that the higher education institution wherein they work is placed in the top 25% of national HEI (Diagram III.20). At the same time, both in terms of teaching and in terms of the quality of research, one can see, in some cases, a tendency to overstate the teaching and research activities.

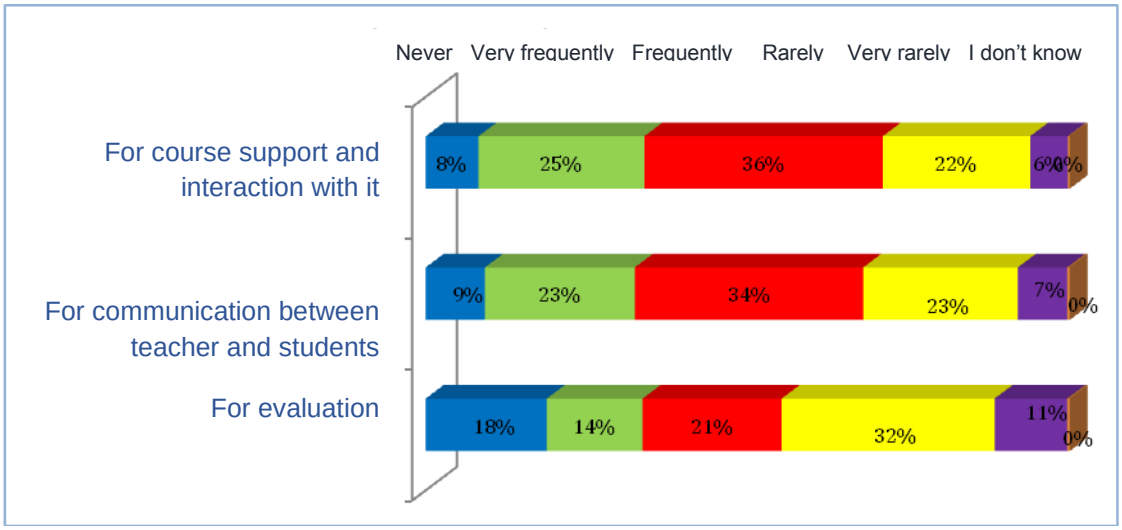



*Diagram III. 21 The use of online platforms*

Another relevant item for the assessment of the education process quality is the use of online tools, to support education as a tool of interaction between teachers and students, as well as a means of evaluation. From the replies to the administered questionnaires, results that the online environment is used mostly for providing ongoing support (61%) and for the interaction between students and teachers (57%), and evaluation is less common (35%). In this respect, the use of online platforms can be intensified, in particular formative assessment.

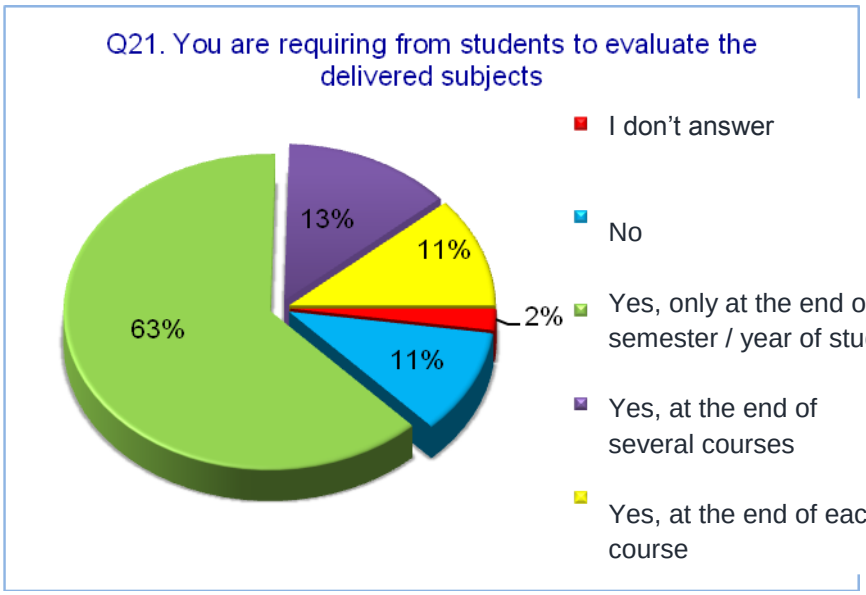



*Figure III. 22 The practice of subject evaluation by students*

From the answers of the teaching staff one can see that the evaluation of delivered subjects is performed 63% at the end of semester/year of study (Diagram III.24). Concurrently, over 85% from the respondents claim that delivered subjects are subject to students evaluation.

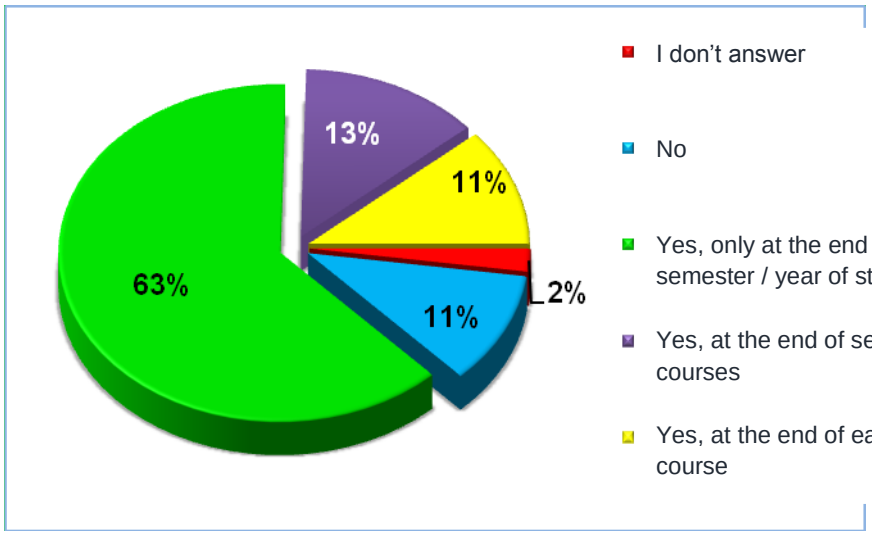



*Diagram III. 23 Practice of course evaluation by students*

An essential aspect of the quality of the teaching process is represented by the way the final beneficiaries perceive the educational service provided by the teacher. To this end, the practice of class evaluation by students is a required and very important stage. From the answers provided, results that the vast majority of teachers (87%) require class evaluation by students. The answers to this question demonstrate that this activity has become permanent upon completion of the class (semester / year), as claimed by 63% of respondents. Only 11% of them say that they use to require from students an evaluation at the end of each class, and 13% stated that they are performing an ongoing evaluation, at the end of several courses.

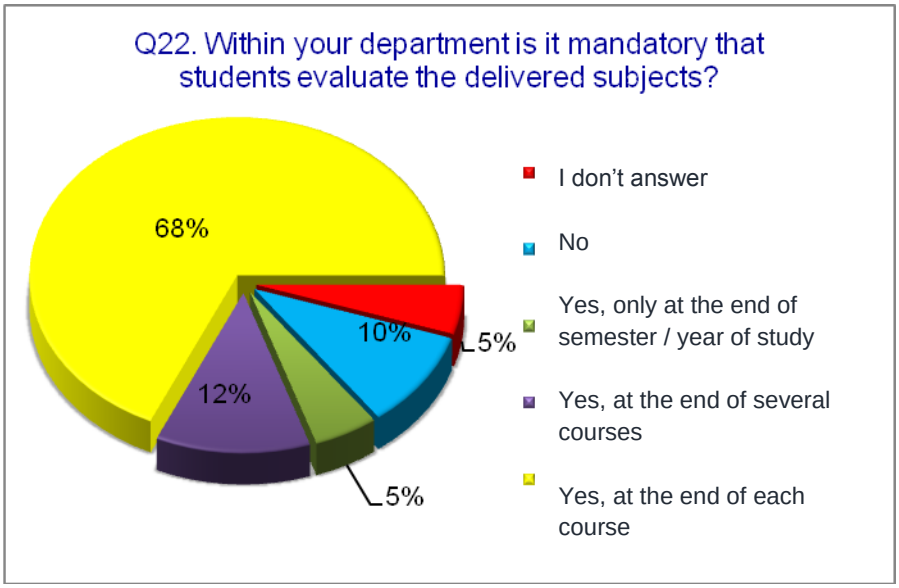



*Diagram III. 24 Incumbency of the subjects' evaluation by students*

In relation to the evaluation of the delivered subjects by the students, it is noticeable that most teachers (68%) say that the procedure is mandatory for all courses on department level they belong to, while 12% claim that the evaluation applies to most disciplines and 5% state that this is practiced only for a few subjects (Diagram III.25). Diametrically opposed there are placed 10% of respondents who claim that, on department level they belong to, the evaluation procedure of courses by students is not mandatory.

By comparing the answers to this question (Q22) and previous (Q21) there is a correlation between the claim of evaluation compulsoriness and its final practice which shows that in most cases this is the mandatory procedure implemented.

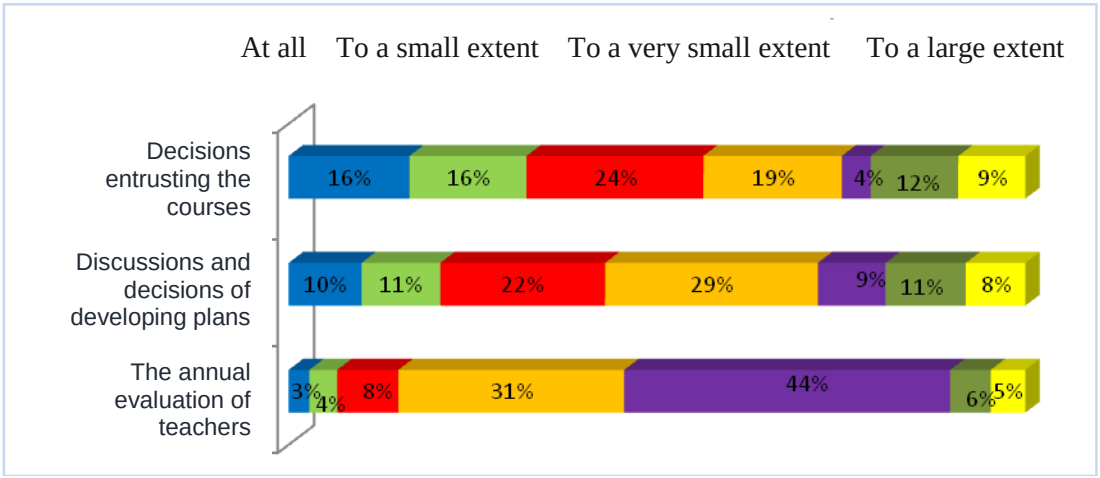



*Diagram III. 25 The scope of class evaluation by students*

A particularly interesting aspect is represented by the way the feedback received from students is developed. As illustrated by *Diagram* III.26, this has great importance and very high importance for the annual evaluation of teachers (75%). Otherwise, 29% of respondents believe that student opinion matters greatly and 9% consider that it is very much important in making decisions in relation to curricula. Instead, related to the attributing courses to teachers, 56% of them consider that students opinion is not taken very much into account, 16% say that is doesn't happen at all, 16% very little and 24% remotely. Only 4% of the respondents believe that students opinion constitutes an important criterion for attributing courses, and 19% believe that this view matters greatly in establishing Lecturers.

### 3.3.3 Employment of students

Perception of teachers on the ability of students to get employed is positive. Thus 61% consider that it is easy for them to get a job (47% to a high degree; 14% greatly). Nevertheless, teachers are less optimistic when referring to employment within the same field they were educated in. In this case, teachers, amounting 50%, appreciate that it is easy for students to get employed within the same field they were educated in (38% - to a high degree; 12% - greatly).

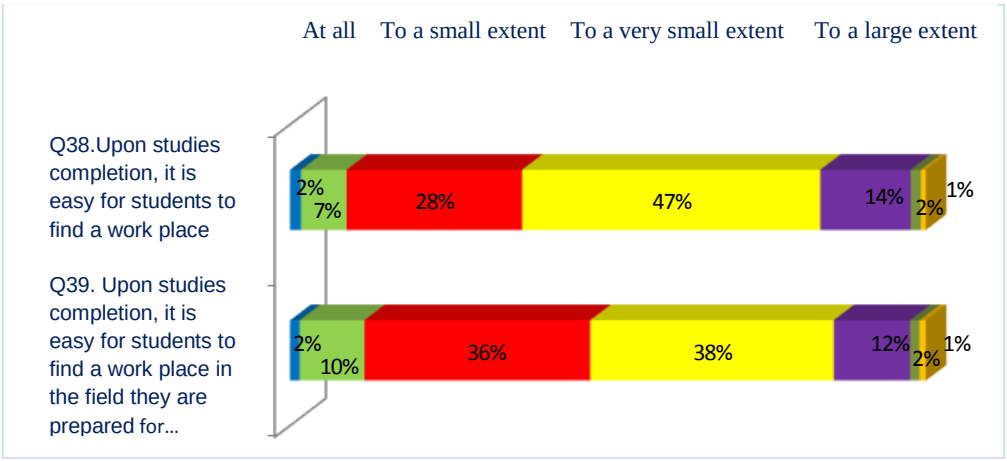



*Diagram III. 26 The readiness of finding work places for students*

In both cases it is noticeable the positive attitude of teachers, who, in this manner are capitalizing the effort put into the educational process, although reality, respectively the number of unemployed young people, doesn't completely support the vision of university teachers.

| Variable | Count | Mean | Std. Dev. | Std. Err.of Mean |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q38.Upon studies completion, it is easy for students to find a work place | 1419 | 3.6645 | 0.874464 | 0.02321 |
| Q39. Upon studies completion, it is easy for students to find a work place in the field they are educated in | 1418 | 3.5021 | 0.893991 | 0.02374 |
| NQ10.Universities, as it is their duty to prepare students for the labour market | 1437 | 4.2936 | 0.662396 | 0.01747 |
| NQ11.Graduates, as it is in their best interest to find a good work place | 1419 | 4.3502 | 0.684777 | 0.01817 |
| NQ12.Employers, because each of them have their own requirements and needs | 1408 | 4.0930 | 0.780361 | 0.02079 |
| Total | 7101 | 3.9814 | 0.854775 | 0.01014 |

*Matrix III.8 Correlation of items concerning the employment of students*

| | Item | Q38. | Q39. | NQ10 | NQ11 | NQ12 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q38. | Q38.Upon studies completion, it is easy for students to find a work place | 1,000 | | | | |
| Q39. | Q39. Upon studies completion, it is easy for students to find a work place in the field they are educated in | **0,735** | 1,000 | | | |
| NQ10 | NQ10.Universities, as it is their duty to prepare students for the labour market | 0,148 | 0,078 | 1,000 | | |
| NQ11 | NQ11.Graduates, as it is in their best interest to find a good work place | 0,231 | 0,159 | 0,403 | 1,000 | |
| NQ12 | NQ12.Employers, because each of them have their own requirements and needs | 0,210 | 0,098 | 0,315 | **0,489** | 1,000 |

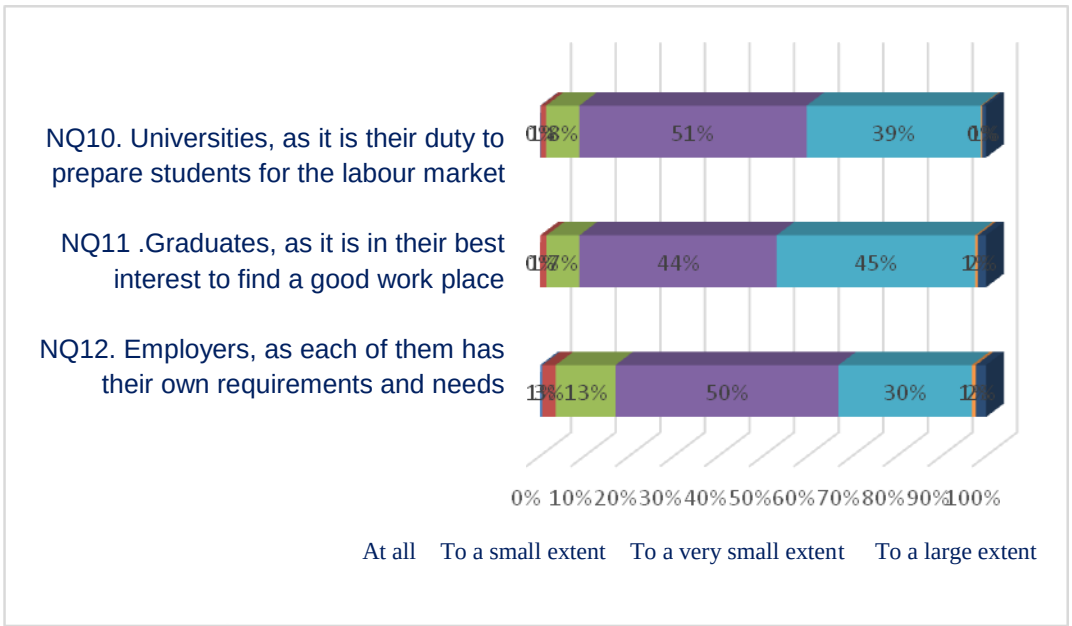



*Diagram III. 27 The role of social players in providing competencies and abilities for the insertion on the labour market*

According to 90% of the teachers who participated in the survey, providing the skills required by the labour market is the responsibility of HEI, and of students. Thus, 45% believe that to a high extent, the responsibility rests with the students, while 39% believe that it belongs to a high extent to HEI and only 30% say that to the highest degree the responsibility lies with the employers. The analysis suggests that the players involved directly in the educational process are to the highest extent responsible for providing the training and skills required by the labour market. Of

course neither the role of employers is not to be neglected, being considered by 80% of respondents responsible to a large (50%) and very large extent (30%). In this regard, teachers feel the need of cooperation and responsibility sharing between the academic environment and market players.

*Matrix III. 9 Correlation of items concerning the role of social players in the provision of acquiring competencies and abilities*

| | Item | NQ10 | NQ11 | NQ12 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| NQ10 | Universities, as it is their duty to prepare the graduates for the labour market | 1,00 | | |
| NQ11 | Graduates, as it is in their best interest to find a good work place | 0,5119 | 1,00 | |
| NQ12 | Employers, as each of them has their own requirements and needs | 0,3721 | 0,3613 | 1,00 |

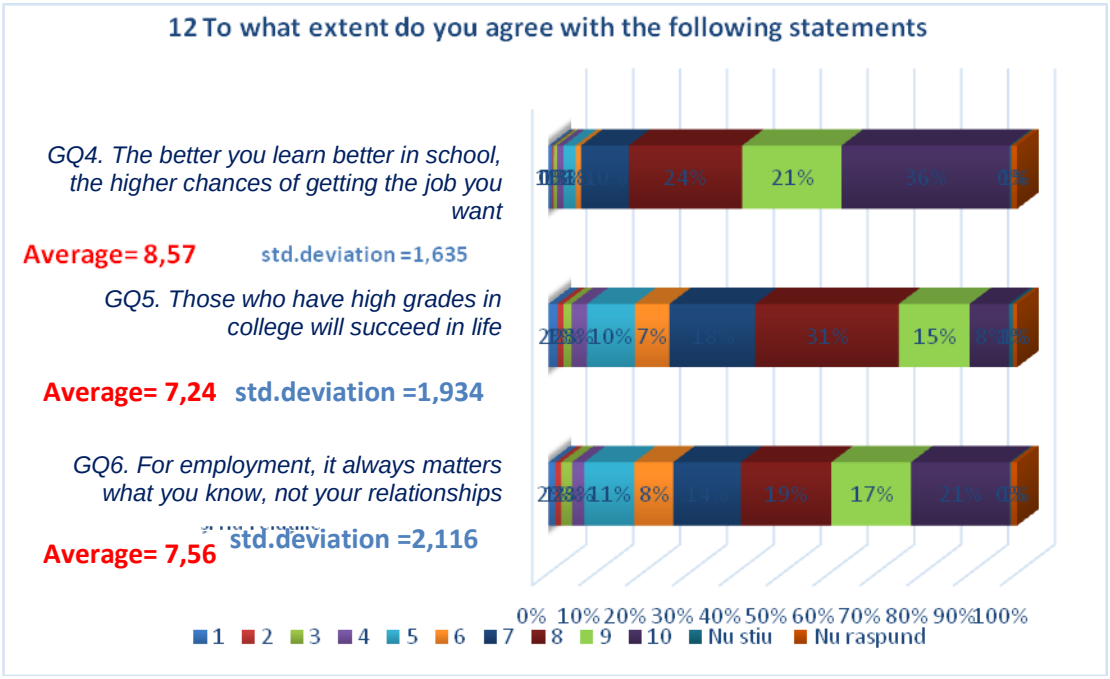



*Diagram III. 28 Involvement in learning and relations in obtaining a work place*

Teachers responses to the question related to the correlation between the accumulated knowledge and employability are obviously in favour of supporting a direct proportionality between the level of training and chances of employment in the labour market (81% give higher grades than 8 to the statement that employment opportunities increase as the level of knowledge accumulated over the years of university studies). This positive perception is not fully supported in relation to the

success in life of those who have achieved high scores during university studies. In this case, only 8% give the maximum score (10 points) to the assertion that good grades in college provide more chances for success.

However, the teachers participating in the survey considered as a majority (57%) that in terms of employment what matters is knowledge and not relationships, with scores above 8 given for this statement. Moreover, 21% give maximum importance to the competencies role compared to relations. In this regard one can observe the consistency in teachers responses who are stating that the university and students must pursue the development of skills required on the labour market, and this will help increase employability by not focusing on grades, but on the skills acquired, which eventually matter the most in getting a job.

### *3.3.4 Finality of education*

As one can see for the data presented by *Diagram* III.30, teachers believe that the department they are part of provide to a large extent digital competencies (38%), a positive attitude towards work (35%), the ability to work in a team (33%) and the development of analytical thinking (31%).

Yet some skills are not developed to the same extent, such as: entrepreneurship (45% believe that entrepreneurship is provided to a small extent, very little or not at all), the ability to lead a team (39% consider that such skills are acquired to a small and very small extent) the ability to communicate verbally and in writing in a foreign language (37% believe this skill is developed to a small and a very small extent).

