
International Forum
Vol. 22, No. 1
June 2019
pp. 151-168

FEATURE

**The School of My Dreams: Perceiving the
Unspoken Desires of Undergraduate
Students Through Photovoice**

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Abstract. *Students do not typically have a voice in the institutional evaluation in Romania. Involving the students to improve a school is an effective means. By using a participatory action research through photovoice and appreciative inquiry, this study aimed to give a voice to the undergraduate students on what they dream for their school to become. The study was anchored on the empowerment education philosophical framework of Paulo Freire. Eight participants who were students from Pedagogy, Social Work, and Theology disciplines completed the photovoice process. Data were collected through photos, interviews, and the researcher's analytic memos. The themes were developed by the participants through photo essay and were analyzed together with other forms of data such as interview transcriptions and observation fieldnotes. The results showed the need for improvement in teacher-student relationships, academic expectations, social projects, and institutional administration. The policy makers made important decisions during the exhibit, planned to implement several recommendations, and expressed the desire to have students' yearly evaluation of the institution through photovoice.*

Keywords: Institutional evaluation, participatory action research, photovoice appreciative inquiry, students' voice, higher education, Romania

Introduction

All over the world, change happens every day. The global society needs people who are prepared today for tomorrow's challenges. In this process, the educational goal is to train students for a society in continuous change (Risinger, 2009). Through education, the 21st century skills must be developed. Students need to

have good skills such as “communication, critical thinking, problem solving, work ethic, collaboration, applying technology, and leadership” (Trilling & Fadel, 2009, p. 7). These skills are specifically required by most of the corporations’ job descriptions (Rappaport et al., 2017). Thus, it is the educators’ responsibility to offer a proper learning environment in which students can develop themselves in an adequate way.

The Romanian post-communist society faces the challenges of a transforming society. The educational system is part of this metamorphosing process. Many changes have taken place in education. However, these improvements should keep the pace with the ongoing change because this is still work in progress. Since Romania has become a member of the European Union, the educational system must meet certain standards of quality. One of these is to improve the educational institutions through both external and internal evaluation. As a result, in Romania, the self-evaluation of schools has become compulsory (Kitchen et al., 2017). The issue is that the organizational culture regarding evaluation is lacking, irrespective of the educational echelon (Toderaş & Stăvaru, 2015).

One reason for this want is represented by the competitive nature of the education in Romania. There is pressure being put on schools to perform well. Poor results reflect negatively on the institution and the sense of education is also not yet developed as a communitarian responsibility. Additionally, many people consider that an institution should not show its weaknesses and mistakes (Kitchen et al., 2017).

Institutional evaluation is a good way to identify proper methods to improve a situation. When change is needed, evaluation is considered the key factor for the organizational growth. Evaluation should be accepted and practiced as a regular routine. Still, the opinion of the important stakeholders involved in the evaluation is ignored. Sometimes, the faculty members are not part of the group who decide on different aspects (Toderaş & Stăvaru, 2015). Thus, the leadership team need to manifest a proactive attitude regarding institutional self-evaluation and the factors involved along the way. They need to understand the importance of learning through evaluation. Notwithstanding the importance of evaluation for the institutional development, it is a less studied process (Toderaş & Stăvaru, 2015). Moreover, given that the Romanian faculty members have been ignored most of the time in the institutional evaluation, there is an even greater need to explore how the voice of students in a university self-evaluation is heard.

Review of the Literature

Institutional development through self-evaluation is not a facile process. However, good leadership positively approaches the interdependence of the relationships within the organization (Bloom, Hutson, He, & Konkle, 2013). The

diversity of opinions is valued, and the leadership empowers the institution members (Mather & Hess, 2013).

Institutional Improvement

Leaders can model the institution they lead for good or for bad. Exemplary leaders have several ways of making their institution a place for continuous development. In their Transformational Leadership framework, Kouzes and Posner (2017) mentioned the five practices of an exemplary leadership; they stated, it (a) models the way by giving a positive example and sharing values; (b) inspires a shared vision by strengthening future possible options; (c) challenges the process by seeking different ways to improve; (d) enables others to act by developing trust and good relationships; and (e) encourages the heart by valuing each person's contribution and motivates for excellence. There is a belief that leaders are born, not made. However, it has also been demonstrated that a leader has qualities which can be taught and learned (Adair, 2009; Wilson, 2010; Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 2000). Thus, leaders can learn how to transform the institution and the people they lead.

