

**BABEŞ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY**  
**FACULTY OF PSYCHOLOGY AND EDUCATIONAL SCIENCES**  
**DOCTORAL SCHOOL „EDUCATION, REFLECTION, DEVELOPMENT”**

## **SUMMARY OF THE PHD THESIS**

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Cluj-Napoca

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**EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL  
MANAGEMENT WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THE VALUE ORIENTATIONS  
THAT CHARACTERIZE THE STUDENTS OF Z GENERATION**

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Both the academic and the organizational environment are currently facing a challenge: a new generation, known as Generation Z – people born after 1995, has started entering the labor market. Therefore, generations shaped and developed under utterly different social and political systems and paradigms will be simultaneously active. The differences between these generations, be it in their way of thinking, in their attitudes, behaviors, and in the values they adhere to, can all turn into sources of conflict that need to be managed (Bencsik, Horváth-Csikós, Juhász, 2016).

The effectiveness of the organizational management process is directly linked to the way the agent sees the human resource, to the way they understand and employ motivational devices, and to the way they ensure the conditions needed for the full potential of every employee to be fulfilled (Russu, 2016). The current research study approaches organizational management from the perspective of human capital management, seen as management relations and processes, through which the leader optimizes the potential of students who are members of Generation Z and uses it as the main source of a competitive advantage (Nicolescu, Verboncu, Ionescu, 2011).

The act of managing is, in itself, an inherent feature of any activity unfolded in an organized manner – in which context, irrespective of the peculiarities and specifics of each field of work, certain functions and basic common elements are always there. From this perspective, the functions and elements of general management apply to other fields – such as education, as well (Tîrcă, Mihăescu, 2011). Educational management does not solely refer to management done by education establishment managers, but also to managing a group of students. From a social point of view, it is the teacher/professor who is the leader of the group. This does not refer to organizing and delivering lectures alone, but to management itself, in the form of being present in the students' life from both an objectively-educational point of view, as well as a subjectively-emotional one (Iucu, 2006; Iucu, 2008). In the current research study, we are investigating the process of educational management, and exploring the individual level perspective of the professor who manages a group of undergraduate students (members of Generation Z).

The main factors that contributed to the shaping of the new Generation Z are related to the dynamics, effervescence, and speed of the external environment, to the behavior of their parents, to technology advances, and to their own inner motivation (Broennimann, 2017). From the perspective of economical, education, cultural and labor market shifts, the acknowledgement,

and awareness of hidden opportunities that lie in the mutual transfer of competencies, experiences, attitudes, and viewpoints are inevitable (Pintér, 2016). Romania's peculiarities in this respect are due to the existence of the generations before Generation Z, who were raised and shaped mainly under the communist paradigm. If we fail to grasp, handle, and take responsibility for the gap between the two systems, we will only witness a major rupture within the Romanian society (David, 2015).

The best way to anticipate and be proactive in both our educational and organizational approaches is to study and thoroughly observe the value trends that the new generation seems to follow. Otherwise, we will approach any endeavor in an insular and reactive manner, while axiological gaps will continue to widen and continuously generate conflict. Furthermore, building a solid ground for intergenerational dialogue will be increasingly harder to do.

With these issues in mind, we organized the main research elements of the present study, as follows:

- Using both qualitative and quantitative means of research in a complementary manner, thus insuring additional flexibility towards the data collected, as well as a balanced view regarding the incipient stage of familiarity with the subject matter, namely with members of Generation Z;

- In order to have a multilayered perspective on the axiological evolution of the Romanian society, we have opted for both a *longitudinal* design – by comparing value trends of different generations/the population of Romania, based on data gathered in a long time interval through repeated measures/waves (World Values Survey), starting from past towards present, as well as a *cross-sectional* design – by analyzing present moment value system factors of Generation Z students;

- The instrument used in the enquiry phase was the questionnaire. Both open-ended questions, as well as probing questions were employed to gather qualitative data. Close-ended questions were used to gather quantitative data;

- The questionnaire was applied to a set part of the study population (students, members of Generation Z). A mix of multistage sampling and cluster sampling was used;

- Our triangulation benchmarks were time – therefore we followed, at the same time, the evolution in time of any changes, by using the longitudinal design, as well as an instant moment

in reality, by the cross-sectional design; and data gathering – we gathered both quantitative and qualitative data, a process known as methodological triangulation.