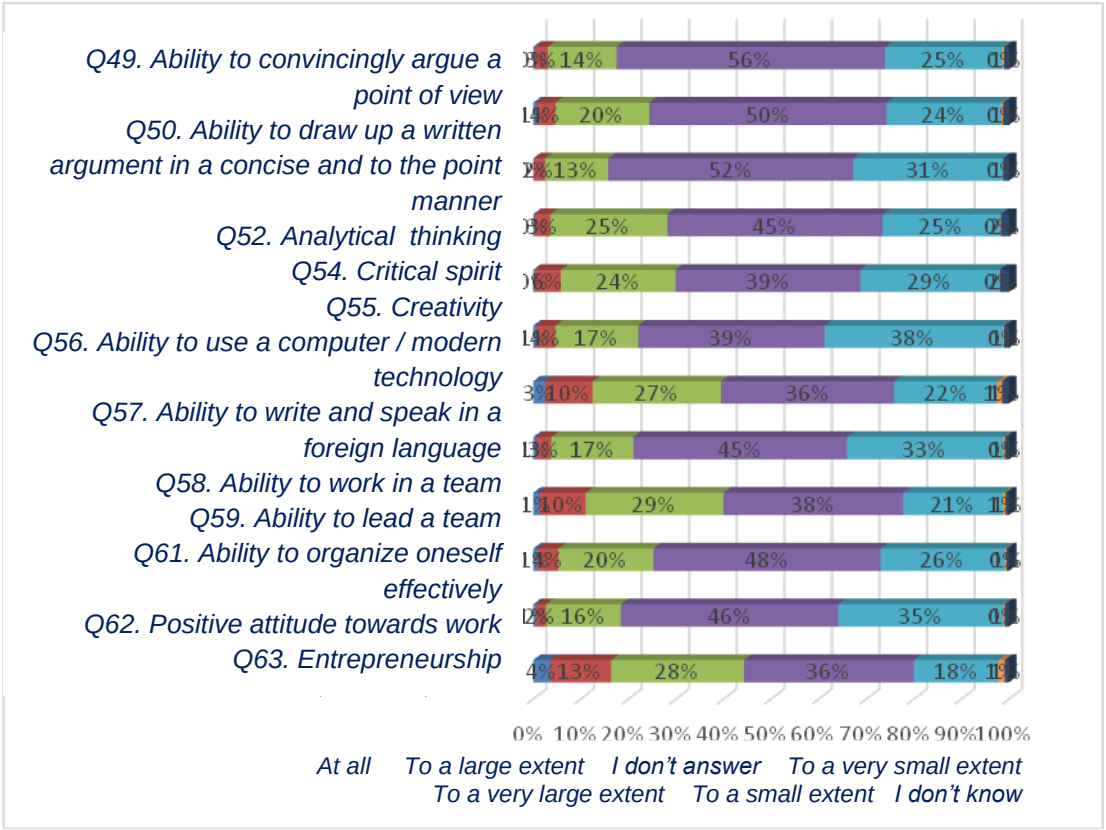



*Diagram III. 29 The role of the faculty in acquiring skills, competencies and abilities required in the work place*

### 3.3.5 Representations on the higher education system

Teachers appreciate that universities in Romania succeed largely (58%) and to a great extent (13%) to prepare students to face the labour market (Diagram III.31). The answers to this question are related to those from question 10. Q38, whereto the respondents were mentioning in a percentage of 61% that graduates could easily find a job.

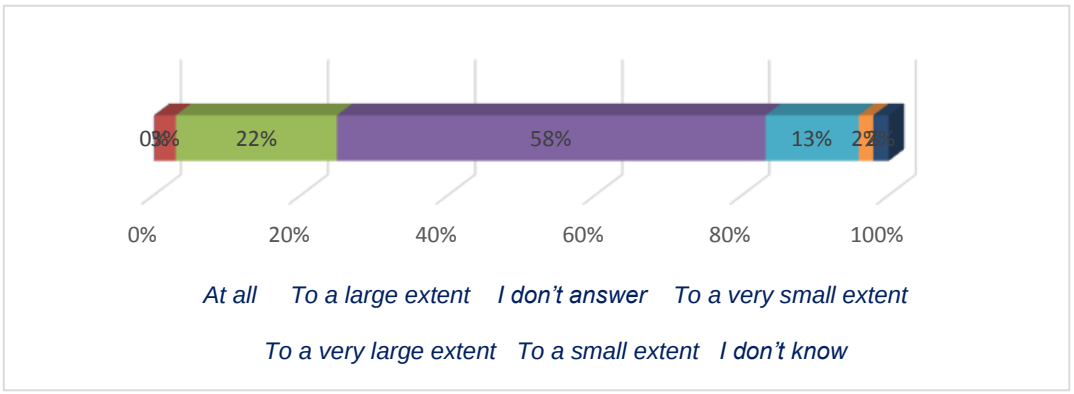



*Diagram III. 30 The extent to which HEI from Romania manages to prepare students for employment*

However, the answers to this question are consistent with the teachers' perception on the role of universities in providing the skills required on the labour market (question 11).

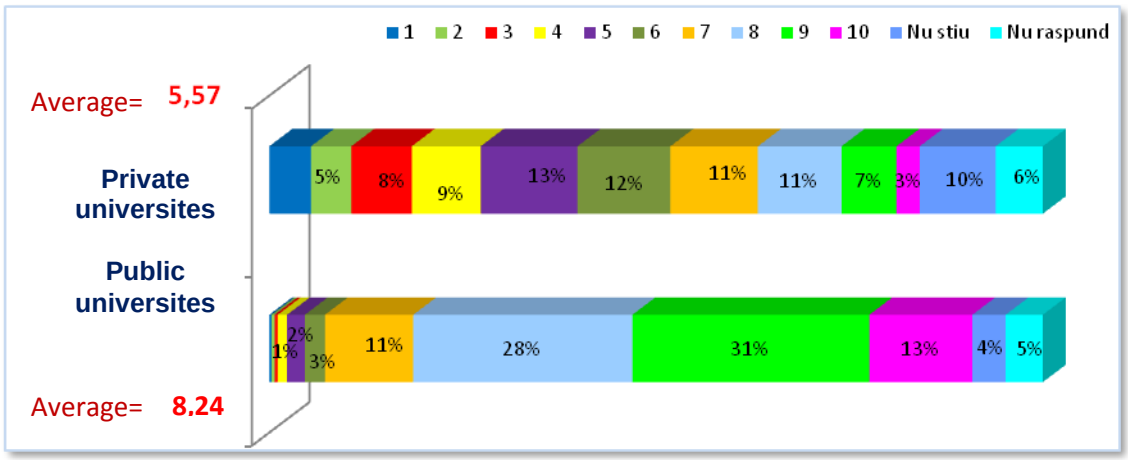



Diagram III. 31 *NQ03. If you have knowledge on the public and/or private higher education system, how would you rate it...?*

The analysis of the perception of teachers on private universities shows that 16% among the respondents do not know or do not answer, and the rest, only 21% give a score above 8 to private universities, while 40% do not assess private universities, by giving a higher grade than or equal to 5. Thus, overall, the evaluation of private universities recorded an average a score of 5.57, compared to public universities evaluation which records an average score of 8.24.

There is a large difference of perception concerning public and private HEIs. Thus, the performance of private HEIs is considered good (grades equal to 8 or higher) by

only 21% of respondents, while public HEIs performance is considered better by 72% of respondents who were giving higher grades or equal to 8.

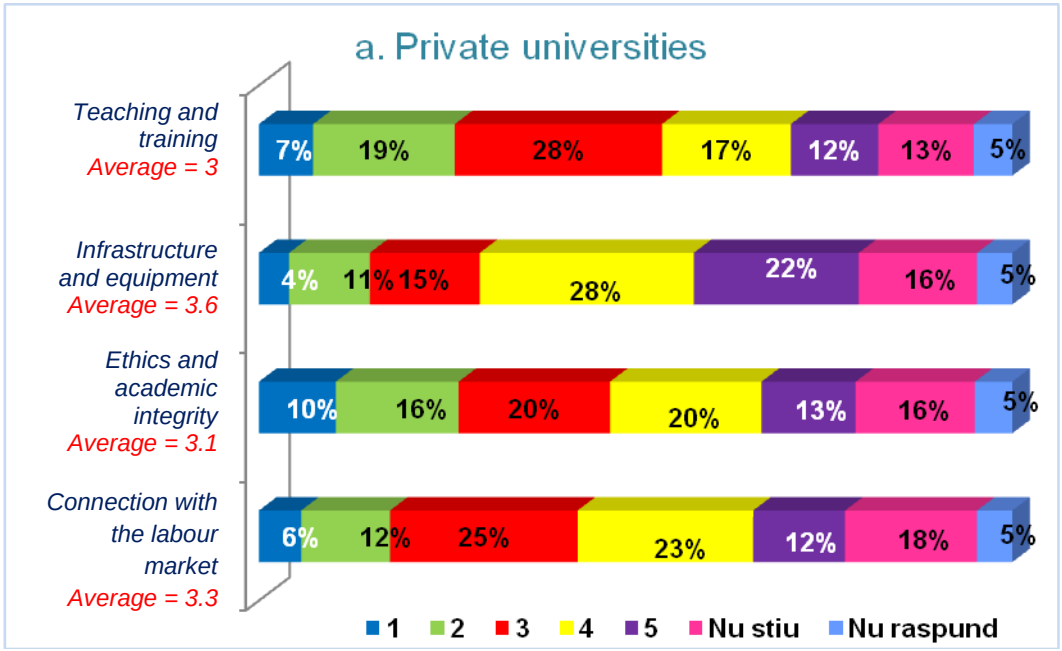



*Diagram III. 32 QN1. In your opinion, how would you rate private and/or state universities, based on the following criteria?*

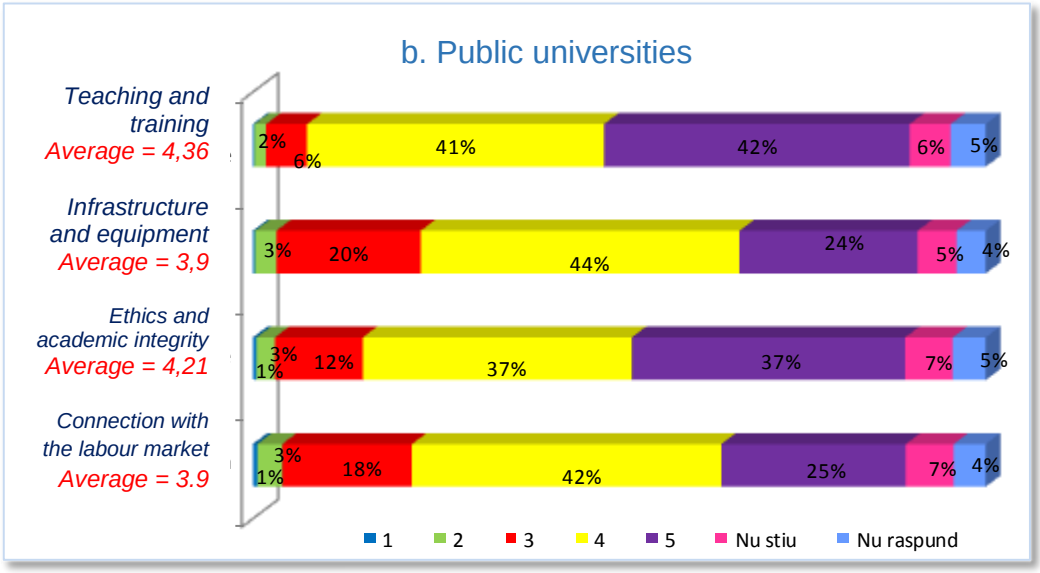



*Diagram III. 33 QN1. In your opinion, how would you rate private and/or public universities, based on the following criteria?*

The gap between public and private universities (15.NQ03) is also maintained when analysing the perception on the educational process. Thus, for private universities,

the average granted for the training process, on a scale of 1 to 5 is 3.09, compared to the state universities which have an average of 4.36. A significant gap is observed in terms of ethics and academic integrity, which is rated on average by 3.11 points in case of private universities and 4.21 points for the state ones. With respect to infrastructure, there are very large gaps between state and private academic environment, being awarded an average score of 3.67 to private institutions and 3.98 to state institutions.

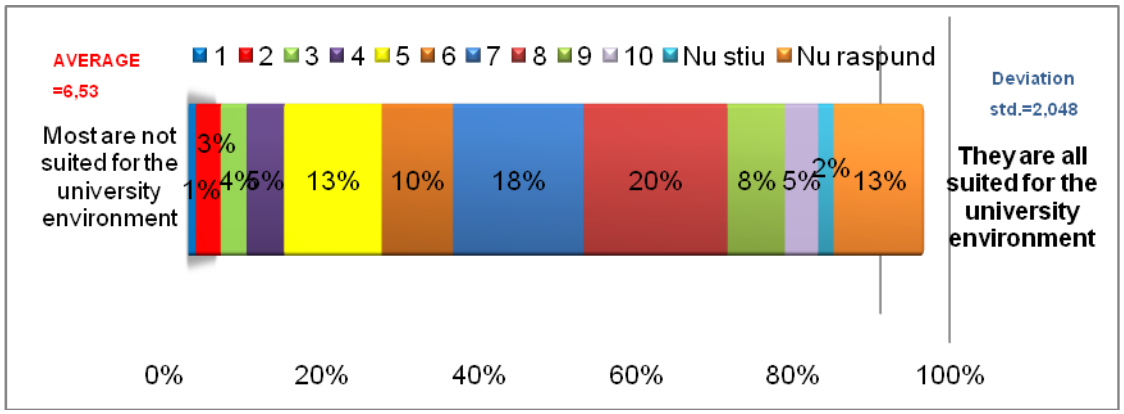



*Diagram III. 34 NQ27. Think about your faculty colleagues, which one of the two statements below is closest to your opinion?*

Respondents' assessments of their peers are not very good, as long as only 33% of them awarded higher grades or equal to 8 to their colleagues. However, 26% are awarding their colleagues grades lower or equal to 8. The average of 6.53 reveals that most teachers would not be suitable for the higher education system.

### *3.3.6 Accreditation and quality assurance*

The opinion of 40.1% of the respondents regarding the evaluation of quality in HEI is that the most appropriate method is based on a system of performance indicators reported by universities (Diagram III.36). Then, 15.8% believe that regular evaluation visits of fields experts is another suitable method.

An important role is also played by the opinion of the players involved within the system (23.7%), including the final beneficiaries: students and employers.

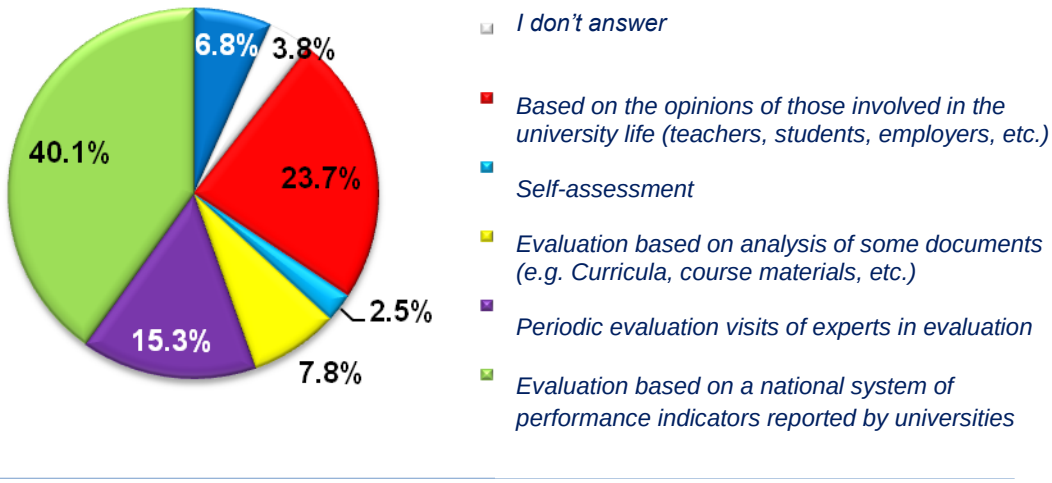



*Diagram III. 35 The method of evaluation of the higher education degree programs' quality*

Interestingly enough, the self-evaluation is not considered an efficient method in quality assessment. As the received answers show, only 2.5% of the respondents appreciate that this method could be used for this purpose. Detailing the analysis, one can see that in the category of those choosing self-evaluation, an important percentage is represented by teachers in private universities, representing 41%.

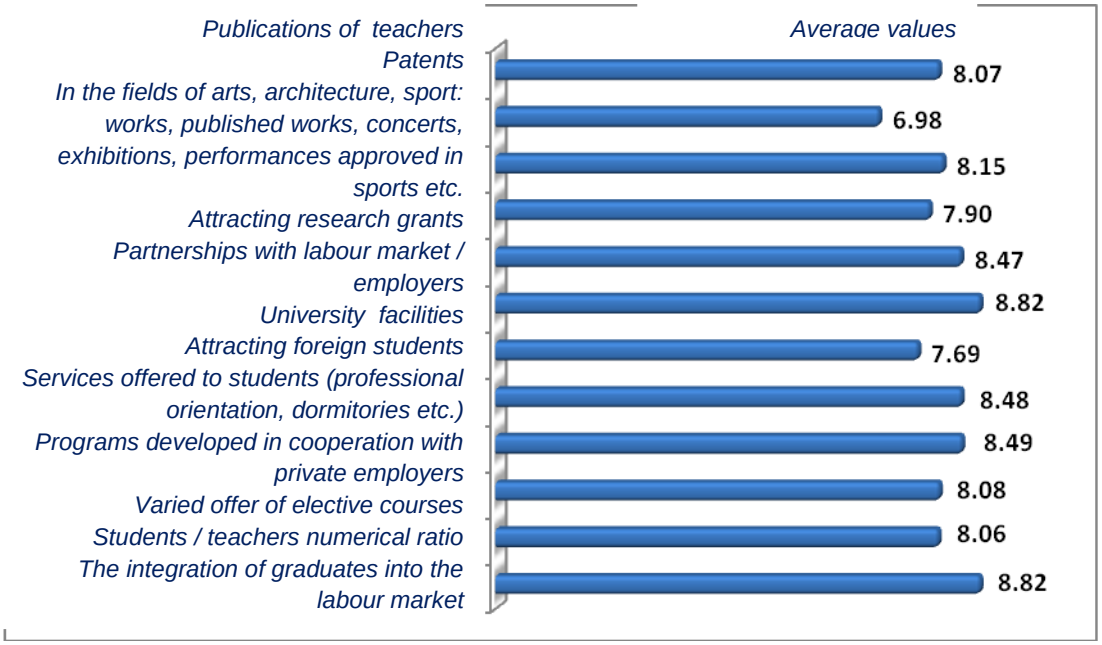



Diagram III. 36 UQ01. How important do you consider the following criteria in order to evaluate universities in Romania?

*Diagram III.37* shows that in the opinion of teachers, endowing the universities and integration of students into the labour market represent the most important aspects (average score 8.82). It is also noteworthy the priority they attach to the connection to the labour market, respectively the partnerships with employers (average score 8.47), to programs developed in collaboration with private companies (8.49) and integration of graduates into the labour market (average score 8.82). The importance given to scientific publications is appreciated on average by 8.07, similar to the evaluation of the quality of teaching, measured by the diverse offer of optional courses (average score 8.06) and numerical ratio students / teachers (average score 8.08). Thus, it is clear that teachers do not attach maximum importance to research, as shown in the international evaluation indicators set.

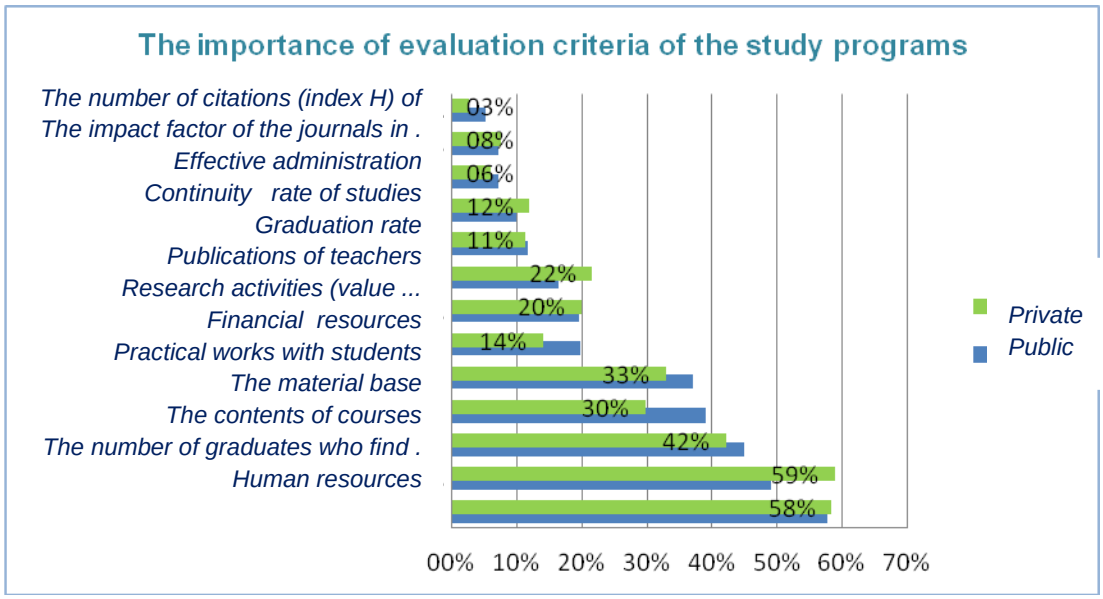



*Diagram III. 37. In your opinion, what would be the 3 most important criteria in the list below, for the evaluation of the quality of a university study program?*

Regarding the importance of the criteria used for the evaluation of the quality of a university degree program, there are no noticeable differences between the views of teachers coming from public institutions compared to those from private universities.
The opinion of teachers on key issues in evaluating a university degree program is oriented in the same direction as in the evaluation of HEI (UQ01) respectively teachers at a rate of 56.5% stating that human resources are very important, and secondly comes the integration of students into the labour market (49.2%). Courses' content is considered at a rate of 43.5% important for the evaluation of a degree program. It is observed the same trend as in the quality assessment HEI: issues related to research and the recognition of its results are only mentioned to a small

extent, respectively the publications of teachers are mentioned only in proportion of 16.8%, and the impact factor of journals where is deemed important just to 7% and the Hirsch index only to 4.8%.

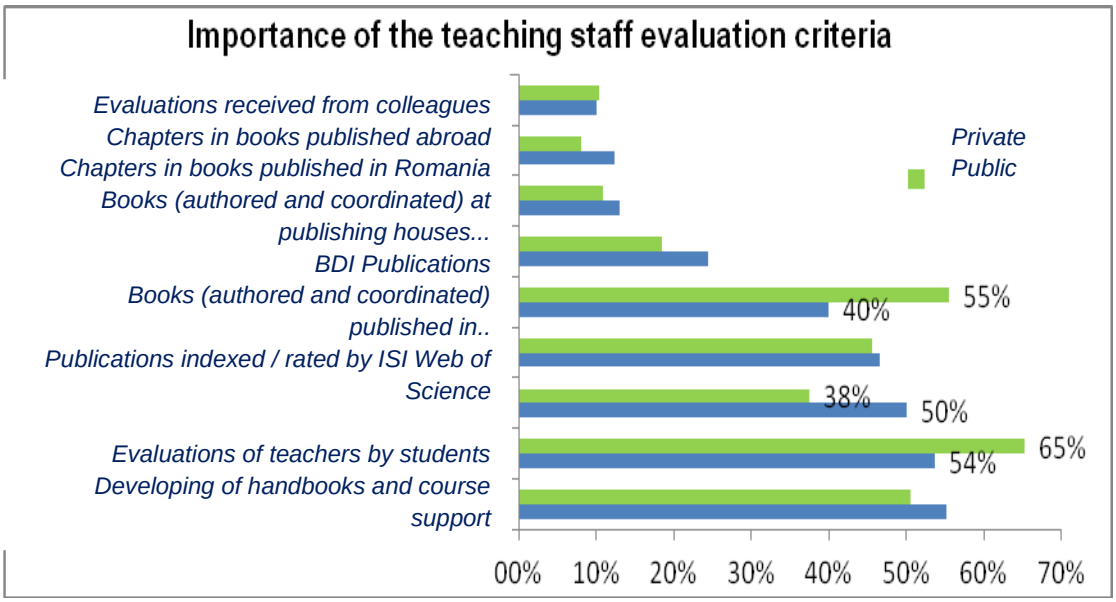



Diagram III. 38 UQ02. Regarding the evaluation of the teaching staff, what do you believe the 3 most important criteria should be?