In their preoccupation for continual growth, leaders are interested in what methods to implement. One way is participatory action research (PAR). Over time, this approach has revealed its effectiveness regarding the improvement of the quality of life of the people within the family, community, and organizations. It has empowered individuals in schools, systems of education, and school communities (Creswell, 2012).

Another method used to generate change is photovoice. It is a relatively new method of creating a proper environment for improvement in which participants share stories by using photos. It was developed based upon the Empowerment Education framework (Freire, 1970) and it adds value to the PAR through its model for individual and social change (Wallerstein & Bernstein, 1987). Photovoice also has its roots deep in documentary photography (Worth & Adair, 1972). It has proven to be an effective method in health (Wang, Yi, Tao, & Carovano, 1998), women empowerment (Rosario, Domocmat, & Oniashvili, 2016), youth contribution in changing a community (Wang, 2006), shared life stories after natural disasters (Rosario, Aguillon, & Lucion), and other areas. It is usually used for groups of people who do not have a strong voice in their community (Wang & Burris, 1997). Therefore, photovoice can bring change and improvement for different groups or communities.

Appreciative inquiry aims to foster change in an organization through the deep reflection of the participants on a situation, focusing on its positive aspects (Fifolt & Lander, 2013). It uses a 4-D cycle with discovery, dream, design, and destiny as components when certain change is intended (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). By sharing the positive aspects of the school and their dreams regarding the very school, students learn to bring change, together with their professors and the staff

(Bloom et al., 2013). A positive environment is promoted wherein institutional growth can take place.

Institutional Evaluation Outcomes

Leadership style makes a difference in the improvement of the school. A positive approach of the staff regarding internal evaluation can lead to change (Mather & Hess, 2013). Moreover, when students are involved in the evaluation, they can significantly contribute in the school's improvement through students' personal reflective input (Fifolt & Lander, 2013). Additionally, students develop constructive attitude when they explore the positive aspects of their own school (Bloom et al., 2013). As a result, students' satisfaction in the university life increases (Schreiner, 2013).

An appreciative approach to the institutional evaluation promotes wiser practices (Wang & Redwood-Jones, 2001). One of these practices is to give credit to the students' opinion. It seems that involving students in the school evaluation helps them feel important for the institution (Bloom et al., 2013). They become interested in helping the school through their recommendations. Therefore, they enrich the community they live in because they feel that they are a part of it (Jackson et al., 2014). By developing a sense of belongingness, students contribute to the school's growth.

A positive approach in internal evaluation helps students to be open in sharing personal desires regarding their school (Doggett & Lewis, 2013). In the evaluation process, they reflected maturity by creating a positive dialog with the leadership team (Dewar & Sharp, 2013), and even requiring that their needs be reflected in the policy and practice of the institution (Fifolt & Lander, 2013). In the appreciative approach, the leadership values the students' voice and recommendations (Kadi-Hanifi et al., 2014), giving the participants equal voice in creating a constructive conversation (Fifolt & Lander, 2013).

The purpose of the present study was to describe the positive aspects of the participating university through the eyes of the students by using photovoice. Further, it aimed to improve the participating university according to the recommendations made by the participant students. Two research questions led this study.

1. What are the positive aspects of the participating university from the students' perspective?
2. What can be improved in the participating university from the students' perspective?

Methodology

The study utilized qualitative research. It used a participatory action research design through photovoice and appreciative inquiry. The details of the research steps are presented in this section.

Research Design

Participatory action research is a design used when the purpose is to improve the quality of institutions, groups, and family lives. It is also used to empower individuals in the educational system and its institutions (Creswell, 2012). Photovoice, which was the main sub-design of this study, has three goals, according to its proponents, Wang and Burris (1997). The first goal is to record and reflect on the positive or the negative aspects of a community. The second is to promote dialog on important issues in a community. The third is to create a favorable situation to reach the policymakers.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI), the other sub-design of this study, has a 4-D cycle with discovery, dream, design, and destiny as components when change is desired (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). In this study, the focus was on the first two elements, discovery and dream, as the purpose of the study was (a) to describe the positive aspects of the participating university through the eyes of the students by using photovoice, and (b) to improve the participating university based upon the recommendations made by the participating students.

Research Setting and Participants

The study was conducted in a Romanian university. The university is situated in the southern part of the country and is a faith-based institution. It has several academic programs. The study used purposive sampling with students representing each school year of each academic program. Thus, the student participants were (a) three students from Pedagogy, (b) three students from Social Work, and (c) four students from Theology. The study took place between April-May 2018.

