

# HUMAN CAPITAL AND ITS TRAINING THROUGH EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Florența-Diana Tănase <sup>1\*</sup>, Mihaela Martin <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> UBB Center from Reșița, Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences  
Traian Vuia Square, no. 1-4, Reșița, Caraș-Severin, România

\* Corresponding author. E-mail: [diana.tanase@ubbcluj.ro](mailto:diana.tanase@ubbcluj.ro)

**Abstract:** Studying public administration offers students a diverse range of opportunities to create a significant influence in different sectors of society. Public administration, being an interdisciplinary and applied area, plays a crucial role in advancing and embodying of extracurricular activities, offering a valuable array of practical instruments. This article focuses on a narrative approach of the role of extracurricular activities in training human resources from public administration.

**Keywords:** human capital, public institutions, extracurricular activity, students' development, skills.

## 1. Introduction

Every organization requires various resources to operate effectively. As it is well known, these resources can be categorized, in the most basic terms, as human, material, financial, and information resources. The importance of each type of resource is obvious, being already known that there is a correlation between them. However, it should be emphasized that human resources are the driving force behind and give rise to the other categories. Throughout history, some nations have achieved great success by prioritizing human capital, as its potential is limitless.

The welfare of a country and the standard of living in an urban area relies on the competence and skill of its leaders, thus the education of human resources in public management being crucial.

In this respect, a first step can be considered to be training in specialized educational courses designed to familiarise upcoming civil servants and workers in the field with the issues involved in administrative work.

Human resources need proper training to tackle the challenges of today's dynamic and competitive society.

There is a necessity for state and local governing bodies to explore novel avenues for managing the potential challenges of students through fostering inter-institutional collaboration between the public and private sectors via public-private partnerships. Thus, analyzing the multifaceted benefits of extracurricular activities can offer a comprehensive perspective on their role in enhancing personal development beyond academic achievements.

Noteworthy is also the considerable influence that extracurricular activities have on building social connections. Taking part in such activities leads to numerous opportunities for those involved in them offering new challenges and avenues for personal development. Extracurricular activities broaden students'

horizons and enrich students' educational experience, preparing them for their future achievements beyond the classroom.

The scholars argue that engaging students in extracurricular activities is a vital component of their educational journey, aimed at establishing a framework of tools and initiatives to address pressing educational issues. This framework also aims to create an environment conducive to the personal and professional growth of university graduates, who are expected to possess profound expertise, ethical values, legal and communicative skills, creative aptitude, and active citizenship.

Extracurricular activities have been shown to have a profound impact on students' academic performance and personal development in higher education institutions. The Zero-Sum model, the Development model, and the Threshold model all provide valuable insights into the intricate relationship between participating in additional activities and academic success. By understanding these models, we can better appreciate how extracurricular engagements contribute to a well-rounded educational experience and ultimately enhance students' overall growth and achievements. It is evident that encouraging students to actively engage in extracurricular activities can lead to positive outcomes both inside and outside the classroom, shaping them into well-rounded individuals ready to face the challenges of the future. [1].

Drawing from pragmatic, personality-centric, student-focused, competency-driven methodologies, Santini outlined the guiding principles for organizing students' extracurricular activities: emphasis on learning content, avoiding oversimplification, focus on student development in activities, comprehensive problem-solving, meeting the needs of all participants, transparent communication, clear definition of skills, recognizing that the design process is just one step in extracurricular activities, consistency and effectiveness, ensuring all

information is considered during design and implementation, thorough justification, comprehensive rationale for objectives, timely assessment/management, regular evaluation of goals, collaborative effort, detailed planning, and last but not the least, involvement of teaching staff and other stakeholders [2].

Although there are few instances where extracurricular activities show a negative impact, for instance the insufficiency of financial resources or the fact that not all students tend to be involved, the effectiveness and quality of extracurricular activities can be achieved through fostering reflections that influence transformation in the beliefs, attitudes, and daily conduct of students, leading to long-term sustainability [3]. By fostering a deep understanding of sustainability principles, public administration extra-curricular programs can empower individuals to make informed decisions that benefit society as a whole [4].