With regard to the criteria used to evaluate teachers, there are different views according to the ownership of the education institution. Teachers in private universities believe, in a higher percentage, the criteria "Evaluations performed by students to teachers" as being very important (65% vs. 54%).

Another difference of opinion concerns the criteria "BDI Publications", in which case 55% of those in private universities appreciate these criteria as being important compared with 40% of teachers in state institutions. Instead, for the criteria "Indexed Publications / rated ISI Web of Science" the situation is reversed, those in state universities consider this criteria important in a higher proportion (50% vs. 35%).

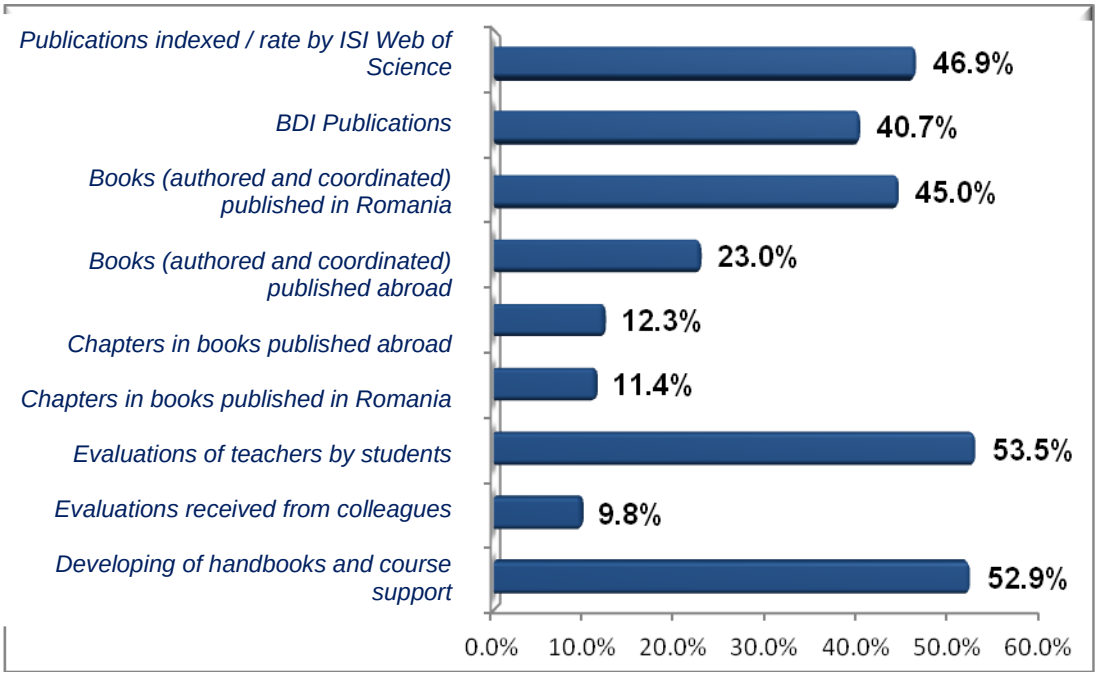
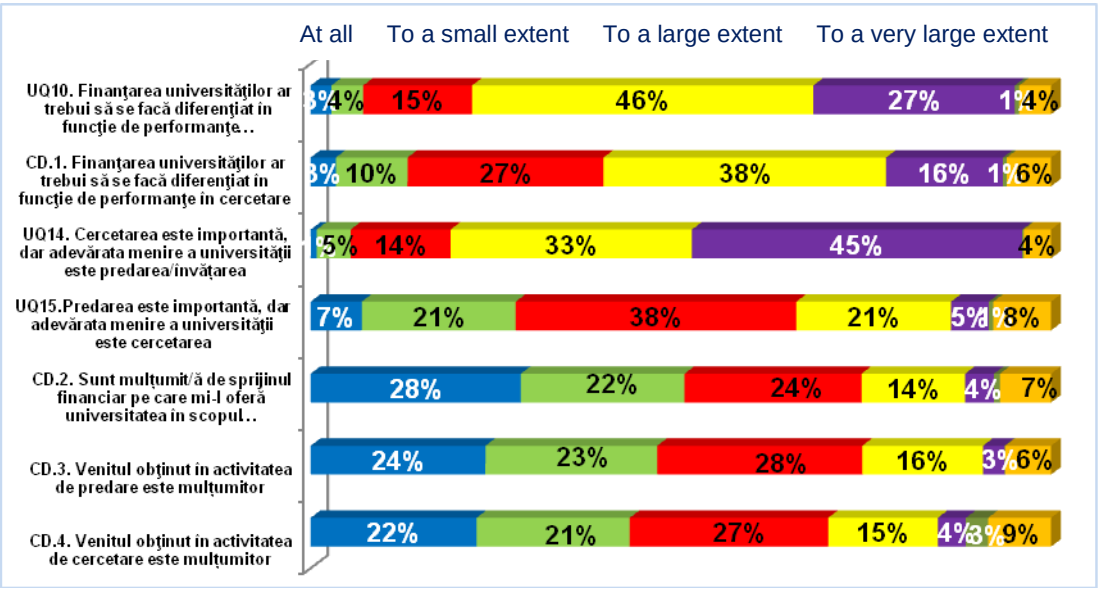



*Diagram III. 39 Teachers evaluation criteria*

In the evaluation process of teachers, teachers mentioned as important indicators their evaluation by students, aspect mentioned by 53.5% of respondents. Secondly, development of textbooks and teaching materials is another important evaluation factor, being mentioned by 52.9% of the teachers surveyed. Indexed publications / rated ISI Web of Science are also deemed important by 46.9% of respondents who mention these criteria. In addition, 45% of them underline that an indicator of teachers evaluation could be considered the number of books published in Romania.




*UQ10. Funding of universities should be made depending on their achievements in educational processes*
*CD.1. Funding of universities should be made depending on their achievements in research*
*UQ14. Research is important, but the real purpose of the university is teaching / learning*
*UQ15.Teaching is important, but the real purpose of the university is research*
*CD.2. I am satisfied with financial support provided me by the university in order to participate in scientific conferences and events*
*CD.3. The incomes obtained from teaching activity are satisfactory*
*CD.4. The incomes obtained from research activities are satisfactory*

*Diagram III. 40 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?*

The opinion of teachers surveyed about providing financing sources confirms the importance given to the teaching process. Thus, 73% of teachers consider that funding should be made according to the didactic process (27% believe that this is highly important, while 46% consider that this indicator is important to a great extent). Teachers express in a coherent manner their view on the importance of the teaching process, considering to a 78% that teaching is the mission of HEI (45% think that this is highly important and 33% stated that this is important to a great extent). Further, only 5% of respondents believe that the research activity represent to a great extent the mission of HEI. At the same time, it is noted the dissatisfaction regarding the financial support for participation to conferences and events. Thus, 64% of the respondents felt that they are not satisfied with the support of HEI in this respect wherefrom 28% state that they are not satisfied in this respect, 22% state that they are slightly satisfied, while 24% say they are satisfied to a small extent. Only 4% of respondents say they are highly satisfied by the financial support from HEI for attendance to conferences and events.

With respect to income, teachers are unhappy, related to those obtained from research as well as those resulting from teaching. In both cases, only 19% of the respondents are satisfied with the income from the teaching/research activities. Otherwise, teachers are mostly dissatisfied. Thus, 75% of them say that the income from teaching is not satisfactory (24% say that the income from teaching is not satisfactory, 23% consider that it is satisfactory to a small extent, while 28% believe that the incomes are slightly satisfactory). With respect to revenues from the research activity there is the same complaint: 4% of respondents are satisfied to a great extent, while 15% were satisfied to a larger extent, and 70% are not satisfied (22% - at all 21 % - very little, and 27% - to a lesser extent).

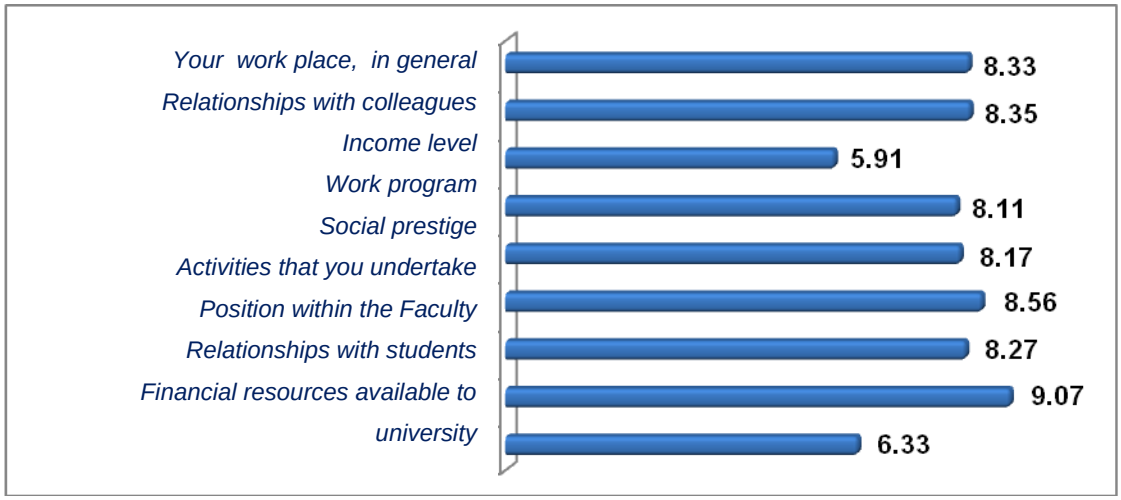



Diagram III. 41UQ20 Thinking about the university where you teach, how unhappy or happy are you with…?

Regarding the position within the university teachers declare themselves generally satisfied first by the relationship with their students (average 9.07), by the activities performed (average 8.56), relationships with co-workers (average 8.35) and work place in general (average of 8.33). Problems arise in the financial sector namely teachers are dissatisfied with the level of income (average 5.91) and the financial resources available to the university (average 6.33). Except financial problems, teachers state they are satisfied with the position within the faculty (average 8.27), social prestige (average 8.17).

| **Analysed aspects** | Ownership | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | State | Private | sig. |
| Your work place, in general | 8,32 | 8,39 | |
| Relationships with co-workers | 8,31 | 8,68 | 0,005 |
| Income level | 5,92 | 5,84 | |
| Work hours | 8,09 | 8,27 | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Social prestige | 8,13 | 8,45 | |
| Activities performed | 8,52 | 8,85 | 0,002 |
| Position within the faculty | 8,18 | 8,86 | |
| Relationship with students | 9,04 | 9,30 | 0,005 |
| Financial resources available to the university | 6,23 | 7,10 | 0,000 |

Except for "income level" and "financial resources available to the university", teachers are satisfied with the aspects of the institution wherein they are performing their activity (average scores are above 8). But there are significant differences. Teachers employed in private universities are generally satisfied with the following: "Relationships with co-workers", "Activities performed", "Financial resources available to the university." The aspect wherefore the level of satisfaction is low in both HEIs relates to revenue.

In conclusion, the answers provided by teachers show a consistent attitude on the role of HEI, namely that related to the quality assurance of the education process and the skills needed by students to facilitate their social integration. Nonetheless, answers about the role of research within HEI demonstrate that presently research is not a priority even at the individual level or at the level of personnel employed in universities (low importance given to the impact factor of journals and number of citations) nor is it institutional wise (lack of substantial investment in research). This outlook does not favour the Romanian higher education system, as internationally such aspects related to research represent a priority in the evaluation of HEI quality. Accordingly HEI funding must be commensurate with the educational performance to its greatest extent, and not with the research one..

An important aspect is the fact that teachers underline the importance of quality evaluation of the HEI activities performed in terms of final beneficiaries (graduates and socio-economic environment players) as well as in terms of performance indicators national wise. This confirms the concern of teachers for an external and objective quality evaluation.

### *3.3.7 Qualitative study of the teaching staff perception - interviews*

There were interviewed 10 teachers in 10 state and private universities in Romania, and the interviews were coded as it is shown by the following table:

*Table III. 19 Participants profile.*

| Teacher identification code | Institution |
|---|---|
| Teacher 1 | University of Bucharest |
| Teacher 2 | “Ion Mincu” University of Bucharest |
| Teacher 3 | Danubius University of Galați |

| | |
|---|---|
| Teacher 4 | University of Oradea |
| Teacher 5 | University of Craiova |
| Teacher 6 | Petroleum and Gas University of Ploiești |
| Teacher 7 | Transilvania University of Brașov |
| Teacher 8 | "A.I. Cuza" University of Iași |
| Teacher 9 | Technical University of Civil Engineering of Bucharest |
| Teacher 10 | Ecological University of Bucharest |

Based on study categories defined a priori within the research methodology, there were made the analysis codes. There were set the following codes and sub-codes, as Table 20 shows.

*Table III. 20 Sub-codes and codes system*

| Code | Sub-code | Fragment number /significant units |
|---|---|---|
| Definition of the teaching-learning-evaluation process | Strengths | 7 |
| | Weaknesses | 12 |
| | Relationship teacher/student | 9 |
| | Students evaluation system | 4 |
| | Aspects to improve | 10 |
| Scientific research | | 11 |
| Education-labour market relationship | | 9 |
| Teachers performance | | 9 |
| Student performance | | 11 |
| System performance | | 13 |
| System financing | | 5 |
| Quality assurance system | Internal system | 6 |
| | ARACIS | 10 |

Data were analysed by descriptive identification and interpretation of content units, by using IT tools of the quality data analysis program MAXQDA12, as diagram III.2 shows:

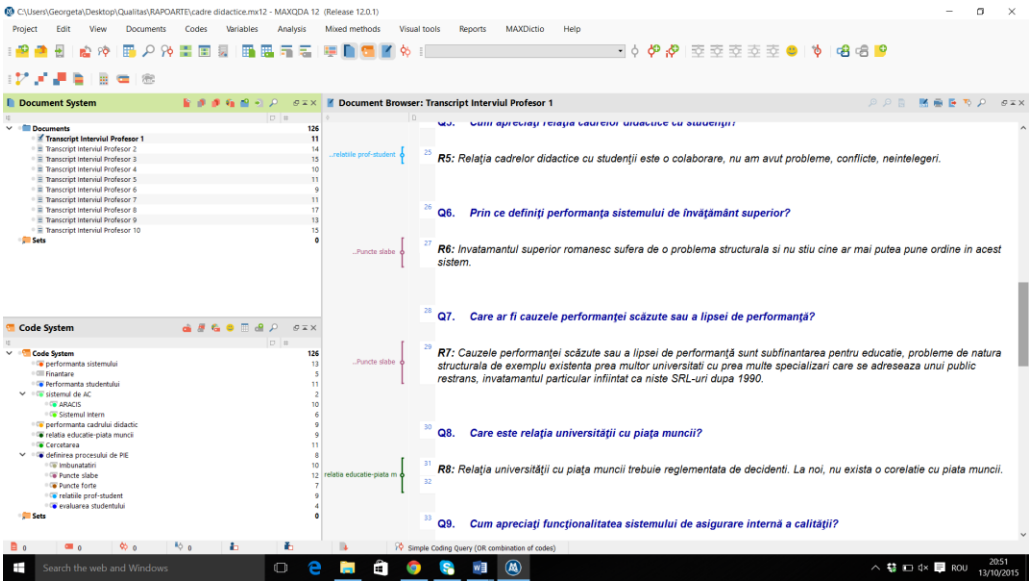



Diagram III.2: Analysis of data by using the Maxqda12 program.

### *3.3.7.1 Definition of the Teaching-Learning-Evaluation process*

The first aspect analysed refers to the teaching-learning-evaluation process in universities. It starts from the definition and characterization of the system operation and continues with the identification of its strengths and weaknesses. Participants also discussed the educational relationships between teachers and students as, ultimately, they would propose concrete measures for improvement.

In terms of defining the system, we are identifying on one hand the idea that the learning process takes place in very good conditions, relying on the coordination of teaching/learning and evaluation activities, wherein new technologies play an important role and students are motivated. On the other hand, we find that there are teachers who consider that the level of desirability is not adjusted to the circumstances, many participants noting the lack of interest and participation of students in the educational process.

We are illustrating, as it follows, with quotes, both statements:

> *„Teaching, learning and evaluation are activities whereby the educational process overall are performed and therefore I consider them to be interdependent. We are speaking of a modern integrating system. We are talking about formative evaluation. In the modern didactic process the student comes first. Evaluation is done throughout the student activity." [T.I. Teacher 10; Position: 14-14]*

> *„We are trying to adjust teaching wise to new technologies, to include in the didactic process, to use methods as interactive as possible to draw the attention of students without giving up classic means, to mandatory reading of courses. Learning, if we look at the actual generations of students are less interested, more confused." [T.I. Teacher 1; Position: 14-14]*

As it follows, participants have identified the vulnerability points and the positive ones of the system. In what concerns the negatives, the opinions range around the following coordinates:

*Vulnerabilities are caused and represented by structured elements ingrained within the system:*

*„Romanian HEI suffers from a structural issue and I don't know what could put an order to this system." [T.I. Teacher 1; Position: 27-27;]*

*„Structural nature issues, for example the existence of too many universities with too many fields addressing to a narrow public, private education formed as companies after 1990." [T.I. Teacher 1; Position: 29-29]*

*Negative elements are related to the number of places and access criteria:*

*„Negative aspects of the education process within the institution refers to the number of places budgeted that are allotted to our faculty, in the sense that, although there is a high demand, we are receiving very few budgeted places." [T.I. Teacher 2; Position: 39-39]*

*„Negative aspects of the educational process within the institution refer to the lack of young people performance, with a concerning percentage, 20-30% from them haven't met the expectations." [T.I. Teacher 8; Position: 41-41;]*

*Adverse remuneration of teachers is creating problems to the system and occurs repeatedly among the opinions of teachers:*

*„Negative aspects of the educational process within the institution concern the lack of remuneration [T.I. Teacher 7; Position: 41-41;]*

Positive aspects of the system are various, and the answers of participants could be grouped according to many categories.

First, it is mentioned the quality and training of the teachers as positive elements of the system:

*„Positive aspects of the educational system within the institution are given by the fact that each teacher has their own documentation, bibliographic support from the university, each understood to establish their own evaluation criteria determining the attendance of students to class. Another aspect refers to the fact that we are not exaggerating with the masters programs, we stick to those programs wherefore there is a higher demand and interest [T.I. Teacher 3; Position: 40-40;]*

Improved material base allowing easy access to information and a good connection to documentation sources represent aspects to be considered facilitating the activity of teachers;

*„Speaking about the material base, there were investments made that offer a mental comfort, we have access to information easily." [T.I. Teacher 4; Position: 40-40]*

The evaluation system, as integrant part of the education process, is appreciated by the participants as being in agreement with the Bologna paradigm centered on the student, on continuous and formative evaluation:

*„Evaluation is periodic, by viva formulas, research paper, project, and the student is notified in a timely fashion." [T.I. Teacher 8; Position: 14-14]; „Evaluation is performed throughout the entire activity of the student." [T.I. Teacher 10; Position: 14-14]*

Nevertheless, there are also cases when the students evaluation stays traditional, based on methodologies favouring the evaluation of knowledge compared to an integrating process based on competencies:

*„Evaluation of students is performed by multiple choice tests, the student has no oral exams, the evaluation being affected." [T.I. Teacher 4; Position: 16-16]*

Relationships between the teachers and students represent a positive aspect most interviewed individuals have underlined, and that is why it was considered as a separate aspect in the analysis of the education process. Participants agree that relations are very good, that between students and teachers there is a good communication and that the relationship is based on mutual trust and collaboration.

*„The relationship between teachers and students is one of collaboration; we had no issues, conflicts, misunderstandings." [T.I. Teacher 1; Position: 25-25;]*

It is appreciated all tutors work who facilitate communication between students and teachers, although it is mentioned that sometimes teachers do not enjoy sufficient appreciation from students and it is noticed a certain lack of involvement from them.

*„There are many students who do not insist on the relationship with their teachers and do not care about their appreciation." [T.I. Teacher 3; Position: 25-25]*

*„I have noticed a lack of involvement from students, which is demonstrated by grades, the quality of dialogue and interaction." [T.I. Teacher 8; Position: 15-15;].*

### *3.3.7.2 Research activity*

Along with the teaching-learning and evaluation activity, research represents another dimension of the teaching profession with valences becoming more visible and conspicuous lately.

Teachers recognize the potential of research and refer to it as a rewarding activity that generates involvement in projects and participation in knowledge dissemination activities.

The Centres of Excellence represent a positive aspect that motivate teachers and provide adequate areas for the performance of activities at the highest level. As one participant stated:

*„The scientific research activity within the university is reflected in certain fields and big projects, we have an Jean Monnet Excellence Centre, and we have 11 Jean Monnet modules. Projects have a competence of curricula improvement, but also scientific research activity." [T.I. Teacher 1; Position: 16-16;]*

The involvement of partners from the social environment into the research activity performed on the university level is an aspect appreciated by the participants:

*„The scientific research activity within the university is applied by research projects, projects with partners from the socio-economic environment, funded by Norwegian funds." [T.I. Teacher 2; Position: 16-16]*

The research activity is applied by publications and conferences of teachers, participants considering as a positive aspect the involvement of teachers into these projects. Control mechanisms of the research activity are functional on university level, mechanisms that do not always meet a real need, but more external "requirements", as the following teachers is pointing out:

*„The scientific research activity is applied by specialty papers with foreign publishers; we have publications in ISI indexed journals, in data bases. Within our university there is a chart of scientific research that we need to fill in every year and we have a minimum number of items we have to achieve." [T.I. Teacher 2; Position: 16-16]*

*„Scientific research activity within the university always met the evaluation requirements." [T.I. Teacher 4; Position: 18-18]*

These research control activities do not favour productivity nor the authentic relations with the social reality, but is performed "by order", as one of the participants points out:

*„The scientific research activity within the university is by order, which is measured by a ruler and scale. It has turned into an administrative activity, meaningless, of no authentic concern." [T.I. Teacher 7; Position: 17-17].*

### *3.3.7.3 Education-labour market relationship*

Regarding the relationship between the university and the labour market opinions are divergent: on one hand we identify teachers who consider that it is non-existent, and on the other hand it is appreciated that the labour market is provided by multiple collaboration projects.

In the first category we can identify opinions such as:

*„Here, there is no relation to the labour market." [T.I. Teacher 1; Position: 31-32]*

In the second category are mentioned the relationship with the economic environment, mediated by practical activities, by collaboration with professionals and students, as one of the participants is underlining:

*„The university has relationships with the socio-economic environment, students are performing their practice in institutions we are collaborating with, there are professionals who are presenting students during courses, for example in the Social assistance faculty." [T.I. Teacher 2; Position: 28-28]*

*„The relationship between the university and the labour market is good, the labour market offering to bring in new offer." [T.I. Teacher 4; Position: 31-32;]*

The role of professional associations is important, and often the relationship efficiency with the labour market is measured by the number of students registered for studies completion:

*„The relationship between the university and labour market is applied by the relation with professional associations, with architect's offices." [T.I. Teacher 5; Position: 31-31;]*

*„The relationship between the university and the labour market is required and suitable, we have periodic meetings with the state employers and private ones and from our dialogue with them we conclude about new majors and the curricula content. Over 80% from our graduates have jobs." [T.I. Teacher 9; Position: 28-28;].*

### *3.3.7.4 Performance of teachers*

Participants agree that the activity of teachers is a complex and multi-dimensional one, taking various shapes and different manifestation contexts.