From this point of view, our study had the following research structure:

- Phase 1 – making secondary comparative analyses based on quantitative data gathered from the World Values Survey. This data pertained to all of the Romanian population – both intergenerational and intragenerational data was gathered. More specifically, it was divided into under 29 years of age, 30-49 years of age and over 50 years of age;

- Phase 2 – applying the research instrument on the sample of students who are members of Generation Z. Here, we gathered both qualitative and quantitative data and analyzed it cross-sectionally, from the perspective of identifying the way Generation Z members enact their value trends in parenting, and on the materialism-postmaterialism axis;

- Phase 3 – observing and analyzing value trends pertaining to the Romanian society (said trends were defined in Phase 1), and comparing them to Generation Z value trends (defined in Phase 2), from the perspectives of parenting and of where they belong on the materialism-postmaterialism axis;

- Phase IV – analyzing and integrating both qualitative and quantitative elements, as well as articulating general benchmarks regarding both optimal educational management and optimal organizational management, as seen by students who are members of Generation Z.

The main conclusions of our secondary analyses of the data gathered from the World Values Survey showed the following:

- a)** From the point of view of parenting values, at country level, between the years 1998 – 2018, Romanians showed a tendency towards autonomy. This is valid especially for younger generations;

- b)** From the point of view of where they belong on the materialism-postmaterialism axis, at country level, between the years 1998 – 2018, Romanians showed a tendency towards postmaterialism. This is valid especially for younger generations.

The main conclusions of the interpretation and analysis of data collected from students who are members of Generation Z showed the following:

a) From the point of view of parenting values, Generation Z showed a higher tendency towards autonomy, compared to prior generations and to the average representative of the Romanian society;

b) From the point of view of where they belong on the materialism-postmaterialism axis, Generation Z showed a higher tendency towards postmaterialism, compared to prior generations and to the average representative of the Romanian society;

c) Generation Z students think of themselves as more open and more tolerant than previous generations. Also, they believe they have superior technology-related abilities, a higher degree of independence and initiative, as opposed to previous generations. Furthermore, they expect older generations to be more open to what is new or different, and less judgmental towards future generations.

On the basis of the results of our research endeavor, we can better understand:

a) The profile of a Generation Z student – expects a high degree of independence and autonomy, demands greater practical, hands-on, learning activities and fewer theoretical activities, expresses directly any discontent or complaint towards the education system and its failure to prepare them for the labor market, expects open and constant dialogue with the faculty, as equals, and strongly believes respect is earned, not granted by status or position.

b) The profile of a Generation Z employee – expects leadership to offer support and understanding, and the working environment to support personal fulfillment and recognition; does not value job security or pay as highly, will not obey blindly or follow rules they do not agree with; expect managers to focus on their development.

In conclusion, the results of our research study – both qualitative, and quantitative – show that we have reached our research objectives. However, given the incipient state of where research on Generation Z is, as well as the novelty of correlating educational management and organizational management with the peculiarities of Generation Z, we believe the present research can represent a great starting point for future endeavors meant to better understand, from an axiological point of view, the members of Generation Z.

All in all, we can claim that the nature and quality of both educational and organizational management will depend on the extent to which teachers and professors, as well as leaders, will

be aware of and will take into consideration the peculiarities and features of Generation Z, as well as its needs and expectations.

If universities or businesses are interested in forging sustainable links to Generation Z, they need to develop their communication skills double fold: both to accept, and to share experiences and perceptions, to learn from each other, and, thus, to insure a gradual filling of the generational gap. The main factors are the role of technology in the life of this generation, who claims and expects flexibility and autonomy in order to innovate, direct and face-to-face dialogue with their faculty and organizational leaders, who have to support them in finding the best educational and organizational path, with as little hierarchy as possible and as much autonomy as possible.

If we fail to search for ways to educate and lead by constantly acknowledging their needs and values, they will emigrate or consciously disengage from any educational or work-related endeavor. This will only lead to either lacking human resources or to having human resources that are ill-prepared and who lack the motivation to be active contributors to success.