Adequate training of human capital in public administration is imperative because it will not only lead and implement projects in various localities, but also affects the well-being of citizens residing in urban areas

## 2. Literature Review

Extracurricular activities play a significant role in shaping an individual's overall development. These activities, often conducted outside the regular academic curriculum, offer students opportunities to explore their interests, develop new skills, and interact with peers in a non-academic setting. The impact of participation in extracurricular activities on academic performance has been a topic of interest among educators and researchers.

According to M. Makarov and D. Pisarenko, findings from the study by Kim and Bastedo (2016) demonstrated that students with involvement in public and social activities at the university display a higher propensity to adapt to new team work environments and exhibit superior skills in handling informational materials compared to the other students without such experiences [5].

Mogonea (2023) presents an literature overview of the term extracurricular and also a clear distinction between extracurricular and curricular activities [6] A pertinent literature review is also presented by O. Moldovan. Moreover, the author states that extracurricular activities are known to play a significant role in the overall development of an individual, impacting various aspects of his/her life. These activities, which are often organized outside the regular academic curriculum, provide students with unique opportunities to delve into their areas of interest, acquire new skills, and engage with their peers in a non-academic environment.

Educators and researchers have shown a keen interest in exploring the effects of participating in extracurricular activities on academic performance, recognizing the potential benefits it can bring. It is widely believed that when approached with a shared

understanding and cooperation among all parties involved, extracurricular activities can exert a positive influence on academic achievement, creating a well-rounded educational experience. By actively participating in extracurricular activities, individuals not only improve their academic performance but also cultivate essential life skills and establish meaningful social connections that are fundamental to fostering holistic personal growth [7].

## 3. Training Future PA Specialists through Extracurricular Activities

While traditionally the organisation was considered as a monolith that grew progressively, according to new approaches it is seen as a whole of its components, learning having an essential process, similar to a learning portfolio [8].

As stated at the beginning of the paper, human capital is vital to any level at which it functions.

The development of human capital starts early and continues through higher education, with elements adapted to the specific programme the learner is studying.

Study programs not only impart fundamental knowledge but also include supplementary activities to enhance the training of future experts.

In addition to basic knowledge, study programmes also offer other complementary activities to complete the training of future specialists. At university level, extracurricular activities, through their pragmatic nature, translate knowledge and thus help students to identify solutions to various problems, familiarise them with different types of environment specific to organisations or bring them into contact with decision-makers. They increase the adaptability of individuals in the labour market, while leading to the development of creativity and managerial performance [9].

At the UBB University Centre in Reșița, the students of the Public Administration study programme have the opportunity to experience different environments, to get in touch with managerial staff from various organisations, and to become familiar with the specific challenges faced by the institutions they visit.

Such activities include:

- a. study visits - these were carried out to local and regional public institutions with the aim of familiarising future specialists in the field with issues such as:
  - the main problems faced by the town hall, county council or prefecture;
  - communication practices within these institutions;
  - public relations and image management;
  - allocation of budgetary resources based on areas of interest;
  - working conditions of civil servants;
  - specific elements of organisational culture.
- b. simulations of activities in various institutions - can be seen as a role-play, resembling a game set in a specific environment to help students embody the "character" swiftly, thereby enhancing active learning;

c. the design of various areas within the study location is geared towards being eco-friendly, ultimately improving the quality of life for its beneficiaries;

d. engaging in public meetings is essential for acquainting students with the formal meeting processes, recognizing organizational culture elements such as flags, anthems, slogans, badges, uniforms, and dress codes, as well as understanding the language and challenges of contemporary public management.

e. various projects with well-defined objectives which aim to put the student in concrete situations;

f. participation in workshops and scientific events;

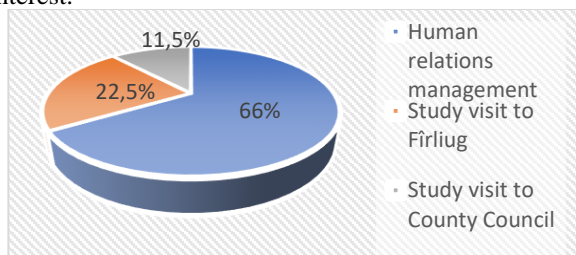
g. participation in events to promote the institution;

h. organisation of meetings on different themes: International Student Day, Q&A with the county public administrator, Local entrepreneurs and the relationship with the institutional environment, Managing interpersonal relations, Public finance vs. private finance. Based on the participation in these activities, 62 students from bachelor degree studies were questioned on:

- most interesting activity;
- most challenging activity;
- what kind of activities they would like to organise in the near future, during their studies.