Performance is defined by the following perspectives:

1. Teaching activity consisting from the predominance of the teaching and evaluation activities. Teachers must be experienced professionals and in the process of continuous training, involved with students activity, but also in the creation of didactic materials.

*„The performance of the teacher is given by the results of learning, as the teacher also learns, and by students' performance." [T.I. Teacher 6; Position: 18-18]*

*„The performance of the teacher is a complex notion and a result of their activity, learning-seminaries attendance, applied by manuals/courses whereby students prepare and an active participation to all actions performed by the university." [T.I. Teacher 9; Position: 18-18]*

2. Research activity. The performance is measured by publications, research, obtained grants, attendance to conferences, and, especially, international visibility:

*„These things would apply by publications in journals and international visibility, participation to projects, international conferences." [T.I. Teacher 1; Position: 19-21]*

*„The performance of teacher is given by one's scientific research activity, by articles and published books, their recognition within scientific circles, by the quality of the graduates of our faculty." [T.I. Teacher 2; Position: 18-18;]*

3. The performance is evaluated. Here intervene various mechanisms and agents, from external ones to internal, some of the participants mentioning the role of their co-workers (evaluation among peers) in the evaluation:

*„The performance of the teacher is applied by the confirmed self-evaluation chart, co-workers evaluation chart, evaluation chart from the side of the department director, evaluation chart of teachers by students."*

4. Performance is measured by the recognition and social prestige.

*„The performance of the teacher is given by the recognition within the socio-economic community they belong." [T.I. Teacher 3; Position: 21-21].*

### *3.3.7.5 Performance of students*

The performance of the student is evaluated from two perspectives: an internal one and it refers to one's result during studies, and another is external, long term and concerns the integration on the labour market.

From the first perspective, performing students are the ones involved with the didactic act, are socially active:

*„The performance of the student is defined by curiosity and desire of knowledge, to assimilate and read." [T.I. Teacher 1; Position: 23-23;]*

*„Performance of the student/graduate is measured by the results of learning." [T.I. Teacher 6; Position: 20-20]*

*„ Performance of the student/graduate is difficult to evaluate and the evaluation criteria." [T.I. Teacher 7; Position: 21-21;]*

From the second perspective, the performance of student is measured by the ability to integrate on the labour market, competencies acquired by graduation and social prestige of the profession they trained for:

*„The performance of student is given by the direct attendance to courses/seminaries. Stage evaluation helps see the way the student thinks, then comes the grade in class, than one's contribution to the scientific press, cultural, attendance to interdisciplinary colloquies. The performance of the graduate is measured by getting a job and the quality level of the respective institution.." [T.I. Teacher 8; Position: 22-22]*

*„The performance of the student/graduate would apply to how fast one can integrate on the labour market in one's field." [T.I. Teacher 2; Position: 20-20; Author:]*

Previous position is completed and strengthened by the social relevance of the profession and social benefits of one's work.

*„The performance of the higher education system is given by the benefits the society has, the integration degree on the labour market, the profit brought to the society by research." [T.I. Teacher 3; Position: 27-27]*

### *3.3.7.6 System performance*

System performance is defined by performance terms of students or teachers, as it was presented by the previous sub-chapters.

Asked how they perceive the performance of the system, interviewed teachers start from the premise that it doesn't rise to the expected level and analyse the causes of such a situation. First there are mentioned the reasons concerning the university system, legislation in force and the large number of universities, with direct connection to the excessive number of private universities:

*„The reasons for a poor performance is given by the Law 1.2 which, instead of stimulating and provide the course, it made us go a couple of steps back and the results show." [T.I. Teacher 6; Position: 26-26]*

*„The higher education system is completely wrong, badly cut, and has crossed a constant reforming crisis, going from financing to the flexibility of the learning programs." [T.I. Teacher 8; Position: 28-28]*

*„The performance of the higher education system is manifested by interruptions generated by the large number of state and private universities. State universities are encouraged to provide places for students correlated to the high school graduates, thus decreasing the performance." [T.I. Teacher 9; Position: 24-24]*

System performance is also given by the quality and social relevance of professionals/graduates, including their ability to enter the labour market at internal and external level:

*„The performance of the higher education system is given by the number of students finding a job within the country and abroad in the graduated field, degree of recognition of the universities internationally and European wide." [T.I. Teacher 2; Position: 24-24]*

The ability to enter the labour market is a measure of the efficiency or lack thereof, as one of the participants is pointing out.

*„The causes for a low performance or a lack of performance are the lack of effectiveness and efficiency because it doesn't meet the market requirements." [T.I. Teacher 3; Position: 29-29;]*

*„The performance of the higher education system is identified by the bachelor, masters, Ph.D. graduates results." [T.I. Teacher 6; Position: 24-24]*

*„The visibility of the institution, its ability to produce students who would adjust to the labour market, the input-output mobility, a recognized brand, faculty name, program name." [T.I. Teacher 8; Position: 26-26]*

Opinions on the performance of the system are completed by those referring to its funding, as many of the elements defining it are related to the money granted to the education. That is why we consider that the aspects regarding system funding can be integrated in the chapter related to performance.

Adverse system funding is, according to the majority of participants, the main reason for the low system performance:

*„The quality of the academic system is influenced by the funding level to a very high extent as the main issue is money." [T.I. Teacher 3; Position: 45-45]*

Funding is affecting the system on macro level, as well as the performance of teachers, the individual motivational and involvement level, as one of the teachers is pointing out;

*„The quality of the academic system is influenced by the funding level to a large extent as otherwise, there is no possibility to pay the teachers, can't make research, don't have visibility." [T.I. Teacher 4; Position: 44-44]*

*„The quality of the academic system is influenced by the level of funding as it is under-funded which leads to lack of motivation." [T.I. Teacher 5; Position: 44-44]*

*„The quality of the academic system is influenced by the level of funding, it is a direct connection, and the lack of money means the lack of didactic material, the lack of quality teachers." [T.I. Teacher 9; Position: 41-41]*

The last analysis category related closely to the performance of the system refers to the quality assurance process. Here we are referring to the internal university mechanisms and the external ones represented by ARACIS.

### *3.3.7.7 Quality assurance*

#### Internal mechanisms

In what concerns the internal mechanisms, they are generally regarded as being positive to the system. Participants consider that the developed strategies by the universities are useful to support from the inside the efforts to improve the system. They also serve as control mechanisms providing the universities a clear image on the aspects operating and those that must be improved.

*„The internal quality assurance system helps us be aware of the deficiencies we have, to put an order to certain aspects that are not completely well taut, to be aware of the needs we have." [T.I. Teacher 2; Position: 31-31]*

Internal systems are acting by the activation of departmental evaluation procedures, institutional and that of students, all of these being deemed necessary in any quality assurance process:

*„The internal quality assurance process is materialized by departmental evaluation, evaluation performed by students." [T.I. Teacher 5; Position: 34-34]*

The system is generally running well, and teachers are manifesting favourable to it, on the condition that the created structures to operate appropriately, coherent and transparent:

*„The internal quality assurance system is very useful, but on the university level is an interference al commissions, coming from an overlap." [T.I. Teacher 8;]*

*„We have specialized bodies, Quality Commission, a director and vice-rector acting in the field." [T.I. Teacher 9; Position: 31-31;]*

#### Quality assurance external agencies (ARACIS)

External system is considered as being useful and required as it exercises pressure on the internal one and demands periodical revisions of the operation:

*„Mechanisms of periodic evaluations performed by ARACIS are useful as they are making us adjust, although we are doing it on an annual basis when we are performing a self-evaluation and we are revising the teaching plans and curricula." [T.I. Teacher 2; Position: 33-33]*

*„Periodic evaluations performed by ARACIS are useful." [T.I. Teacher 5; Position: 36-36]*

*„Evaluations are good and results are positive." [T.I. Teacher 10; Position: 35-35]*

An interesting aspect in what concerns the external quality system consists from taking up responsibilities and their distribution between the system's stakeholders:

*„The main responsible for the quality assurance of the academic system is ARACIS, but every one of us is also responsible." [T.I. Teacher 2; Position: 35-35*

Next with the favourable opinions and critical opinions regarding the utility and efficiency of ARACIS there are the teachers who deem ARACIS procedures as being ineffective and often times interfering with the internal systems, presenting internal coherence issues (between commission) and external (with internal mechanisms).

*„Periodic evaluation mechanisms made performed by ARACIS are interfering with the internal quality assurance system." [T.I. Teacher 3; Position: 36-36].*

*„Periodic evaluations made by ARACIS have deficiencies and are different from commission to commission. Such commissions are creating a positive tension whereby the quality is maintained." [TI Teacher 8; Position: 35-35]*

## 3.4 Quantitative and qualitative study regarding the perception of employers

**Profile of organizations investigated representing employers**

Most companies participating to the research are private companies with Romanian majority capital. They represent over 80% of all employers investigated, while state-owned companies have a much smaller share, less than 10%, similar to that registered by the civil society organizations (NGOs). The share of private companies with majority foreign capital does not exceed 1%. This distribution reflects only in part the profile registered national wide, for example, the number of employees in the public sector accounting for about 25% of the total number of employees in the economy, according to INS data (2014).

Most of these organizations fall into the category of micro-size enterprises with less than 10 employees. Companies with 10-49 employees and those employing 50-249 employees have close shares, 17% and 15% respectively. As shown by *Diagram III.43*, 90% of organizations participating in the research are part of SMEs with less than 250 employees. This distribution is similar to that national wide, where SMEs represent over 99% of all companies active in Romania, where we find two out of

three employees now. Within the sample companies, public institutions or NGOs representing employers one can find a relatively large number of large organizations, with over 250 employees - 8% from the overall.

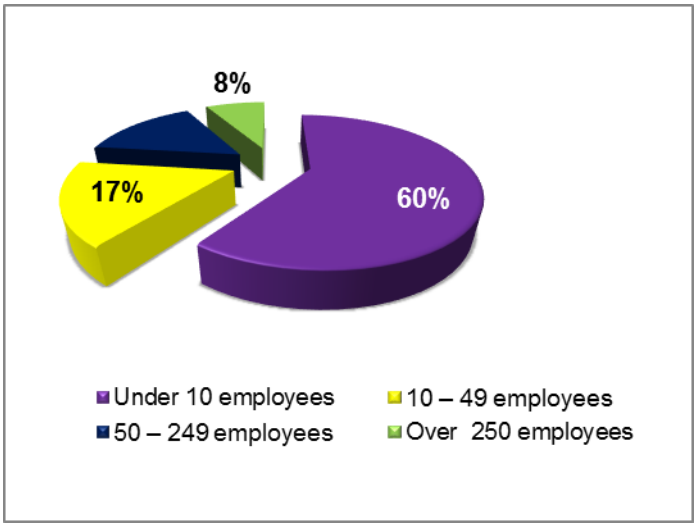



*Diagram III. 42 Number of companies/organizations participating to the survey*

In terms of geographic distribution, except the Bucharest-Ilfov area, we have a relatively balanced distribution by area. The investigation of a greater number of stakeholders in representing the employing organizations in Bucharest area is justified in terms of the higher level of economic development of the region and, hence, the higher employment potential of university graduates. The South West area recorded the lowest number of employers, along with the West area, being the only ones with a lower share of 10% of the organizations investigated.

### *3.4.1 Socio-economic aspects of the responding employers*

The sample is made up of 1574 employers of BA studies students, wherefore we are presenting the following aspects:

- They are coming from the 8 areas of development, being structured in relation to the overall number of economic agents within the country[68]. The larger share is represented by the Bucharest Ilfov area - 24,6%, followed by the Nord West area - 14% and Centre -11,8% (Annex II.4.1);
- 92,7% are coming from private institutions;
- 60% from the employers represent small companies, 32% average companies and the rest of 8% represent companies with over 250 employees.

[68] *In NIS online database accesed in August 2015*

### 3.4.2 Criteria used for the selection of future employees

Employers indicate a wide variety of criteria whereby they are recruiting future employees, university graduates. On the basis of average grades obtained (*Diagram III.44*) there was developed a prioritization system of such criteria. Between the average grades obtained there are statistically significant differences for a probability of at least 99.98% (student test was performed for pairs observation). *The level of training of the candidate* represents, with few exceptions, the criteria whereby employers are bestowing upon with the utmost importance, as can be seen in *Diagram III.44*. Individual interviews show that employee training is generally viewed as representing a sum of competencies acquired upon completion of university studies, suitable for the specific of the targeted job.

Also, important criteria are: "The way one conducted during the interview/employment contest" and the "Experience in the field".

High importance it is given to criteria relating to *how the candidate conducted oneself during interview/employment contest* is explained by the fact that, most often than not, another court is verifying the professional training level. Employers, thus regard this stage in the selection as an opportunity to test certain professional skills, but also to observe behaviours and attitudes important to the company/institution.

Similar to the previous Barometer results, the *experience in the field* represented an important criterion in the decisions regarding the employment of a higher education system graduate. This situation is explained by the current strategies concerning human resources, preferring a capitalization as fast as possible of the potential of an employee as well as by the employers' willingness to have a previous instance of verification of employee skills (including the decrease in the risk of failure in identifying the best candidate for the available job).

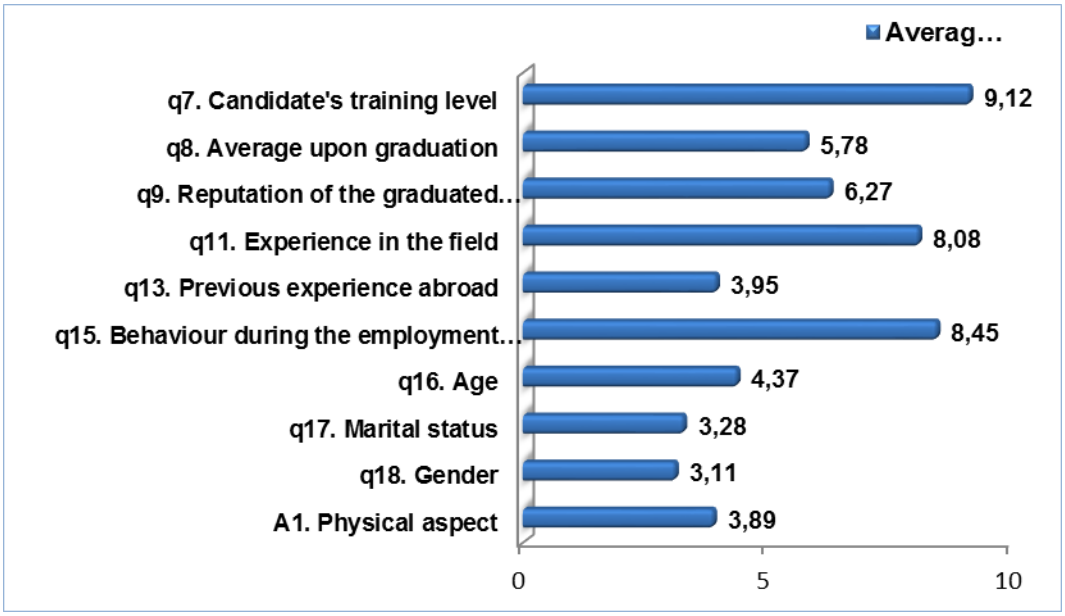



*Diagram III. 43 In the higher education system graduates employment process, how important are the following criteria within your company/institution?*

Close to the half of the interval stand the criteria regarding the *reputation of the graduated university/college*, and the *graduation average*. This fact demonstrates the confidence that some employers have in universities and the evaluation system used by them. This is seen particularly in terms of reputation, one in two respondents giving a score of over 8 in this case, while only one out of six has awarded a score similar to the candidate graduation average (remember, 10 is the maximum importance given to this criterion).

With a lower average there are criteria such as *gender, marital status*, which can be explained considering that labour legislation prohibits any discrimination based upon such considerations. The same situation has occurred related to the *age* criterion, although in this case the average is slightly higher. Surprisingly, *previous work experience abroad* does not appear as a very important criterion, with a score close to that recorded for the *physical aspect*. Individual interviews show that this result is primarily due to the widely held idea by the employers that professional experience counts, whether it was acquired in the country or abroad.

An analysis of variance (Table III.21) of answers based on the value recorded by the standard deviation shows that employers appreciate differently such criteria. For example, although half of them consider the *reputation of the university/college* as being important for the employment, one in three respondents attach a low or very low importance to this criterion. A similar polarization of opinions is seen in the case of the *age* criterion.

*Table III. 21 Standard deviations calculated for the average grades granted to the selection criteria of possible employees*

| | - Standard deviation - |
|---|---|
| Candidate professional training level | 0,898 |
| Average upon graduation | 2,298 |
| Reputation of the graduated university/college | 3,042 |
| Experience in the field | 1,629 |
| Previous work experience abroad | 2,638 |
| The way the candidate conducted oneself during the employment interview/contest | 1,654 |
| Age | 2,752 |
| Marital status | 2,112 |
| Gender | 1,917 |
| Physical aspect | 2,411 |
| *Base:* | *N=1574* |

Based on the value of the presented coefficients by matrix III.10 one can conclude that there are no connection between the selection criteria. The fact that one is important to the employer doesn't imply that one will give importance to another criterion.

*Matrix III. 10 Correlation coefficients of the selection criteria*

| | | Q7 | Q8 | Q9 | Q11 | Q13 | Q15 | Q16 | Q17 | Q18 | A1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q7 | Candidate professional training level | 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| Q8 | Average upon graduation | -.03 | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| Q9 | Reputation of the graduated university/college | .00 | .01 | 1 | | | | | | | |
| Q11 | Experience in the field | .01 | .01 | .00 | 1 | | | | | | |
| Q13 | Previous work experience abroad | -.05 | .01 | ,056* | -.01 | 1 | | | | | |
| Q15 | The way the candidate conducted oneself during the employment interview/contest | -.01 | .01 | -.01 | .01 | -.01 | 1 | | | | |
| Q16 | Age | .00 | .02 | -.01 | .02 | .03 | -.04 | 1 | | | |
| Q17 | Marital status | .01 | .00 | -.03 | .02 | .00 | -.01 | .01 | 1 | | |
| Q18 | Gender | .00 | .00 | .04 | .01 | .03 | .02 | .01 | .04 | 1 | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A1 | Physical aspect | -.04 | .00 | .04 | ,093** | .02 | .03 | -.01 | .02 | .00 | 1 |
| | *Correlation is significant by 0,05 level (bilateral test) | | | | | | | | | | |
| | ** Correlation is significant by 0,01 level (bilateral test) | | | | | | | | | | |

Employers evaluated on a scale of 1 to 5 (where 1 - „It is not important at all", and 5 „Very important") the importance of the abilities and competencies, as well as the satisfaction level concerning such abilities/competencies held by the employed graduates. By analysing this set of questions we can underline that they are very important to the employers, but also the satisfaction level *(Table III.22).*

*Table III. 22 Abilities and competencies of graduates. Importance versus satisfaction level*

| Criteria | Importance level | Satisfaction level | Difference average | t | sig |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Analytic thinking | 4.37 | 4.02 | 0.35 | 11.31 | .000 |
| Very good knowledge of the field they are employed in | 4.11 | 3.85 | 0.26 | 7.51 | .000 |
| The ability to communicate (with the co-workers, supervisors, clients etc.) | 4.09 | 3.92 | 0.18 | 5.21 | .000 |
| The ability to work in a team | 4.01 | 3.87 | 0.14 | 4.12 | .000 |
| Proactivity | 3.94 | 3.56 | 0.38 | 10.67 | .000 |
| Punctuality | 3.91 | 3.83 | 0.07 | 2.33 | .020 |
| Critical thinking | 3.90 | 3.53 | 0.36 | 10.86 | .000 |
| The ability to use the computer | 3.87 | 4.13 | -0.26 | -8.50 | .000 |
| Creativity | 3.81 | 3.80 | 0.01 | 0.20 | .839 |
| Positive attitude towards work | 3.81 | 4.14 | -0.33 | -9.73 | .000 |
| The ability to be convincing when arguing a point of view | 3.60 | 3.87 | -0.27 | -8.51 | .000 |
| Ability to write and speak into a foreign language | 3.59 | 4.31 | -0.72 | -22.12 | .000 |
| The ability to organize oneself in an effective manner | 3.57 | 3.56 | 0.01 | 0.30 | .764 |
| The ability to edit a concise and pointed argument | 3.53 | 3.88 | -0.35 | -10.13 | .000 |
| The ability to lead a team | 3.42 | 3.64 | -0.22 | -5.38 | .000 |

The most important criterion is considered "Analytical thinking" with an importance level of 4.37. The level of satisfaction in relation to this skill/competency is 4.02. A good evaluation, but below expectation. The difference between the two values is statistically significant.

Other skills/competencies considered important are: "Very good knowledge of the field one is employed in", "Communication ability (with co-workers, supervisors, customers, etc.)", "The ability to work within a team" and "Proactivity". For all these the level of satisfaction is lower than the level of importance.

The analysis of how employers appreciate different types of skills (understood as a structured set of knowledge, skills/abilities and attitudes) provides an opportunity for a deepest understanding of the expectations in this area. According to research data, a higher education system graduate is appreciated today, especially for one's cognitive abilities (*analytical thinking*), for the communication skills (*ability to communicate with colleagues supervisors, clients, etc*.) and the knowledge level in the field one will be employed (*very good knowledge of the field one will be employed in*). As it can be seen in *Diagram III.45*, another capacity expected from graduates is *proactivity*, especially understood as an attitude of constant involvement in solving problems that may occur in the workplace.

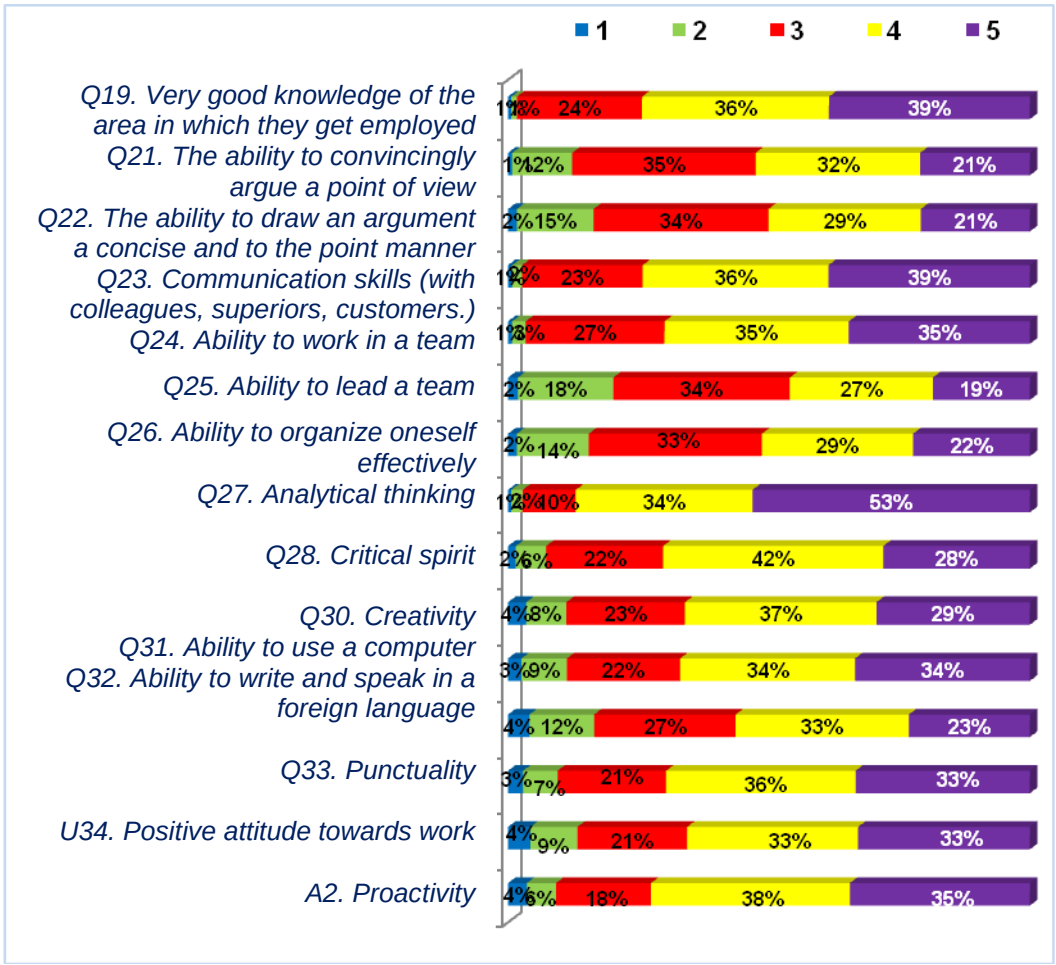



*Diagram III. 44 How important is it for your company/institution that the graduates who wish to be employed to own the following abilities and general competencies?*

A less importance level can be observed in case of those skills that require a certain specific of the workplace, for example, holding a managerial position or coordination of a team, using a foreign language or computer (the last two corresponding though to key competencies assumed by Romania as being acquired at the functional level for all graduates of compulsory education!). It is surprising the high percentage of answers granting a limited importance to transversal competencies, useful regardless of the nature of the tasks, such as:

- organization of oneself activity (49%)
- creativity (35%)
- positive attitude towards work (34%)
- team work (31%)
- critical thinking (30%).

Also, employers' answers seem to take partially into account the fact that the analysis is focused on the status of university graduates with a higher skill level, which implies a higher degree of autonomy at work. In the absence of similar research focusing on other categories of graduates (i.e., those who graduated from high school or vocational school) we can only advance the hypothesis that these lower expectations pertain to the specific of the company/institution surveyed (90% are SMEs ) and the nature of jobs offered to graduates, sometimes below their level of training.

Beyond these possible explanations, we can talk about oriented expectations of employers and previous recruiting experience or, in other words, expectations influenced by the assessments of the degree the graduates who have been employed lately by the company/institution hold such skills. *Diagram III.45* confronts these two issues, demonstrating that only in case of certain capabilities we can find a relatively high level of convergence between the degree of appreciation of the importance of a skill and the degree of satisfaction on the level held by university graduates recently employees.

Even in case of those skills rated as being the most important one can notice a lower level of satisfaction in relation to the extent to which the new employees demonstrate analytical thinking, communication skills with co-workers, supervisors, clients etc. or very good knowledge of the field they were employed in. At the opposite pole there are the capabilities such as synthetic or concise expression or the one to argue convincingly a point of view where the degree of appreciation of the level held, is higher compared to the granted emphasis.

This fact demonstrates the priority to develop partnerships between the higher education institutions and representatives of employers and business, allowing bidirectional information on the competencies sought to be acquired while in university (outputs) and the contexts in which they can prove relevant. A good example of this can be the proactivity skill, which registers a gap between the importance given by employers and satisfaction with the level held the by new

employees: only a structured dialogue can lead to a detailed definition of such a competence and can lead to the development of the current curricula of a higher education institution. Vice versa, companies or state institutions may seek to capitalize better (through development strategies of the company/institution) the skills of the new employees in areas such as the computer use or expression in a foreign language.

Competencies where there is presently the higher degree of convergence, such as the effective organization of work or creativity, also remains an important subject of reflection for both categories of stakeholders.

### *3.4.3 Preferences for various types of graduates*

Employers were also surveyed on the preferences for a graduate of a certain category of universities in terms of ownership. In a scenario where they had to choose between two candidates who had a similar level of education, we find that for some employers the type of university matters. As shown by *Diagram III.46*, there is a difference between the 10 per cent between those who prefer a graduate of the state university and those who would choose a graduate of a private institution, given that only 2% of subjects are not responding and 2% could not decide to formulate a response.

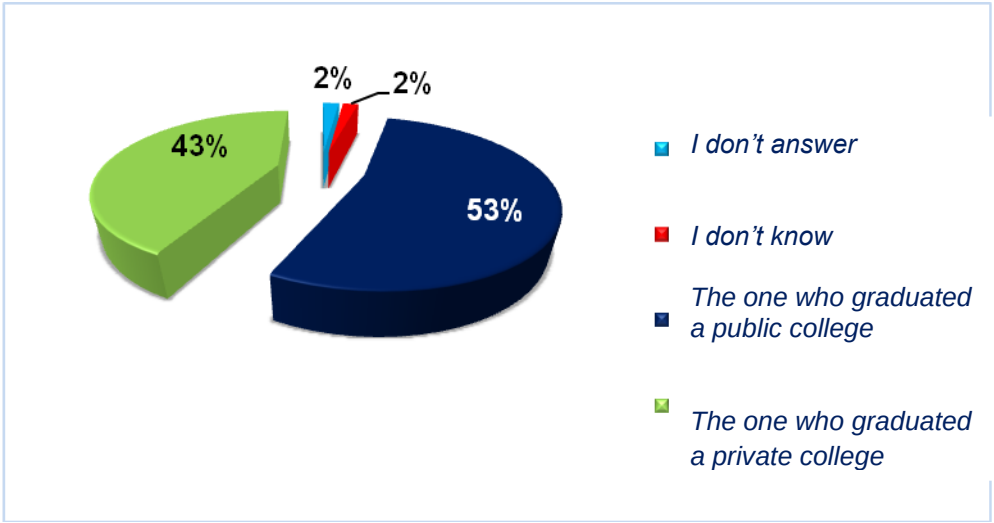



*Diagram III. 45 If you would have to choose between two candidates with similar training, which one would you employ?*

Individual interviews with business representatives and employers within the public sector or within the NGO sector provide some explanation of the reasons wherefore they are preferring one type of university or another, and on the ways whereby they get to know the HEIs (directly, as a graduate of Bachelor, Master or Doctorate or indirectly through contact with teachers, students or university graduates).

The situation is perfectly balanced in case of one similar scenario wherein the employers are put into the position to choose between a graduate who went to college in Romania and one who went to college aboard: in each category we can find half of the respondents.

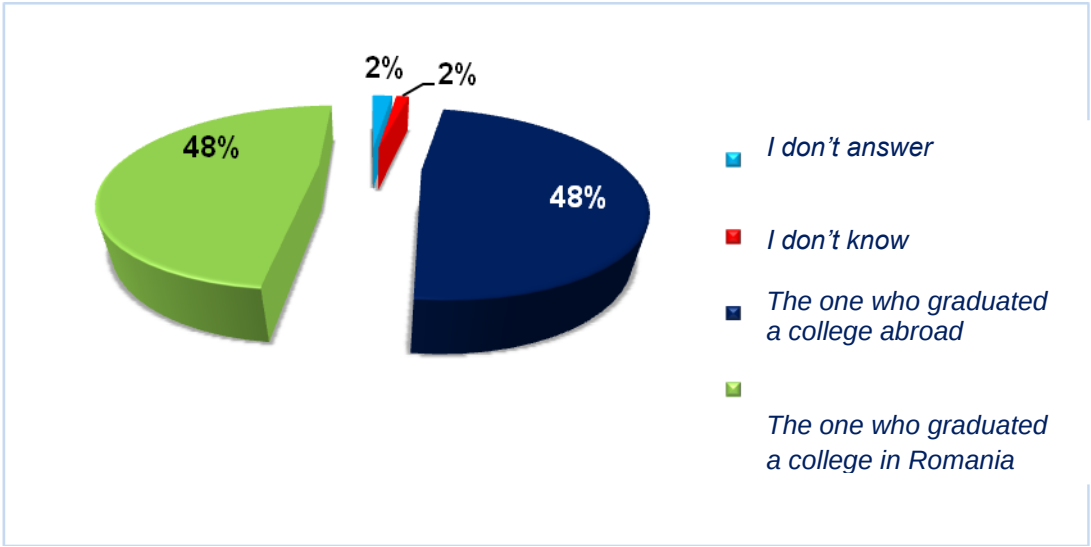



*Diagram III. 46 If you ought to choose between two candidates with similar training, which one would you hire? (Education institution in Romania/abroad)*

As we have already seen, employers consider as an important criterion in choosing a graduate degree or experience. This thing is also confirmed by the data in *Diagram III.48*, where the graduate who had a job during college (without specifying whether the job is relevant for the job offered by the company) is preferred by almost 40% of the respondents.

Surprisingly, the graduates who were involved in voluntary activities during college are preferred by a quarter of employers, which confirms the trend of recognition of the relevance of this method to gain experience. In this case there are appreciated the variety of activities one has been involved, the types of responsibilities undertaken and the degree of involvement, reminiscent of the *proactivity* criteria analysed above.

Same as for volunteering, the preference for a graduate who worked only part-time in university is substantiated by employers as providing a guarantee of a proper balance between the period of time dedicated to a job and the time devoted to study sessions. We observe in this case also a higher share of those who had difficulties to choose an answer, as well as those that did not provide any answer to this question.

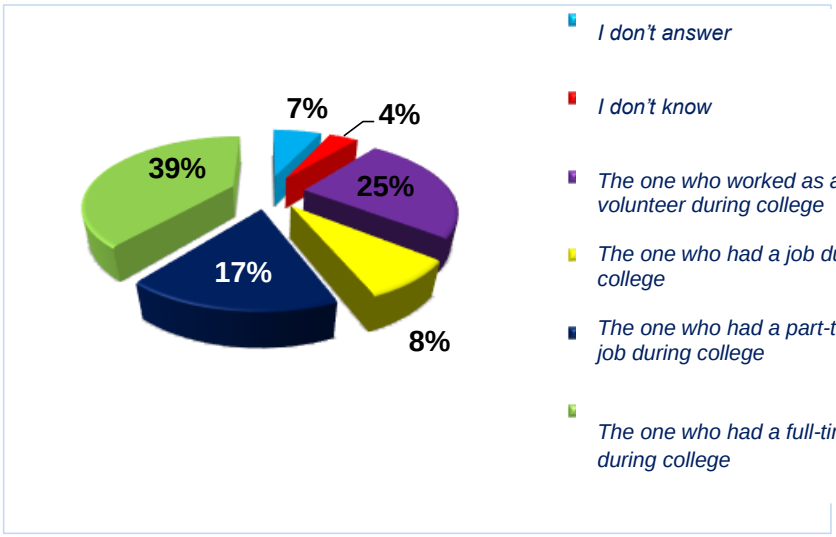



*Diagram III. 47 If you ought to choose between two candidates with similar training, which one would you hire?*

There are differences between employers and the regard for a preference for a graduate who has a BA compared to one who also has master's degree. Thus, a little over half indicate a choice for a graduate with a higher study degree, while 45% declare that they would choose the graduate who holds only a BA. The study level of the respondents might offer some insight on the choice, starting with the hypothesis that the highest school graduated can orient, together with the specific of the targeted work place, the preference for a type of candidate or another.

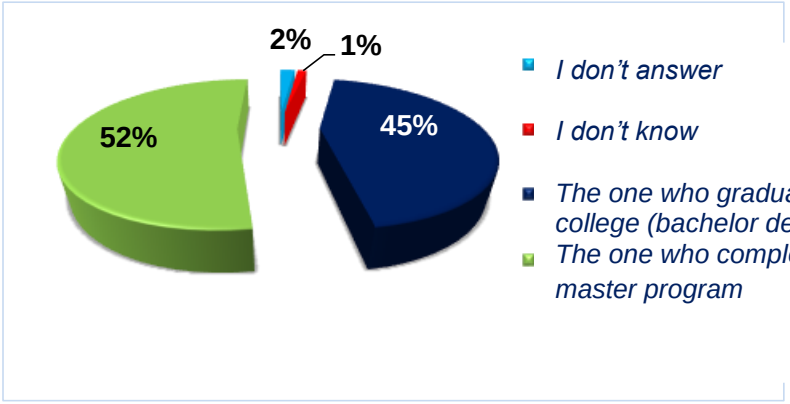



*Diagram III. 48 If you ought to choose between two candidates with similar training, which one would you hire? (BA/MA level)*

### 3.4.4 Investments into the professional training of employers

The issues presented thus far showed the different ways to approach the process of initial training from employers, both in terms of skills range expected from a university studies graduate and recruitment strategies. This section explores the lifelong learning perspective and the opportunities the graduates have to continue their training and professional development process after employment also.

Although many of the companies/institutions included in the survey have a relatively small number of employees, there is a declared concern for training. As shown by *Diagram III.50*, over half of the respondents indicate that they are organizing various training activities dedicated to employees, without resorting to external specialized services. For the most part, these courses fall within the scope of programs of non-formal and informal learning do not end with a form of official certification, recognized national wide. Individual interviews provide a number of examples of activities, whereby mentoring and tutoring activities, activities of know-how inter-generational transfer in the context of workplace training, self-training etc.

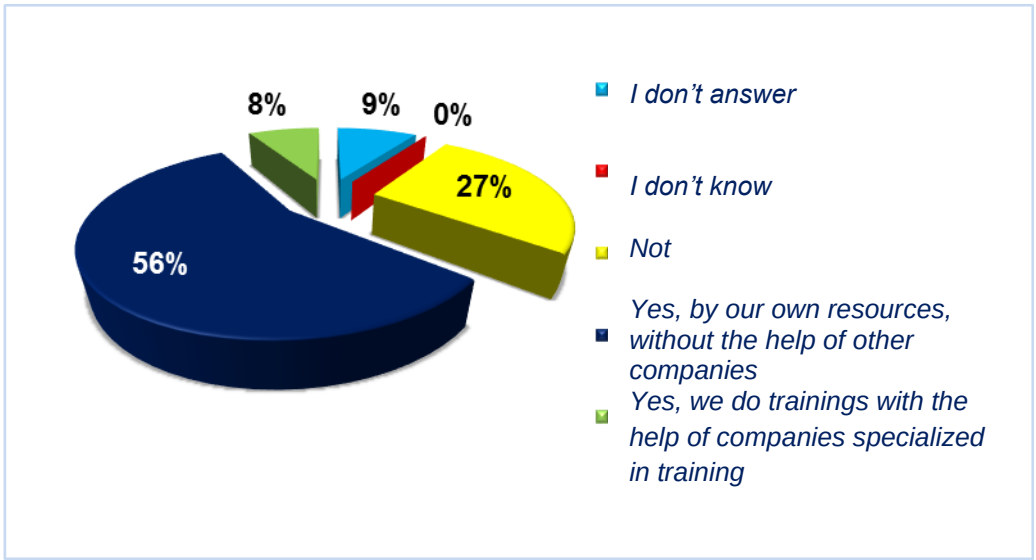



*Diagram III. 49 Do you organize training/professional training courses for the employees?*

Almost one in ten employers said that they manage to provide employees with opportunities for professional training with the support of specialized on-going service providers. In this case the training activities have a higher degree of structure and contain several specific elements: an organized context (program), a series of learning resources that support the acquisition of competencies, resources for evaluation etc.

The fact that only 27% of employers indicate that they do not offer opportunities for learning/professional training now (plus 9% who would not respond to this question) is a good thing in terms of the very low rates recorded by Romania in this area (under 2% according INS) and of the priority represented by the target related to participation in continuous training in the framework of Europe 2020 program.

From the university-company-individual partnership point of view for the development of professional competencies required at the workplace, research data show that employers see in relatively balanced manner this involvement. If we consider the cumulative responses (to a large and very large extent), we see in *Diagram III.51* that there are close expectations to all three stakeholders. 18% of employers who believe that this partnership should be supported in a lesser extent by the companies are still a challenge. Information campaigns on the long term benefits of investing in the professional development of employees, awareness activities concerning one's own needs (such as *balance skills*) to support new strategies for human resource development could reduce in the future the number of such category of employers.

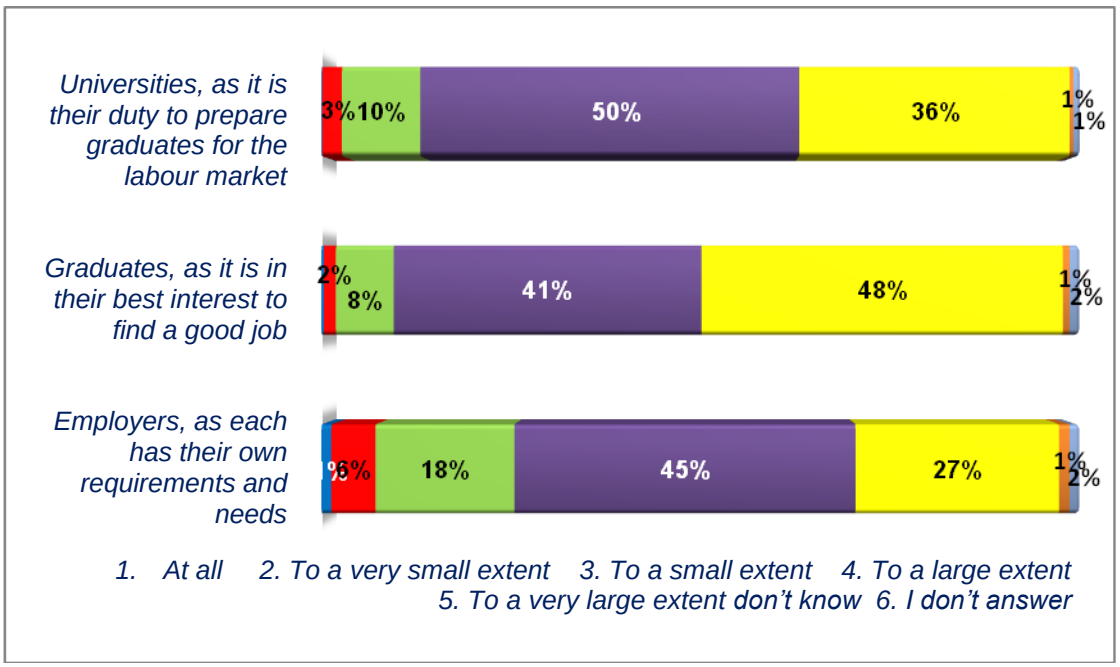



*Diagram III. 50 To what extent each of the following stakeholders should make sure the graduates hold the required skills and competencies to meet the requirements of the workplace?*

Only approximately one in ten organizations participating in the research indicate that they are frequently or permanently using an important tool in the human resources strategies, internship. Almost 70% of the employers say they have never used young

people working voluntarily for a certain period of time in order to be familiar or even specialize in a particular field.

We thus see a very important potential for the future to overcome the vicious circle observed when obtaining a first job, often accessible only to those who can demonstrate previous professional experience. This requires an organized framework for cooperation and policy that should stimulate/support companies in this respect.

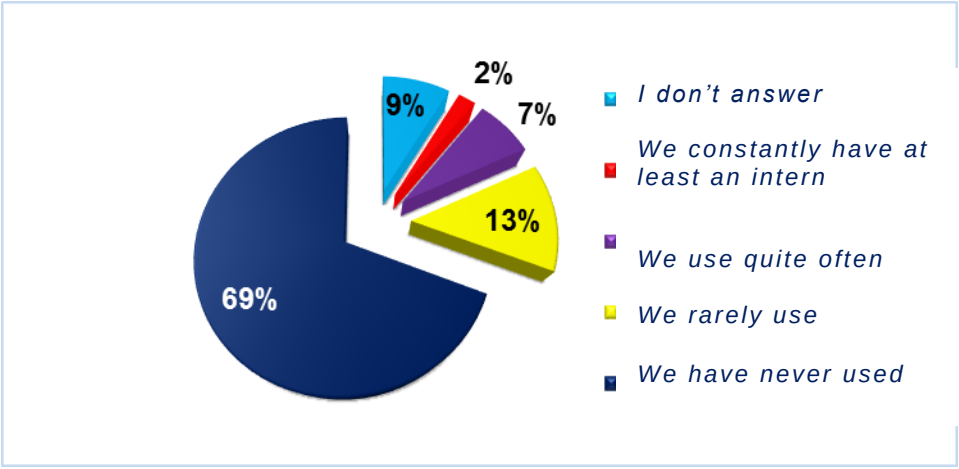



*Diagram III. 51 Does your organization use to utilise interns – youngsters who work voluntarily (for free or underpaid) for a period of time having as benefit the fact that they are training/getting familiar with the activity field?*

More than a half of the employers surveyed have a high trust in the higher education institutions, considering that universities largely or mostly succeed in preparing students to meet the requirements of a future.

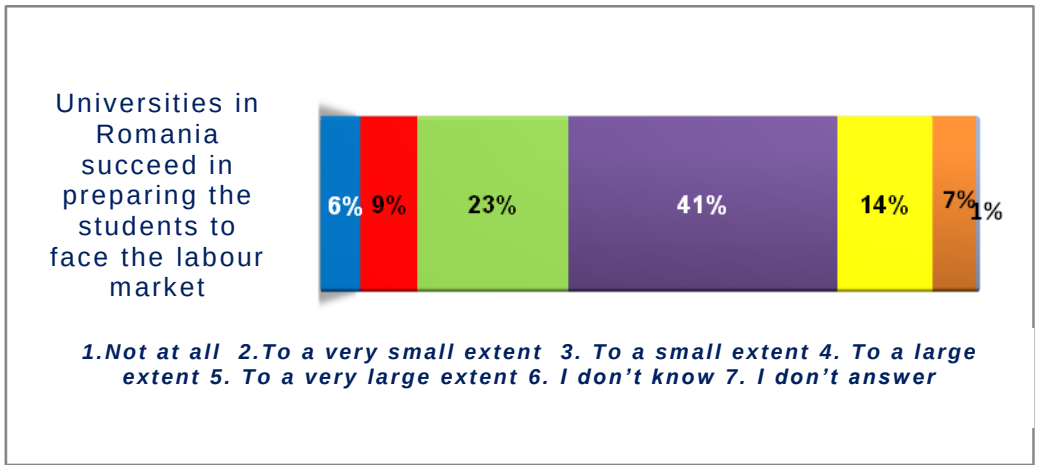



*Diagram III. 52 To what extent do you consider that universities in Romania succeed in preparing the students to face the labour market?*

As it can be seen from *Diagram III.53*, on the opposite end there is 15% of the employers, who trust very little or at all in the ability of universities to develop key competencies for the actual labour market. Most of these opinions are based on the negative experience of employing higher education system graduates, requiring specific theme research in order to understand how such low trust occurs in universities.