The findings are outlined as follows:

a. 2/3 of the respondents (fig.1) consider the most interesting/captivating activity to be the meeting with the psychologist. This session taught them how to avoid some problems that arise in interpersonal relationships, by relating to the examples provided by the expert. The students said that they found themselves in the examples given by the specialist and, in some cases, they also know the solution to some of the problems presented. Another attractive element was the game at the end of the meeting, which showed them the importance of expressing emotions in human interactions and highlighted the importance of self-care. The exercise where students selected images for interpretation further piqued their interest.

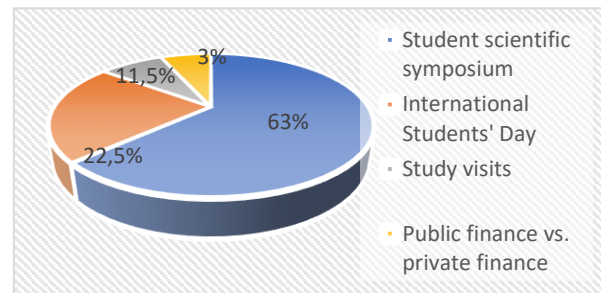


**Fig. 1.** Respondents' perception of the most interesting extracurricular activity

Another activity considered interesting was the study visit to the Fîrlig Town Hall. The mayor's open communication, workplace presentations, and a pleasant autumn day enhanced the experience. Additionally, some of the students conducted a series of interviews with their colleagues, which gave them the opportunity to share their impressions of the visit. At the end, a reel was made with the most important aspects of the visit.

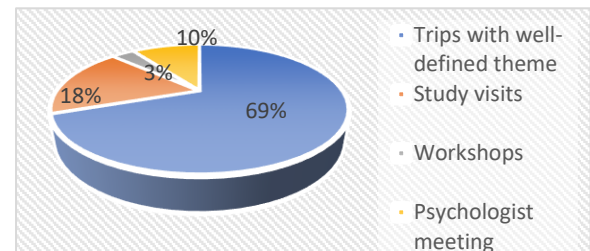
b. The most strenuous activity was the student scientific symposium (fig.2). Its classification as challenging stemmed from the extensive work required and the lengthy duration of the symposium.

A challenging activity was the panel on International Students' Day where, some of the participating students made presentations on given topics. Managing emotions while presenting to the sub-prefect and county public administrator posed a significant challenge.



**Fig. 2.** Respondents' perception of the most demanding extracurricular activity

c. Regarding the organization of other activities (fig.3), most students expressed their interest in organising trips with well-defined themes. Therefore, they believe that this activity will help strengthen teamwork, familiarize themselves with different work environments, organizational cultures, and even interact with various individuals in public administration.



**Fig. 3.** Respondents' perceptions of activities to be implemented.

Further more, the students want additional meetings with the psychologist on various topics, visits to institutions and other informal activities.

Upon participating in different activities, it is evident that students are particularly drawn to those aimed at addressing sensitive issues. Thus, after each activity, aside from the usual core group, other students also become more involved, showcasing how these activities cater to the diverse needs of learners.

Despite the limited or nonexistent funds for these activities, and the additional time, effort, and commitment required from the teaching staff, the impact on student development is substantial, especially as collaboration with the institutional environment, community, and other decision-makers is enhanced.

#### 4. Conclusions

The organization is viewed as an adaptable system, with human resources considered a "key element for learning or achieving results." [9]. The human resource is vital to its success in today's context, marked by the recognition of interdependencies, dynamism and competitiveness.

It is obvious that the focus, now and in the future, is and will be on its training because its capabilities are impressive, and when all other conditions are equal and remain unchanged, it is the human resource that makes the difference, that leads nations/organisations to the top of competitiveness, well-being or a higher quality of life.

The training of students, future specialists, through extra-curricular activities is essential to the success of study programmes because it achieves a number of the skills needed for integration into the labour market and for interpersonal relations as a whole.

#### 5. References

- [1] Buckley P., Lee P.: "The impact of extra-curricular activity on the student experience", *Active Learning in Higher Education*, Vol, 22, Issue 1, pp. 37-48, 2021, available at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1469787418808988> [The impact of extra-curricular activity on the student experience - Patrick Buckley, Paul Lee, 2021 \(sagepub.com\)](https://doi.org/10.1177/1469787418808988), accessed 14 May 2024.
- [2] Enăchescu V.: "Management of educational potential through extracurricular activities", *Review of International Comparative Management*, Volume 20, Issue 3, pp. 317-322, 2019, DOI: 10.24818/RMCI.2019.3.317, available at: [09.pdf \(ase.ro\)](https://doi.org/10.24818/RMCI.2019.3.317), accessed 14 May 2024.
- [3] Díaz-Iso A., Eizaguirre A., García-Olalla A.: "Extracurricular Activities in Higher Education and the Promotion of Reflective Learning for Sustainability", *Sustainability*, 11(17), 4521, pp. 1-18, 2019. Available at: [Sustainability | Free Full-Text | Extracurricular Activities in Higher Education and the Promotion of Reflective Learning for Sustainability \(mdpi.com\)](https://doi.org/10.3390/su11174521), accessed 14 May 2024, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11174521>.
- [4] Katsamunská P., Rosenbaum A.: "Strengthening Governmental Effectiveness Through Improved Public Administration Education And Training: The United Nations/ Iasia Task Force And The Creation Of The International Commission On Public Administration Education And Training (Icapa)", *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences*, No. 57 E, p. 23, pp. 21-33, 2019, available at: [Strengthening Governmental Effectiveness Through Improved Public Administration Education And Training: The United Nations/ IASIA Task Force And The Creation Of The International Commission On Public Administration Education And Training \(ICAPA\) | Katsamunská | Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences \(rtsa.ro\)](https://doi.org/10.1177/1469787418808988), accessed 14 May 2024.
- [5] Makarov I. M., Pisarenko A. D.: "Extracurricular Activity of Students in The Aspect of the University Idea", *Social and Behavioural Sciences EpSBS* e-ISSN: 2357-1330, pp. 532-540, 2020. DOI: 10.15405/epsbs.2020.11.03.57. Available at: [PDF Extracurricular Activity Of Students In The Aspect Of The University Idea \(researchgate.net\)](https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2020.11.03.57), accessed 14 May 2024.
- [6] Mogonea F.: "Extra-curricular activities as an educational alternative for the training of transversal competencies", *Annals of the University of Craiova, the Psychology-Pedagogy series* ISSN 2668-6678, ISSN-L 1582-313X, Year XXII, no 45, Issue 1, pp. 175-185, 2023. DOI: 10.52846/AUCPP.2023.1.13. Available at: [MOGONEA AUC PP 2023 no 45 issue 1 pp 175-185.pdf \(aucpp.ro\)](https://doi.org/10.52846/AUCPP.2023.1.13), accessed 14 May 2024.
- [7] Moldovan O.: "Activitățile academice extracurriculare, performanțele școlare și angajabilitatea masteranzilor", *Revista Transilvană de Științe Administrative* 2(33), pp. 89-118, p.90-93, 2013, available at: [Activitățile academice extracurriculare, performanțele școlare și angajabilitatea masteranzilor | MOLDOVAN | Revista Transilvană de Științe Administrative \(rtsa.ro\)](https://doi.org/10.1177/1469787418808988), accessed 14 May 2024.
- [8] Chivu I. (coord): "Învățarea organizațională și dezvoltarea resurselor umane", Editura ASE, București, 2009.
- [9] Demyen S., Ciurea J.: "The role of creativity for achieving performance in management", *Annals of the University of Oradea. Economic Sciences*, Tom XXV, 1 st Issue / July, ISSN 1222-569X (printed format), ISSN 1582-5450 (electronic format), pp. 906-913, 2016.