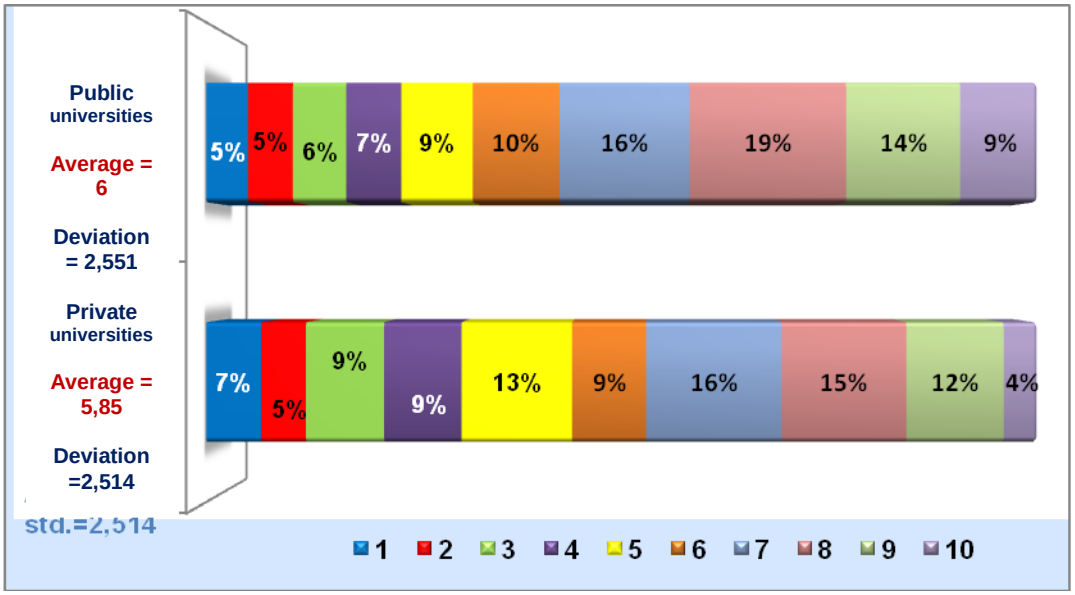



*Diagram III. 53 If you have knowledge on the state and/or private higher education system, what grade would you give…?*

*Diagram III.54* show that both in state education and in the private one there is a very wide variety of opinions on the quality of services they provide, situation also demonstrated by the value recorded by the standard deviation. As average, related to this question state universities recorded a higher score (6.4 compared to 5.8). It can be guaranteed by a 99.99% probability that the difference between the two averages is statistically significant (t = 6.8). Again we find a group of employers with a very low confidence in the quality of universities, the percentage in the case of state education is 16%, while the private sector is of 21%. It is important the systematic analysis of how employers justify this view, individual interviews featuring several explanations.

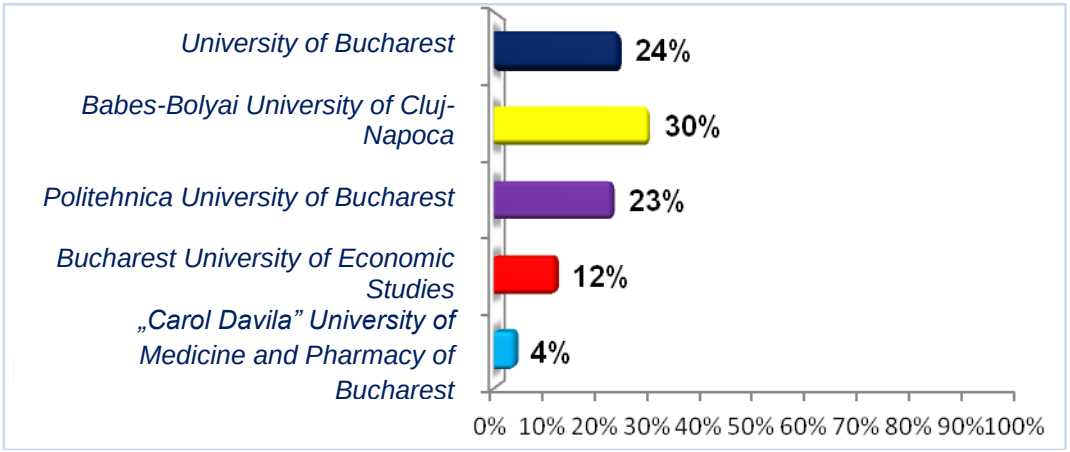



*Diagram III. 54 Which do you believe to be the best 5 universities in Romania?*

Invited to indicate which universities they consider as being the best, employers trust the most universities with tradition in state education, one in Cluj Napoca and four in Bucharest, as one can see in *Diagram III.55*. In interpreting this result we have to consider also the fact that employers in Bucharest have the highest percentage in the total of investigated subjects (22%).

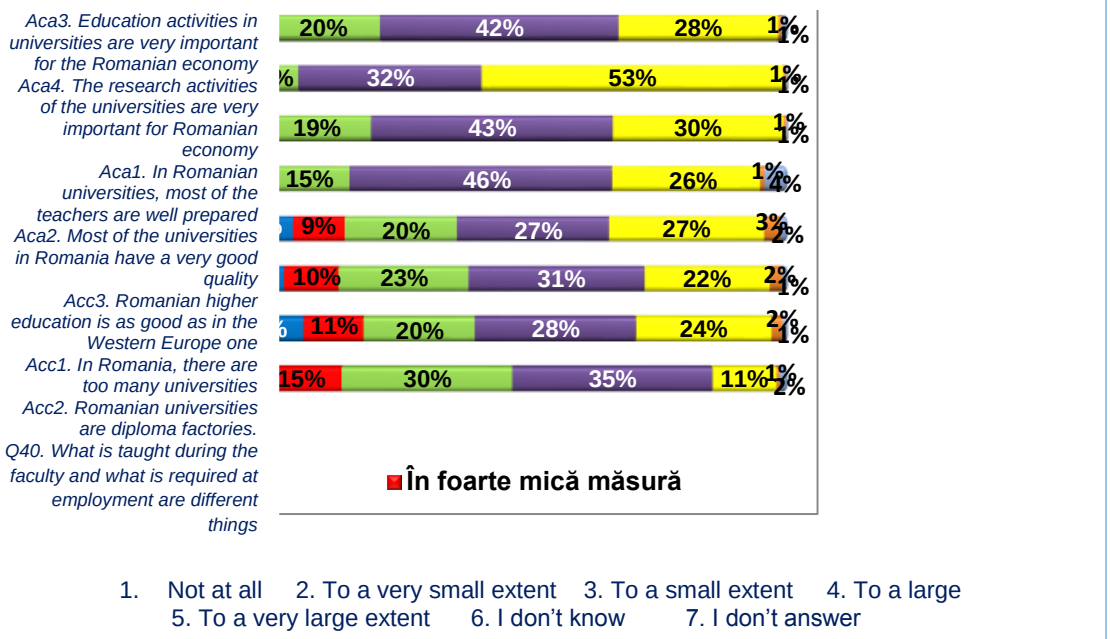



*Diagram III. 55 To what extent do you agree with the following statements referring to the higher education system in Romania?*

A high percentage also have the answers that consider that the higher education system in Romania is not at the same level as in Western countries, here observing a strong dispersion of answers. Thus, 42% of the answers consider that our schools are to a small extent close to similar institutions in the West, while 54% think the opposite, largely agreeing that there are quality related differences between them.

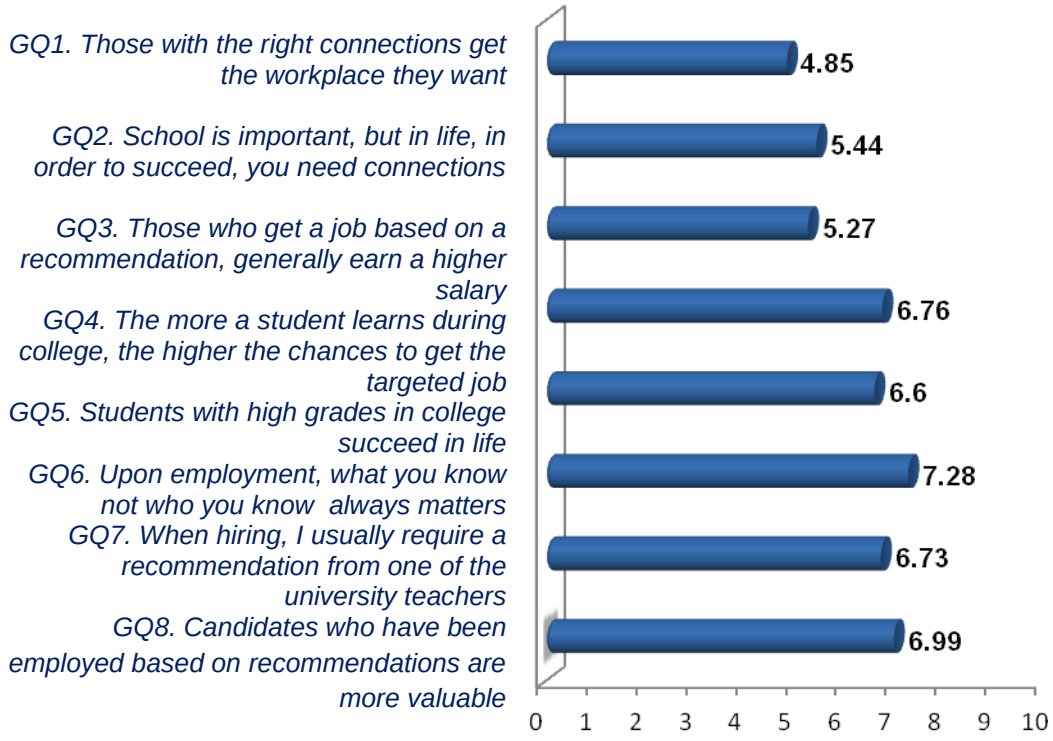



*Diagram III. 56 To what extent do you agree with the following statements?*

Employers have very different opinions in what concerns the extent the success on the work labour depends only on the skills of a graduate or there intervene other factors (relationships, informal support which can facilitate professional insertion). As it can be seen in *Diagram III.57*, employers support the principles of merit, largely agreeing that during employment first matters what you know. However, a closer share of answers are recorded also in case of employers who largely agree that graduates who come with recommendation are more valuable than other candidates.

In matrix III.11 are presented the values of correlation coefficients between the scores given to importance of employability criteria.

Employers who are used to seeking recommendations from the teachers think that persons employed on the basis of such recommendations are more valuable. The relationship between the two variables is direct, of low to medium intensity, statistically significant with a probability of 99.99% (r = 0.482).

Interestingly enough is that employers who grant importance to the recommendations of teachers come from companies with a small number of employees (*Diagram* III.58). The difference between the averages given by employers grouped by company size was examined using the ANOVA test (F = 4.6, sig = 0.004).

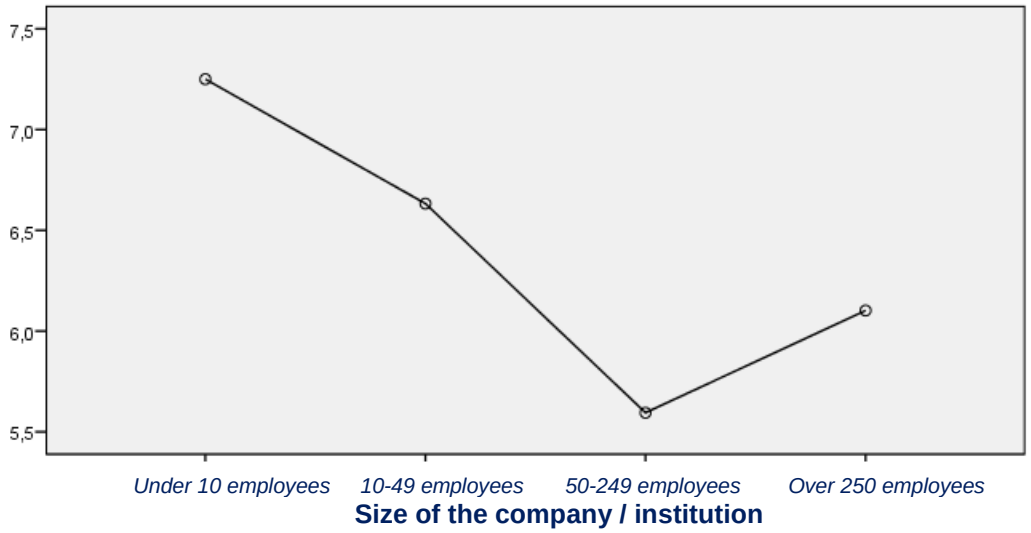



*Diagram III. 57 The average score given by the employers to the importance of recommendation from teachers who teach in universities, according to the size of the company*

Similarly, most employers believe there is a direct relationship between student performance during college and that as employee and that high grades often foresee the professional and personal success. However, there is a relatively high share of employers who see, along with the school other important factors as well for the career success (relationship, recommendations etc.). There is a direct link, weak but statistically significant (for a significance level of 0.01) between the variables "Obtain the workplace they want those with the right connections", "School is important, but in life in order to succeed you need connections "and "Those obtaining a job based on a recommendation generally earn a higher salary". Employers who give importance to personal relationships upon employment believe that these are very important to succeed in life (r = 0.293) and that people with connections earn a higher salary (r = 0.368).

It is important to note, however, that by recommendation the employers understand also valuable additional information provided by a teacher about the potential and skills held by a graduate or student as a candidate.

Matrix III. 11. Correlation coefficients of the employability criteria

| | | GQ1 | GQ2 | GQ3 | GQ4 | GQ5 | GQ6 | GQ7 | GQ8 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| GQ1 | Obtain the workplace they want those with the right connections | 1 | | | | | | | |
| GQ2 | School is important but in life, in order to succeed | .293** | 1 | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | you need connections | | | | | | | | |
| GQ3 | Those obtaining a job based on a recommendation, generally earn a higher salary | .368** | .288** | 1 | | | | | |
| GQ4 | The more a student learns during college, the higher the chances to get the targeted job | .061* | .072** | .183** | 1 | | | | |
| GQ5 | Students with high grades in college succeed in life | -.062* | -.018 | -.022 | .190** | 1 | | | |
| GQ6 | Upon employment always matters what you know not who you know | -.057* | -.047 | -.033 | .050 | .106** | 1 | | |
| GQ7 | When hiring I usually require a recommendation from one of the teachers teaching in university | .011 | .018 | .048 | .185** | .224** | .055* | 1 | |
| GQ8 | Candidates who have been employed based on recommendations are more valuable | .016 | .062* | .080** | .216** | .161** | .003 | .482** | 1 |
| | **Correlation is significant on 0,01 level (bilateral test) | | | | | | | | |
| | *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed). | | | | | | | | |

### 3.4.5 Qualitative study on the perception of employers regarding the quality of HES

**Methodological considerations**

There were interviewed 10 employers in the following fields and were coded as it is shown in table III.23:

*Table III. 23 Participants' profile.*

| Employer identification code | Institution / Company | Field |
|---|---|---|
| **Employer 1** | Commercial Bank Bucharest | Banking |
| **Employer 2** | Integral Consulting R&D | Consultancy, research, development and innovation |
| **Employer 3** | Crescendo International | IT&C applications, solutions and services |
| **Employer 4** | ROMVAC Company SA Bucharest | Medical |
| **Employer 5** | NFG Trade | Constructions |
| **Employer 6** | M.B. Attorney office/Mediation centre | Legal |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Employer 7** | Himalaya Herbal Healthcare Romania | Medical |
| **Employer 8** | Rhode & Schwarz Romania | Sales |
| **Employer 9** | ONG Ruhama Foundation Oradea | ONG |
| **Employer 10** | South Journal in Craiova | Journalism |

*Table III. 24* ***Codes and sub-codes system***

| Code | Sub-code | Fragments/significant units |
|---|---|---|
| University labour-market relationship | Labour market-university correlation | 11 |
| | Research-development relation | 3 |
| Initial training of students | Training strengths | 3 |
| | Training weaknesses | 12 |
| University system performance | System weaknesses | 11 |
| | Training strengths | 13 |
| | Graduate performance | 10 |
| | Causes of the lack of performance | 14 |
| | Improvement strategies | 14 |

Data have been analysed by the identification and descriptive interpretation of the content units, as it is shown in Diagram III.3:

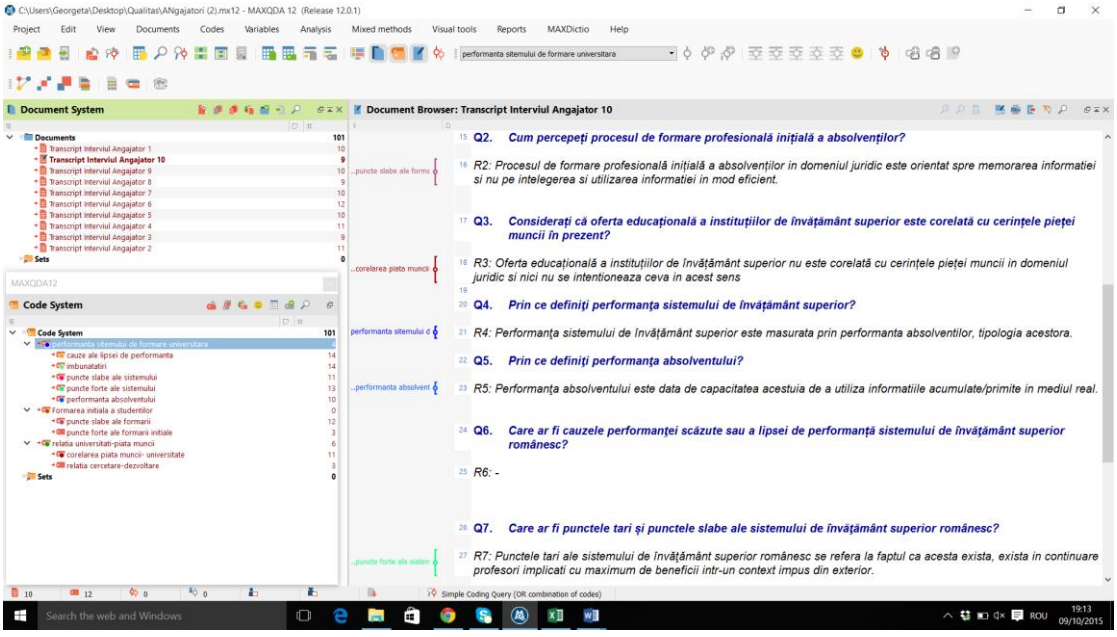



Diagram III.3: Analysis of data by using Maxqda12 program

### *3.4.5.1 Relation between the universities-labour market*

The first issue discussed in the interviews refers to employers' perception on the relationship between university training and graduates entering the labour market. In this regard, participants agree that there are different levels of integration of studies on the labour market and various professional contexts put their mark on these levels. However, there is a shared perception that there is a clear consistency between university training and the objectives and requirements of the labour market.

On the one hand, interview participants consider that the educational offer of universities is not correlated to the practical field:

> *„The educational offer of the higher education institutions is not correlated to the requirements of the labour market. [T.I. Employer 5; Position: 18-18;]*

On the other hand, it is visible that the interdependent relationship between vocational and academic environment, even if there, is not sufficiently organized and systematic. As one of the participants says:

> *„Relationship of the academic environment with the employers/labour market is not organised and permanent; it exists solely in terms of agreements." [T.I. Employer 4; Position: 14-14;]*
>
> *„ Relationship of the academic environment with the employers/labour market is rather sporadic, unsustainable and unpredictable." [T.I. Employer 9; Position: 14-14]*

However, consolidated experiences for the promotion of the employers - universities relationship can also be identified that can be considered best practice cases. One aspect of connection between universities and the labour market is achieved through internships for students.

> *„I could characterize the interest of universities to accommodate the specialized practice of students, as being the main focus in the partnership relationship. The second place is occupied by the joint development of intervention programs to enable teachers, respectively teachers with a specific hypothesis applied research component. Third, I would mention the interest of universities in collaboration to host the work of teachers in practical activities. "[TI Employer 1; Position: 15-15;]*

Another way to promote the relationship with employers is the internship, functional in some areas, but whereto, as one of the employers points out, universities are not focusing on:

> *„I know there are many multinational companies offering internship; unfortunately we have not been contacted by the universities." [TI Employer 3, Position: 14-14]*

Another experience with potential is represented by "clusters" created between universities and companies to boost the academic-practical partnership relationship and to facilitate the employer involvement in academic reforms. It is the successful case of the IT field promoted by the University of Craiova:

> *"We've noticed in the last 2-3 years the concern of the University of Craiova to try to accommodate the requirements of the labour market, in the sense that they created some clusters, have been facilitated some meetings between employers and academic environment whereby the labour market wants to find prepared individuals*

*and to find the way to reform the curriculum. Clusters are focused on the computer – automated part as it is the trend. "[TI Employer 2; Position: 14-14]*

If the relationship between the labour market and the university is not carried out according to the expectations of employers, this happens for various reasons, some having to do with the training offer of universities, other with the competencies of students, while others are rather related to the system.

The perception of employers is that the university is very isolated from actual practice, and that the formative programs do not provide authentic learning, correlated to the real needs of society. The participants consider that:

*"The relationship between the academic environment with the employers/labour market in the legal field is weakly developed at the moment, whereby I am referring to the fact that during training, students know very little about the real typology of the labour market, ending up that upon completion of studies to have little knowledge on the potential of the labour market."[TI Employer 10; Position: 14-14]*

*"The educational offer of the higher education institutions is not correlated to the labour market requirements in the legal field and nor is it intended to do something about it" [T.I Employer 10; Position: 18-18]*

Competencies of students do not meet the real requirements of the employers, as one of the interviewed adds:

*"Graduates are less prepared for the private sector, where challenges are different; there are requirements of entrepreneurship competencies, identification of resources opportunities, partnerships." [T.I. Employer 1; Position: 19-19]*

Lack of a coherence and clear planning concerning the mediation of the relationship university/labour market was signalled by most of the participants:

*„Overall, although they may not have direct knowledge of those factors, I consider that the academic environment does not have a very developed relationship very with employers/labour market, there is no consistent approach, and everything is sporadic and short term." [TI Employer 7; Position: 14-14]*

*"Academic environment relationship with employers/labour market is not orderly, there is no strategy, a plan, and everything is based on relationships." [TI Employer 6; Position: 14-14]*

*"The cause of low performance is the fact that academic relationship with employers / labour market is not orderly." [TI Employer 6; Position: 24-24]*

An interesting aspect of the university-labour market relationship is related to the promotion of the research made on academic level and its transfer to the professional level. In this way, it is mentioned that:

*"In our projects, some academic experts are involved in concrete work, which allows them to relate to the academic reality. In other words, there are created job opportunities for teachers. "[T.I Employer 1; Position: 15-15]*

Along the same line, there is a reference to the possibility of creating patents, innovations during the collaboration between researchers and professionals:

*"I participate very often in international fairs and I can state that the performance of the higher education system is given by products where some educational research*

*institutions succeed to submit products or research results, in invention fairs, where you know Romanians are very honoured."[TI Employer 8; Position: 20-20;]*

In summary, it is considered that in general the academic environment and the labour market establish contextual and sporadic relationships lacking consistency and planning, which emphasizes the differences between the expectations of employers and the formative offer of colleges, as well as the development of skills in students in line with the requirements of the professional environment

### *3.4.5.2 The initial training of students*

Continuing with the previous section, this sub-chapter is making a deep analysis of the employer's view regarding the educational process which is taking place in universities in order to identify the vulnerable and improving points but also the positive aspects which could be maintained and improved.

**Weaknesses of the initial training**

First, the employers are able to identify those aspects which, according to their own experience, could be improved within the formation process. In this matter we can identify different aspects. The first one refers to the students' formation regarding the specific abilities required by the professional environment. On one hand this refers to the theoretical part of the learning process and the superficial approach of the educational process.

*„The initial learning process of the graduates in the legal field is focused on memorizing the information and not on understanding it in order to be used efficiently". (T.I. Employer 10, Position: 16-16)*

On the other hand, this refers to the insufficient number of academic internships and thus, to an insufficient development of professional practical abilities of students, mainly the transversal ones:

*„It would be really useful to have more practical abilities and a different attitude towards certain social issues where we can find a negative opinion in regards to vulnerable groups." (T.I. Employer 1; Position 17-17)*

*"There is a good theoretical training part in the initial learning process of graduates but many practical issues are learnt while actually working; the graduates have less knowledge of the needs and specific requirements of some employers who would like to see more experienced graduates." (T.I. Employer 8; Position 16-16)*

*"The graduates should have a good theoretical background but at the same time less structured on the specific requirements of some employers who would like to see more practical abilities and initiative." (T.I. Employer 4, Position 16-16; Author: Georgeta; 08/10/2015 21:03; Weight score: 0])*

Transversal competencies such as communication, adaptability, team work or initiative are some of the main concerns of employers. Although the majority of them consider that the focus on practical abilities should be a priority, there are also a few of them who appreciate the training of students and signal the paradox between the

lack of a practical formation and the capacity of adjustment of students to the realities of the actual working environment:

> *"In theory the relationship is extremely weak but in practice this becomes a paradox because students are extremely adaptable." (T. I. Employer 6; Position 16-16).*

**Strengths of the initial training**

Although the employers' opinion has mainly focused on highlighting the difficulties and vulnerable points, some of them acknowledge the positive aspects of the initial training process:

> *"The students' knowledge cover a fairly wide range of areas which is a good thing, they have a general knowledge in the field which is also an advantage. They are focused on this area which is a good thing" (T.I. Employer1, Position 17-17)*

A solid theoretical background, the educational tradition and well-trained teachers, they all represent elements with a good potential to change the academic system, as it is mentioned by some of the interviewers:

> *"The strong points of the Romanian higher education system are all the positive answers of the previous questions, the fact that we have a good tradition means we must also have a good advertising"(T.I. Employer 6; Position 26-26)*
>
> *"The basic knowledge is well taught and well learnt. The initial learning process is very efficient; the information is interesting and well taught" (T.I. Employer 5, Position 16-16)*

The chapter regarding the vulnerabilities and the strong points of the educational system performance is continued and completed below where the perception of employers regarding its results is deeply analysed.

### *3.4.5.3 Performance of the university education system*

We begin this section with the employers' opinions regarding the performance of the higher education system. There are different opinions and they go from giving credibility to the system and considering it a positive one to those giving many critics and recommendations for improvement.

The employers define the performance of the system differently: from assimilating it with the quality of the students to more pragmatic ideas regarding the level of graduates' integration in the labour market:

> *"The performance of the higher education system is measured by the performance of the graduates, their typology" (T.I. Employer 10, Position 21-21)*
>
> *"The performance of the higher education system is defined by the percentage of the graduates who are able to become a part of the labour market, their employability." (T.I. Employer 9, Position 20-20)*
>
> *"The performance of the higher education system is given by a direct involvement in the economical needs but also by the results of the students" (T.I. Employer 7, position 20-20)*

**Causes of the lack of performance**

Considering the lack of performance of the system, the opinions go in the direction of identifying the main responsible parties in regards to the quality of the higher education system: the state, the central authorities, the traditional mentality of the decision makers, the poor relation with the labour market (as it was highlighted in the initial report).

One category of causes is represented by the systemic elements. In this regards, the political and administrative measures are mentioned and they are considered as inadequate and not promoting the competence and the performance of the system:

> *"The main responsible in ensuring a good higher education system are the state, the government, the ministry, the civil society and less the employers" (T.I. Employer 10, position 32-32)*
>
> *"The lack of performance of the higher education system is given by the fact that it is stuck in certain patterns" (T.I Employer 9, Position 24-24)*
>
> *"The main responsible in ensuring a good higher education system is The Ministry of Education together with the ministry of Labour "(T.I. Employer 9, position 31-31)*
>
> *"We are all responsible in some extent but the main responsible in ensuring a good educational system is the state/ the government for not giving the necessary funds like they have been promising for many years" (T.I. Employer 7, Position 30-30)*
>
> *"The main responsible in ensuring a good higher education system is the Government and the lack of a strategy." (T.I. Employer 6, Position 31-31)*

There are also some other system-related issues such as the teachers' salaries and the way teachers can be promoted, elements which generate the decrease in performance:

> *"The reasons for a decrease in performance are the low wages of teachers which also generate their lack of involvement during courses and thus a poor training of students" (T.I. Employer 3, Position 24-24)*
>
> *"We need young well-paid teachers. A new strategy should be implemented and respected for a long period of time." (T.I. Employer 2, Position 30-30)*

A second category of causes are the ones related to the universities' management. Here we can identify, on one hand, a number of dysfunctions concerning the leaders of universities:

> *"The main responsible with the provision of a good higher education system is us, the students who go to courses and it's us who should be more involved, then there should be the teachers, the managers and the budgets given " (T.I. Employer 5, Position 31-31)*
>
> *"The main responsible with the provision of a good higher education system are the managers." (T.I. Employer 4, Position 32-32)*

On the other hand, another cause for the lack of performance of the system is an intrinsic one and is referring to the lack of interest and motivation of students and to the formation system promoted by the teachers. As one of the interviewers says:

> *"The causes for a low performance of the Romanian higher education system are given by low expectations" (T.I. Employer 5, Position 24-24)*

*"It is important that universities should be interested in giving a good quality education based on a continuous dialogue between teachers and students, on relevant studies, on debates." (T.I. Employer 3, Position 31-31)*

Finally, in the same category of universities management, we can also include the admission procedure which is seen by many as being very flexible and promoting a lack of competence.

*"The cause of the lack of performance is given by the easiness of admission in universities, the idea of university graduate has no value any more, there is no selection, and everyone should be a student. There are illiterate students with a diploma, without any respect for a diploma." (T.I. Employer 2, Position 24-24).*

### Weaknesses of the system

Furthermore, the interviewers were asked to identify the weak points of the system, by giving examples.

One category represents the study programmes which are not related to the requirements of the labour market and the real needs of the students:

*"The weaknesses are related to certain modules in the curriculum which should be changed. The selected themes for study should be linked to the students' needs which mean a tighter collaboration between universities and also the existence of a bigger flexibility." (T.I. Employer 1, Position 28-28).*

*"The weakness of the higher education system refers to the low adjustment to the labour market; there should be certain study modules, a legislation to force the private companies to participate in the training of students with the help of the Ministry of labour". (T.I. Employer 9, Position 27-27).*

We can also include here the lack of an efficient infrastructure in the teaching process and research. As one of the participants is mentioning:

*"The weakness of the higher education system is the lack of teaching materials, the lack of equipment, the lack of libraries and the lack of a relationship with private companies." (T.I Employer 5, Position 27-27)*

Another category of weaknesses of the system refers to the deficiencies of strategies and vision on a long term which could involve the university in the social development plans:

*"The lack of a vision regarding the directions of development of the economy in accordance with the development needs of the higher education system, the lack of a strategy." (T.I Employer 8, Position 27-27)*

### Strengths of the system

Although the discourse of the identification of the weaknesses of the system is predominant, the participants have also added a series of positive aspects which should be taken into account when we analyse the academic performance. Here we can identify some elements which are linked to the Romanian culture and academic tradition: the quality of the teachers, the history of universities, the formative premises of the students.

The quality of the teachers is a key-element recognized by the majority of the interviewers:

> *"A system having people, resources and which operates well is a strength. Another strong point is the history of universities. The pool of recruitment is another important aspect as well as an investment in the pre-schooler. "(T.I. Employer 1, Position 27-27)*
>
> *"The strengths of the higher education system refer to the fact that it exists, that there are teachers who are deeply involved with maximum benefits in an imposed context." (T, I Employer 10, Position 27-27)*
>
> *"The strengths of the higher education system are represented by the teachers involved." (T.I. Employer 5, Position 26-26)*

The quality of the students is another key-element:

> *"The strengths of the higher education system refer to the fact that it is on top among other international universities having in mind the pupils who won at Olympiads, high technology or aero spatial contests. (T.I. Employer 9, Position 26-26).*

### *3.4.5.4 Performances of graduates*

The interviewers consider that a graduate has performance if he/she has the necessary abilities to find a job at the end of the studies:

> *"The performance of the graduate would be defined by how fast they could integrate in the labour market, by the mobility to change if required by certain jobs." (T.I. Employer 9, Position 22-22)*
>
> *"The performance of the graduate depends on the way one could integrate on the labour market, by the ability to adjust to the specific requirements of a job." (T.I. Employer 8, Position 22-22).*

Once again, as it was mentioned in one of the previous chapters, the focus is on the development of the student's abilities as key-elements of his performance. The participants talk not only about the specific abilities of this field but especially about the transversal ones which would allow the graduate to adapt to the professional environment and face future changes:

> *"The performance of the graduate is measured by one's level of knowledge, by the way one is able to cooperate, the team spirit, and one's input on innovation and relationships." (T.I. Employer 5, Position 22-22)*
>
> *"The performance of the graduate required by the employer is a mixture between one's professional competencies and abilities; by the way one can solve problems, communication, involvement, team work. The graduates are very well trained from a theoretical point of view." (T.I. Employer 3, Position 22-22).*

The performance is also defined through the quality of the implementation of certain types of interventions or, by the ability of the graduate to promote changes at work:

> *"Creating a certain intervention , adopting patterns to different cases, to communities, to a group, to people we work with is either given by the way people know how to influence the taking of decisions in favour of the group, of the community." (T.I. Employer 1, Position 23-23)*

**Strategies of improvement of the university system**

One last chapter of analysis is represented by the possible solutions to improve the academic performance from the point of view of the employer. We can emphasize the main contributions:

- **The adjustment of the study programmes to the specific of the labour market by an active involvement in the professional environment, in their design and implementation at the university level:**
  *"The list of the study areas within a certain specialty could be accepted, so that a mechanism should exist to regulate, to force the university structures which implement the curricula, so that the final version would be decided after a consultation with the people involved." (T.I. Employer 1, Position 30-30).*
  *"The academic environment should concentrate on applicability, and the practical utility of the knowledge acquired, to be more involved in a relation with the economic parties." (T.I. Employer 8).*
- **Promoting a competitive system of admission to university, by emphasizing the role of selection:**
  *"In order to see an increase of quality of the higher education system there must be an admittance selection and to partially give up the idea of a profitable business in this area." (T.I. Employer 10, Position 30-30)*
- **Developing collaborative projects between universities and companies, including at international level:**
  *"In order to increase the quality of the higher education system I suggest the participation in European projects together with private economic partners." (T.I. Employer 8; Position 29-29)*

## 3.5 Comparative analysis of the perception of social stakeholders

Following the global evaluation of the higher education institutions (presented by Diagram III.59), we can notice that state universities have positive remarks (with average marks above 8 on a scale from 1 to 10) given by students and teachers. The private universities are considered to be weaker especially by teachers (in the teachers' evaluation there is a 2.5 points distance between the average mark obtained by the state universities and the private ones). The difference in the marks given by these two social stakeholders, considering the type of the university involved, is important statistically speaking with a probability of 99.99%. In regards to the employers, they consider that the educational institutions in Romania are mediocre (the state universities with an average mark of 6.44) and weak (the private ones with an average mark of 5.83).

This analysis from the point of view of the three social stakeholders shows that there is a big difference between the state and the private universities, in the favour of state universities.

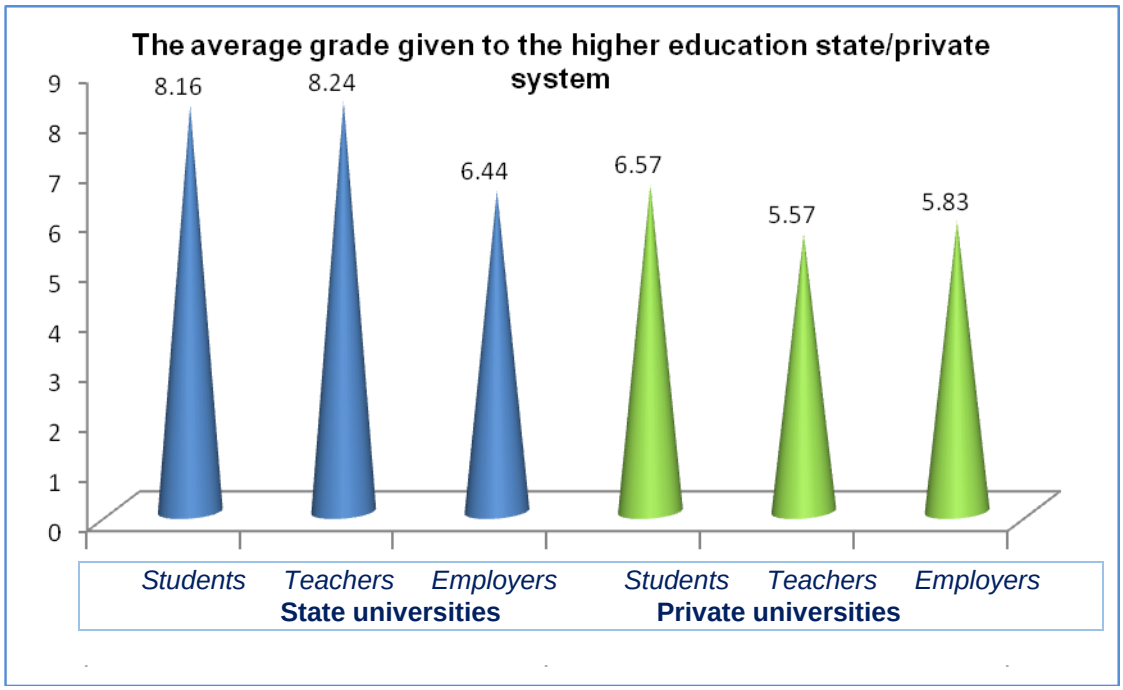



*Diagram III. 58. Average grade given to the state/private higher education system*

On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 meaning “at all” and 5 – “to a very large extent”), the respondents have evaluated the role of the universities, of students and employers in forming abilities and necessary competencies to meet the requirements of a job.
The students and then the universities have the main role, in the opinion of the three social stakeholders (students, teachers and employers). (*Diagram III.59*)

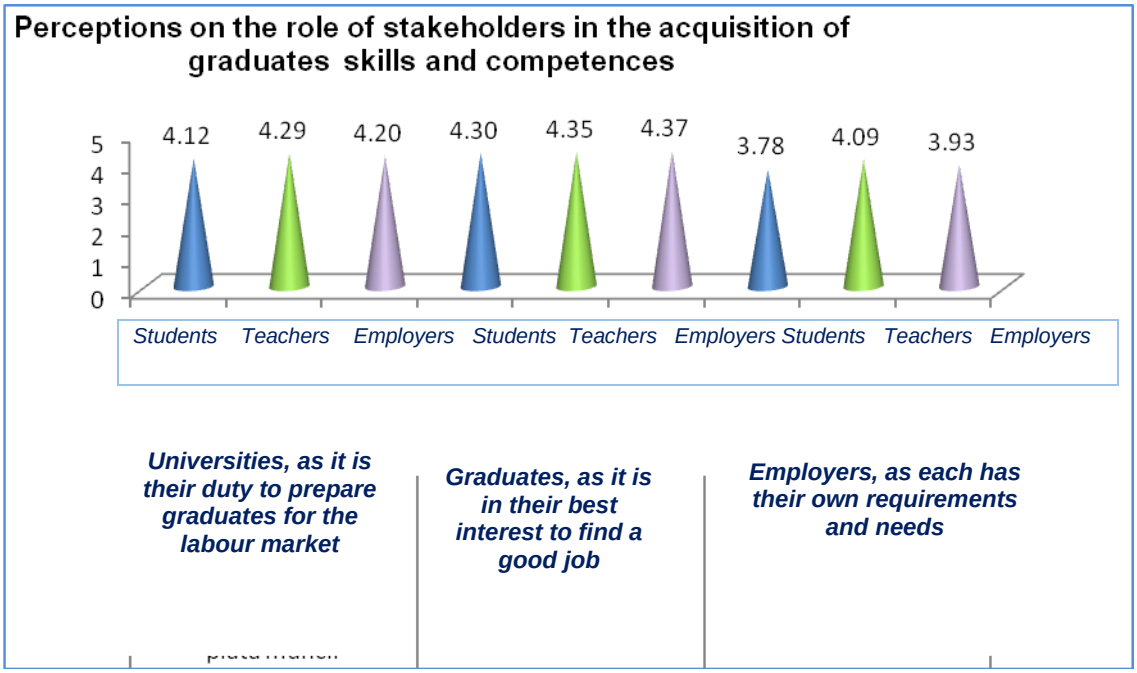



*Diagram III. 59 Perception of the role of the social stakeholders in the acquisition of graduates skills and competencies*

On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 meaning total disagreement and 10 total agreement), the respondents have shown their agreement to a number of enunciations in regards to the role of education.

The majority of teachers and students consider that it is important to study well during the studies because the chances of getting the desired job become very high. (Diagram III.60)

The employers consider on the other hand that the most important is the student's knowledge.

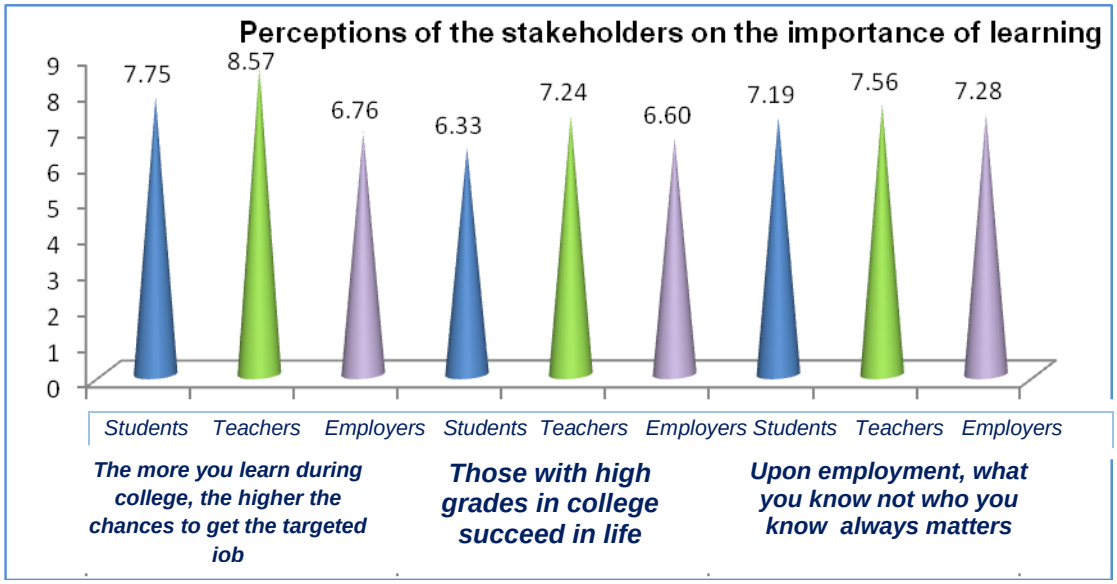



Diagram III. 60 Perceptions of social stakeholders on the importance of learning

In order to be able to find a job, a graduate must acquire certain abilities and competencies. These are analysed through the eyes of the three stakeholders. The students – to what extent they believe that the university can form these abilities and competencies , the teachers- to what extent they believe that the university contributes to getting these abilities and competencies and the employers-how important all of them are. In table III.25, we can see the average marks given for each ability / competence by the social stakeholders.

The perceptions of the three social stakeholders are different with one exception. All of them consider that the analytical thinking is very important. The students also consider that the "Critical thinking " is very important and also "the ability to organise oneself effectively."
The teachers consider that "besides "analytical thinking" the students should also have a positive attitude towards work and the ability to use a computer.
The employers consider it is very important the "good knowledge of the field of employment" and "the ability to communicate (with the co-workers, supervisors, clients etc.) ".

*Table III. 25 Average grades given for each skill/competencies by the social stakeholders*

| | Students | Teachers | Employers |
|---|---|---|---|
| The ability to be convincing when arguing a point of view | 3.88 | 4.04 | 3.60 |
| The ability to edit in writing a concise and pointed | 3.88 | 3.94 | 3.53 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| argument | | | |
| Analytical thinking | 4.00 | 4.13 | 4.37 |
| Critical thinking | 3.93 | 3.92 | 3.90 |
| Creativity | 3.82 | 3.93 | 3.81 |
| The ability to use the computer / modern technology | 3.84 | 4.10 | 3.87 |
| The ability to speak and write in a foreign language | 3.60 | 3.66 | 3.59 |
| The ability to work in a team | 3.89 | 4.08 | 4.01 |
| The ability to lead a team | 3.77 | 3.68 | 3.42 |
| The ability to organise oneself effectively | 3.92 | 3.95 | 3.57 |
| Positive attitude towards work | 3.87 | 4.13 | 3.81 |
| Entrepreneurship | 3.63 | 3.53 | |
| Good knowledge of the field of employment | | | 4.11 |
| The ability to communicate (with the co-workers, supervisors, clients etc.) | | | 4.09 |
| Punctuality | | | 3.91 |
| Proactivity | | | 3.94 |

We consider that every national educational system – regardless of the type, level, area, etc – has the obligation to provide to its own students a good education, and it's the state duty to develop the national academic environment and to find ways to keep the graduates in the country. Certainly, they will be a part of the social-economic development, and they will make a contribution to the increasing of the academic prestige and to the improvement of the educational environment.

## 3.6 Conclusions and the SWOT analysis of HES quality

The answers given by the teachers, students and social stakeholders highlight a series of positive aspects but also a series of weak points of HES in regards to the educational performance and the accomplishment of the HEI mission. Without the intention of making a comprehensive SWOT analysis, some opportunities and dangers can be highlighted for the positive evolution of HES so that a series of strategic directions could be refined in order to provide a good quality.

By structuring the results obtained considering the information given by the respondents on the basis of the pattern used in the analysis, we could see a number of positive and negative aspects but also some opportunities and vulnerabilities connected to the structural, human and relational capital from an internal perspective of the stakeholders involved in the educational process, respectively the teachers and the students. (Table III.26 and 27.)

From the ***external perspective***, respectively from the employers stand point, the analysis shows the method of capitalization of the educational processes results, these being analysed separately (Table III.28).

*Table III. 26 Summarization of the positive and negative aspects underlined by the teachers and students in questionnaires and interviews*

| Dimension | STRENGTHS | WEAKNESSES |
|---|---|---|
| **STRUCTURAL CAPITAL** | | |
| 1.1 Infrastructure | ↳ HEI infrastructure generally appropriate for the educational process, especially the IT one<br>↳ Appropriate accommodation for students<br>↳ Existence of libraries and related quality services | ↳ Lack of proper endowments of the specialty seminary and laboratory rooms<br>↳ Lack of availability of laboratory equipment |
| 1.2 Educational offer | ↳ Wide educational offer<br>↳ | ↳ Structural deficiencies in the provision of an appropriate educational offer to the requirements of the market (specializations and number of available seats) on HES level |
| 1.3 Funding and investments | ↳ The existence of funding from the state budget for state HEI<br>↳ Existence of funding for research from the national budget | ↳ Insufficient funding and investments, from the educational perspective as well as where research activities are concerned<br>↳ Dissatisfaction of the teachers regarding the revenues obtained from the teaching activity and research |
| 1.4 Teaching, learning, evaluation process | ↳ Teaching and evaluation methods adjusted to the educational process centred on the student<br>↳ Predominance of modern didactic methods<br>↳ The more frequent use of the online tools within the educational process<br>↳ Availability and support given by the teachers during consultations and career development<br>↳ Study program as schedule<br>↳ Utility of practical programs<br>↳ Variety of resources for individual study | ↳ Too many series and groups of students<br>↳ Online tools insufficiently used to the formative evaluation of student<br>↳ Reminiscence of some old teaching-learning methods (dictation, memorization) and the lack of methods whereby there are developed abilities required on the labour market: creativity, entrepreneurship, transversal competencies<br>↳ Absence of students from courses/seminaries<br>↳ Absenteeism of teachers from |

| Dimension | STRENGTHS | WEAKNESSES |
|---|---|---|
| | | class<br>↳ Narrow range of optional and extra subjects<br>↳ Narrow range of practical stages the universities provide<br>↳ Insufficient time assigned by students to individual study |
| 1.5 Management, policy and internal procedures | ↳ Existence of quality assurance policies on HEI level, being applied evaluation procedures of the educational process<br>↳ The good quality of evaluation and structuring of received feedback<br>↳ The transparency of university life<br>↳ Information facilities for students<br>↳ High level of confidence in the university (quality processes, social prestige) | ↳ Lack of long-term strategies<br>↳ Lack of management / efficient control on HEI level<br>↳ Lack of availability of the administrative staff (secretariat)<br>↳ Lack of stringent selection criteria for admission to HEI<br>↳ The evaluation is performed mostly at the end of a class<br>↳ Evaluations are not used properly in development/updating of the educational programs and qualifying courses for teachers<br>↳ Lack of adequate involvement of students in the educational process evaluation<br>↳ Lack of transparency on the results of the evaluation of teachers by students<br>↳ Lack of awareness of students on the duties of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education |
| 2. HUMAN RESOURCES | | |
| 2.1 Teachers | ↳ Mostly well prepared teachers<br>↳ Undertaking by teachers of their role in education<br>↳ The existence and operation of the performance evaluation process of teachers | ↳ Existence of teachers without adequate academic skills<br>↳ Lack of adequate consideration for the research activity<br>↳ Too many subjects for one teacher |
| 2.2. Research personnel | ↳ Existence of research personnel<br>↳ Introduction of the research results as a criteria in the evaluation of teachers | ↳ Insufficient number of staff members involved in research |

| Dimension | STRENGTHS | WEAKNESSES |
|---|---|---|
| 2.3. Students | ↳ Acquisition of skills required for employment by most students<br>↳ Gaining awareness on the importance of preparing during the university study years by students | ↳ Inappropriate training degree at pre-university level |
| 2.4. Graduates | ↳ Good training degree of graduates (acquired skills and competencies during the study)<br>↳ The ability to integrate professionally and socially (increased chance in gaining employment) | ↳ Deficiencies regarding the employment in the field they've prepared for |
| 3. RELATIONAL RESOURCES | | |
| 3.1. Relation with students | ↳ The existence of good communication in teacher-student relationship<br>↳ The use of online communication with students | ↳ Too high a number of students assigned to one teacher |
| 3.2. Relationships and partnerships with the academic and research environment | ↳ The existence of cooperation with entities in the socio-economic and research for the joint execution of research<br>↳ The existence of mobility programs for students and teachers funded by European funds (Erasmus) | ↳ Lack of a stable frame of cooperation with the research activities |
| 3.3. Relationships with the socio-economic environment | ↳ Existence of partnership agreements with entities in the business environment, especially for the performance of practical and internship activities | ↳ Insufficient time assigned to practical activities |

*Table III. 27 Opportunities and threats highlighted by teachers and students in questionnaires and interviews*

| Dimension | OPORTUNITIES | THREATS |
|---|---|---|
| ↳ **STRUCTURAL CAPITAL** | | |
| **1.1 Infrastructure** | ↳ Access to technology<br>↳ Existence of a modern infrastructure for the most part | ↳ Lack of IT performance infrastructure at intra and inter-institutional level<br>↳ Lack of strategies for sharing resources, especially for research infrastructures |
| **1.2** | ↳ Implementing curriculum | ↳ Structural deficits and of the |

| Dimension | OPORTUNITIES | THREATS |
|---|---|---|
| **Educational offer** | standards<br>↳ Diversification of education<br>↳ Permanent updating of the educational offerings | definition of long-term strategies<br>↳ Insufficient calibration of the educational offer to the socio-economic realities<br>↳ Lack of educational and professional flexibility<br>↳ Lack of flexible programs for choosing subjects depending on the student's interests and professional project |
| **1.3 Funding and investments** | ↳ Existence of resources of European funding dedicated to the increase of HEI capabilities, especially within the field of research | ↳ Reduced financial resources designated from the national budget for education and research<br>↳ Difficulties in accessing the funding resources |
| **1.4 Teaching, learning, evaluation process** | ↳ University autonomy<br>↳ The focus of the education and training process on the student<br>↳ Orientation of education on skills acquisition | ↳ Maintaining outdated teaching methods<br>↳ Poor utilization of the potential of technology<br>↳ Insufficient time assigned to practical activities<br>↳ Insufficient support for students during practice/internship<br>↳ Low importance given to transversal skills |
| **1.5 Management, policies and internal procedures** | ↳ Existence of internal policies and procedures | ↳ Organizational and performing management deficiencies |
| **2. HUMAN RESOURCES** | | |
| **2.1 Teachers** | ↳ Existence and operation of a teachers evaluation unitary system | ↳ Low attractiveness of the status of a teacher for the younger generation<br>↳ Insufficient emphasis placed on continuous training of teachers<br>↳ Insufficient involvement in research<br>↳ Lack of cohesion of academic staff |
| **2.2. Research** | ↳ Increase of the proactive behaviour of students and the | ↳ The demographic evolution (negative natural growth, |

| Dimension | OPORTUNITIES | THREATS |
|---|---|---|
| **personnel** | degree of making them responsible in the definition of the professional path | negative migration balance)<br>↳ Scarce educational training within the pre-university system and low baccalaureate graduation |
| **2.3. Students** | ↳ Increase of students employability | ↳ Maintaining a gap between the academic and socio-economic, both positively and negatively, so that graduates do not always find a job on the level of their training and in the field of specialization followed during BA/MA studies |
| **2.4. Graduates** | ↳ Good level of preparation of graduates (skills and competencies acquired during studies)<br>↳ The ability to integrate professionally and socially (better chances in getting a job) | ↳ Deficiencies in finding a job in the field they prepared for |
| **3. RELATIONSHIP CAPITAL** | | |
| **3.1. Relationships with students** | ↳ Ensuring open communication between student and teacher<br>↳ Use of the online environment for communication and sharing of materials | ↳ The high number of students assigned to a teacher, which creates difficulties in communication and provision of adequate support during the educational process<br>↳ Sporadic involvement of students/MA in research<br>↳ Insufficient attention to extra-curricular activities |
| **3.2. Relationships and partnerships with the academic and research environment** | National wide<br>↳ Existence of national programs dedicated to the improvement of HEI performance within the field of research | National wide<br>↳ Deficiencies in the inter-systemic communication<br>↳ Lack of solid partnerships between universities national wide |
| | International wide<br>↳ Cooperation facilities within the European academic and the research area<br>↳ The existence of European mobility programs for students | International wide<br>↳ Low competitiveness of Romanian HEI internationally<br>↳ The ability to receive students/teachers in mobility programs |

| Dimension | OPORTUNITIES | THREATS |
|---|---|---|
| | (study and practice) and teachers (teaching and training)<br>↳ The existence of international cooperative programs on HEI level and research entities | ↳ Underperformance in research for some HEI |
| **3.3. Relationships with the socio-economic environment** | ↳ The existence of a framework for cooperation and stable partnerships between academic and socio-economic environment<br>↳ The existence of programs/projects performed in partnership between the academic environment and stakeholders within the socio-economic environment | ↳ Deficiencies in the operation of the trinomial education - research - socio-economic environment<br>↳ Lack of availability of specialists to assist in the training of young graduates<br>↳ Lack of a strategy of HEI to attract practitioners in academic and research activities<br>↳ Insufficient permeability of certain economic stakeholders to the current dynamics and to the adoption of new technologies<br>↳ Lack of strategies on the level of socio-economic stakeholders to capitalize the potential of knowledge and technology provided by the academic and research environment |

*Source: Answers collected by means of survey and interviews with students and teachers*

Integrating the ***perceptions of teachers and students opinions***, and statistical data relating to the matters concerning HES reveals that, in many respects, there is a consistency between the evaluation of HES quality issues and quantitative aspects revealed by statistics. The conclusions of the comparative analysis are presented according to the structure of the evaluation model.

Regarding the ***HEI infrastructure*** (classrooms, seminar rooms / laboratories, computers, libraries), both statistical data and students' perception reveal the existence of adequate facilities. Teachers rated the overall work environment (including infrastructure) positively (average score of 8.33 out of 10). However, certain nuances were revealed during interviews made with teachers, respectively the lack of an updated library book fund or deficiencies in endowment of laboratories with adequate technology. Another important aspect is related to the accessibility to these facilities. Students mentioned the existence of educational resources and libraries,

appreciating the services offered in this respect, but stressed the limitations in the availability of laboratory facilities.

***The educational offer*** has grown and diversified in recent years, as confirmed by statistical data. However, interviews with teachers from the academic environment signalled a gap between the supply and actual market needs, such as types of specialization and number of seats. From this point of view, this underlines the structural deficiencies and internal communication of the HES, which prevents a better correlation of the educational offer with the actual requirements and a corresponding improvement thereof.

***The higher education funding*** according to the answers provided by teachers showed a negative aspect, strongly emphasized by the academic staff, respectively the lack of adequate funding of the higher education system. Teachers' opinion is consistent with the statistical data that clearly shows an underfunding of the higher education system (steady decrease of GDP allocations for higher education, from 1.33% in 2008 to 0.72% in 2013). This is a cause for various deficiencies reported with regards to the teaching process, respectively a larger number of students per series/groups, improper endowment of seminar rooms/laboratory, demotivation of teachers due to revenues which are inconsistent with the preparation and effort. A lack of funds for education and research leads to a vulnerability of HES, which under underfunding conditions is not able to fulfil its mission in a quality manner. However, prioritization of research within the development strategies and improvement of HES is absolutely necessary because this area remains vulnerable.

The ***educational process*** is perceived as the core of HES, this being largely the mission of HEI. The teachers think by 78% that the didactic activity represents the meaning of HEI (45% think that this is important to a great extent and 33% stated that this is important to a large extent). Consequently, teachers respondents indicated by 73% that funding should be made according to the didactic process (27% think that this must count heavily, while 46% believe that this indicator is largely important). Thus follows a lesser emphasis on research compared to the educational process, which is also maintained with regards to the evaluation criteria for the evaluation of the work of teachers.

The quality of the teaching process is diminished by the large number of students by series/groups (43% believe that the number of students in class is too high, and 38% believe that the number of those attending seminaries is far too high), which does not allow the quality assurance of the didactic activity, especially with concern to the student-centred educational process because teachers cannot assign enough time to each student, according to their specific needs. This fact that was pointed out by teachers is confirmed by statistics showing that the number of teachers peaked in 2007/2008 academic year, where after the trend has been decreasing, while the

number of students in groups and number of series within the years of study increased.

Regarding the quality of teaching, both teachers and students consider the teaching methods have improved, being used modern methods. Students reject 43% of outdated practices (the dictation) and support almost by 90% the interactive methods that give a chance to communicate, to be active during the educational process. Related to the independent study, the number of hours designated to students is relatively small (average 2.55 hours/day), compared to the actual learning tasks and time invested by learners in European universities. Students appreciate the practical work for the acquisition of skills required for social integration (84% of the students in private institutions and 72% of the students in state institutions). Related to the diversity of internships, students are not fully satisfied. Thus, those learning in state universities are very demanding and more than 50% appreciate mostly to a lesser extent that there are diversified internships provided. Students from private universities evaluate positively by 93% the diversity of internships provided for them. A point of confluence between the perception of teachers and students is the undertaking of responsibility for training and development of specialized and transversal skills to facilitate social integration of graduates. Thus, both students and teachers, by approximately 90% consider that the responsibility for ensuring the acquisition of skills required on the labour market goes to stakeholders equally, respectively HEI and students. Consequently, both students and teachers think that taking a job depends on the knowledge and skills acquired and not on other situational factors. However, this determination does not meet proportionality, both categories of respondents failing to agree with the assertion that students with higher grades succeed more. In this respect, it is inferred that grades do not reflect the skills acquired, which means deficiencies in the evaluation process, especially related to the formative assessment. An interesting aspect of the results of the answers provided by 78% of students' state that they want to continue their educational path and follow master courses after the completion of the BA studies. This demonstrates that students consistently approach the path of the professional training, aiming the increase of the level of competence, being aware that in this manner they have more chances of employment. However absenteeism and its frequency in group is a significant phenomenon in 2015 (28% of students in state universities and 24% of those in private institutions). This phenomenon represents a weakness of the educational process. In addition, the phenomenon is even more serious when it comes to teachers, who, as testified by students, sometimes are missing courses or send replacements. Fortunately this practice is not frequent.

***Institutional management*** is perceived positively in terms of implementation of quality procedures, both by students and teachers. The latter consider as useful the evaluation process by students of the courses and seminars, procedure applied systematically by HEI, as 85% of respondents claim. However, the assessment is carried out mainly at the end of class and not during the class (68% of respondents). In addition, it appears that the procedure is applied more formally, given that the number of students involved in this process is decreasing (in 2011 nearly 50% of students respondents participated in the evaluation of all courses and seminaries, and in 2015 their number has halved). A negative aspect of the process is revealed also by students who are not notified about the outcome of the evaluations (47% of students in state universities and 29% of those in private institutions are not notified about the outcome of evaluations, not even partially). These results highlighted by students, represent the weaknesses of the evaluation process. At the same time, the decrease in the number of students involved in the evaluation of the educational process shows the sometimes formal character of the evaluations, thus jeopardizing the accuracy of the procedure, constituting vulnerability in the quality assurance process.

***The number of teachers in HEI*** decreased compared to the academic year 2007/2008, which creates vulnerability of HES. Although they believe that teachers within the academic environment are well prepared, however the grades given to their co-workers do not illustrate this (only 33% offer their co-workers in HEI the 8 grade and over 8, 5% - 10; 8% - 9 20% - 8). This situation shows some weaknesses of HES, which can be corrected by continuous training activities in order not to turn into threats for the system quality.

Regarding the ***number of students***, this has decreased compared to the 2007/2008 academic year, decreasing by approximately 50%. This trend poses a threat to HES and is due partly to the negative natural growth, and partly to the low high school graduation rate, but also to the migration balance. A negative aspect is represented by the continuously decreased preparation level in the pre-university education cycle, as demonstrated by the reduction of the rate of graduation from high school (according to statistics), but also the perception of teachers on the preparedness of students which is that " every year is getting worse "as 50% of respondents teachers claim. However, most teachers (70%) consider that the number of very good students is low (below 50%). In addition, 43% of teachers believe that just fewer than 25% of students are very good. These issues raised by teachers represent threats for HEI, are being put at risk the quality of inputs into the system.

***The results of the educational process*** were evaluated by the skills acquired by graduates and by their ability to get a job. From this point of view, teachers' perceptions are consistent with those of students, both groups believing that

graduates have the skills required to get a job (61% of teachers and 67% of students). In this sense, we can say that in terms of the educational mission, the universities fulfil their mission.

Issues related to the ***research activity*** in HEI are less thorough. The results of the research were only partially analysed, being commensurate with scientific publications of teachers, which is a criterion for performance evaluation. It is observed the lack of a corresponding share of research in the academic activity, only 5% of respondents believing that the meaning of HEI is, mostly, represented by research. However, during the interviews, emerges the interest of teachers to engage in research projects funded from different sources. Teachers interviewed stated that the establishment of centres of excellence is also positive for the research activity.

HEI relational capital has been achieved, especially through the connection with the socio-economic environment in order to ensure some internships/internship programs for students. The internships are appreciated by their beneficiaries, but it is emphasized their lack of diversity. Another partnership relationship which has acquired a stable character is that of Romanian and international HEI, in view of carrying out mobility programs (Erasmus - mobility in the European Union; bilateral international agreements - mobility outside the European area). While mobility is appreciated by students' respondents, only 15.5% benefited from Erasmus grants. This percentage is good, considering that during the national academic year 2012/2013 the percentage of students who received Erasmus grants was only 1.1%. Mobility on national level, as is apparent from the answers of students, had even a lower share (4.1%) and those international outside the European area accounted for only 2.3%. As it is apparent from the answers of the stakeholders directly involved in the educational process, relational capital of HEI can be expanded and strengthened to allow greater openness to academic environment towards research and for building partnerships of public-private type wherein to be involved entities within the academic, research and socio-economic environment, which would create new opportunities for HEI.

Overall, all the dimensions evaluated in the educational process in the HEI Quality Barometer 2015 (method of teaching, feedback, correctness of evaluation, and infrastructure related issues) are evaluated positively by students (average scores placed between 7 and 8). In this context, improvements were found in perception regarding all the issues that could be compared with 2011 Barometer.

***Quality evaluation from the employers stand point*** is an external process, the socio-economic stakeholders being direct beneficiaries of the educational outcomes. From their perspective, the external evaluation of the educational process results

reveals the positive and negative aspects, confirming for the most part the perceptions of teachers and students. A summary of the issues raised in the questionnaires and interviews performed with the representatives of the socio-economic environment is shown by *table III.28*

*Table III. 28 Summarization of positive and negative aspects highlighted by employers in questionnaires and interviews*

| Dimension | STRENGTHS | WEAKNESSES |
|---|---|---|
| **1. Evaluation criteria upon employment** | ↳ Using objective criteria based on the amount of professional training, experience and how one conducts during the interview<br>↳ The importance given to a higher level of training (Master)<br>↳ The importance given to transversal skills | ↳ Lack of appropriate importance bestowed upon certain skills (creativity, proactive behaviour etc.)<br>↳ |
| **2. Involvement into the HEI educational process** | ↳ Undertaking some responsibilities in acquiring practical skills of the higher education graduates | ↳ Lack of involvement into the internship programs |
| **3. Evaluation of HEI** | ↳ Awareness on the HEI role in the training of youth<br>↳ Awareness on the HEI role in research<br>↳ Critical evaluation of HEI according to the professional profile of graduates | ↳ Lack of a coherent internal evaluation frame of HEI from the employers point of view |
| **4.Professional training** | ↳ Awareness on the importance of the professional training process | ↳ Insufficient investments in the development of human resources |
| | OPPORTUNITIES | THREATS |
| **1. Evaluation criteria upon employment** | ↳ Proactive involvement of the employers' representatives in the execution of curricular projections | ↳ Lack of a cooperation framework for the development of educational programs together with the socio-economic stakeholders<br>↳ The gap between the perceptions of employers and HEI<br>↳ Lack of interest in closing the gap between the positive and negative skills acquired by graduates and requirements of |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | | employers |
| **2. Involvement into the HEI educational process** | ↳ Active involvement of the stakeholders within the socio-economic environment in activities and projects together with HEI | ↳ Lack of a good communication between HEI and the socio-economic stakeholders |
| **3. Evaluation of HEI** | ↳ Creation of solid partnerships between universities and academic environment for the execution of practical and internship activities | ↳ Lack of availability of employers to offer support during the practice/internship |
| **4.Professional training** | ↳ Existing programs providing funding for the development of programs of practice/internship national and European wide | ↳ Reduced ability of the socio-economic stakeholders to assist students during periods of practice/internship<br>↳ Difficulties in accessing funding |
| | ↳ Existence of programs supporting the transition of students to the active life | ↳ Reduced ability of socio-economic stakeholders to manage projects with non-refundable grants |

*Source: Answers collected by means of questionnaires and interviews with employers*

It is observable that most employers consider the objective criteria for the evaluation of candidates applying for a job. Thus, they are **attaching the greatest importance to training** (average mark of 9.12). This is consistent with projections of students and teachers who felt that the skills acquired provide greater employment opportunities. At the same time, employers appreciate candidates' experience in the field (average grade 8.08). Along the same line also fall the claims related to their preferences for students who have gained practical experience during college, working part-time (17% of respondents) or full-time (39% of respondents) during college. Their opinion is converging with the teachers on the importance attached to grades, employers arguing that it does not matter very much the grades received during or the average gained upon graduation, but the proper training or skills acquired/what the candidates know. In addition, the employers state that they take into account the recommendations, including from teachers to the candidates.

They also say they prefer individuals with a higher level of training (52% opting for masters graduates, compared with 45% who choose the Bachelor graduates).

An important aspect relates to the fact that **employers understand the role of HEI**, both as educational factors and as actors in the research activities. In terms of educational processes, 55% consider that universities provide the necessary competencies to graduates to obtain employment. It is noted in this respect the

convergence of views of the respondents' students and teachers on one hand and employers on the other. In terms of involvement in research, the latter appreciate by 85% (53% very much, 32% largely) that the research activity of HEI research is particularly important for the economy. The socio-economic stakeholders consider by 73% (30% - very much 43% - largely) that universities have well-trained teachers, ensuring a quality educational process. Although the perception of HEI's role in the economy is positive, a significant proportion of respondents (52%) believe that universities are factories diplomas (24% - very much, 28% - largely).

Another important aspect lies in the **undertaking by the employers of the responsibility to get involved in assisting students in acquiring practical skills**. Although, as the respondents in the sample of students and teachers consider that the responsibility lies to the highest degree with HEI and students, however, they are undertaking their role in developing the skills of students (72% wherefrom 27% - heavily and 45% - largely). However, very few employers are involved in the practical programs of longer duration, such as internships. Thus, 82% of them say they have never used (69%) or rarely (13%) young interns who work voluntarily.

**Employers are interested in raising the skill levels of employees** and thus their professional training (64%), but most often turn to training within the organization by using methods of non-formal and informal learning (56%) and only 8% use specialized training companies.

**A number of areas of improvement** of the quality of education and research within HEI resulted by refining the conclusions based on the analysis of questionnaires and interviews. These strategic directions primarily aimed at removing the barriers identified, so as to be able to exploit the mentioned opportunities. Thus, the main strategic directions for HEI aim to eliminate structural weaknesses and define long-term strategies, as well as the provision of curricular projections calibrated according to the progress of knowledge and technology and market requirements. Eliminating the gap between the socio-economic and academic institutions, as well as providing a framework for cooperation between employers and HEI are other priorities in education. Other important aspects are related to providing the adequate funding of the educational processes and research, allowing optimum endowment, accessibility to information, participation to international specialized conferences, and appropriate motivation and rewarding of teachers and research staff, according to the results/performance. Improving the management of HEI, procedures and inter-institutional communication, the control ones and quality assurance are other ways to improve the internal processes of the HEI. Prioritization of HEI research activities and transfer of knowledge and technology between the academic and socio-economic environment represents another direction required in order to increase the role and quality of service rendered by HEI.

In the future, a goal in terms of methodology is represented by better structuring the indicators for measuring the quality on the internal processes level of HEI (both on HEI level and systemic interactions), externally - the purpose of education (skills acquired by graduates and research results) and the level of the results obtained by HEI (the extent to which graduates find a job and whereby it is performed an effective transfer of knowledge and innovation to the socio-economic environment). However, besides the main strategic directions, a series of methodological issues related to refining the set of indicators and evaluation procedures should be considered.

***Given the complexity and vastness of the quality domain of HEI, the improvement of the quality system remains open, being revised according to the perception of the stakeholders involved.***

In conclusion, we consider that every national educational system – regardless of the type, level, area etc – has the obligation to provide to its own students a good education and it's the state duty to support and develop the national academic system, to establish strategies and policies for keeping graduates in the country, fact that would lead to economic development and increase of the higher education system prestige.