Data Collection

Data collection was conducted by following the photovoice steps used by Wang et al. (1998). Each step is described in the following sections. Additionally, specific elements from Rosario et al. (2016) model were added to strengthen the study. They consist of in-depth interviews and photo essay. I used in-depth interviews to enrich the data about the experiences of the student participants. I also used photo essay to create an environment wherein the participants presented their photos and the story behind each photo, grouping the photos into themes, and organizing the photo exhibit.

Preliminaries. According to Wang et al. (1998), the preliminaries should take into consideration several aspects. First is the contextualization of the problem. The present study aimed to give a voice to the students of the selected university in the institutional evaluation. The second aspect is about stating the objectives. The purpose was to improve the selected university through the students' recommendations. The third aspect is selecting the site followed by obtaining permission from the administration. For this, a research proposal was submitted to the rector of the university. The proposal described the purpose of the study, the research methodology used, the steps of the photovoice, the ethical considerations, and the consent form for the participants. The fifth aspect in the preliminaries is the selection of the participants. This selection was presented in the previous section. The sixth aspect considers the selected methodology which is discussed above. Obtaining verbal and written consents from the participants was the last step of the preliminaries of the photovoice study.

Implementation method and data analysis. This first phase of the photovoice, implementing method and data analysis, is important. Next, a point-by-point presentation of each sub-section of this step follows. The study was built upon two groups of contributors. The main group was Wang and colleagues (1998) while the second group Rosario and colleagues (2016), mentioned some improvement they brought to the photovoice model.

1. *Orientation regarding the concept and the methodology of photovoice.* The participants learned what photovoice is and when this methodology can be used in a research study.
2. *Photography training.* The participant students were then trained to take pictures, taking into consideration important elements such as correct lighting and the position of the major parts of the picture. They were oriented in considering ethical aspects pertaining to picture-taking.
3. *Theming.* For the first set of photos, the theme was about what aspects students liked about the university. For the second set of the photos, students focused on what they dreamed for their university and gave recommendations for aspects that should be improved.
4. *Time for taking pictures.* The participants took as many pictures as they wanted regarding the university's positive aspects. They had two weeks to take pictures for the first part. Then they selected five pictures that were closely related to the theme.
5. *Facilitation of the group discussion.* I facilitated a meeting with the participants to discuss the photos of each set of images.
6. *Critical reflection and dialogue.* After selecting five pictures, the participants started to present the stories behind each one of them. To facilitate the dialogue and their critical reflection, they used the SHOWED framework developed by Wallerstein and Bernstein (1988) and adapted by

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Wang et al. (1998). Through this framework, the participants presented the stories behind their pictures by responding to the next questions: What do you **See** here? What's really **H**appening here? How does this relate to **O**ur lives? **W**hy does this problem or strength exist? What can we **D**o about this? The same procedure was also followed for the second set of photos.

7. *Codifying*. After the group discussion, contextualizing, and storytelling, the participants engaged in the photo essay activity. They collaborated in grouping the photos by themes. Under the given themes, *positive aspects* and *dreams for the university*, the participants grouped the photos under several sub-themes.

After the participants shared the photos' stories, they participated in an in-depth interview. This step was added by following the procedure used by Rosario et al. (2016). The participants had the opportunity to speak more both about the strengths they perceived and the dreams they had for the university. Each interview was followed by my debriefing session. The objective was to improve the research process.

Dissemination of findings. For the dissemination of the findings of this study, several methods were used in the second phase of photovoice. The main method was the photo exhibit. It had two parts. The first photo exhibit covered the initial part of the photovoice, *the university's strengths* as seen through the students' eyes. The photo exhibit for this part was organized during the university Open Door Days. The final photo exhibit was organized at the end of the photovoice project. Both the strengths and the dreams of the students for the university were presented. The staff of the university participated in the photo exhibit. Due to the university schedule and the time when the final photo exhibit was organized—the end of the semester—the exhibit was opened for two days. In this way, those who did not come on the first day had the opportunity to visit it on the next day as their individual schedule allowed. The second method of disseminating the findings was through a presentation in an international research conference. The last method for disseminating the study findings is through this publication.

Advocating policy. The third phase of the photovoice, advocating policy, is addressed to the policy makers; in this case, the representatives of the academic and the financial departments of the university. The second aspect is reaching the policymakers. They had received the research proposal; thus, they were informed about the necessary details regarding the study and the steps involved. The photo exhibit aimed to influence the policy makers' decision regarding the university's improvement through photovoice and AI.

Sources of Data

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In this study, the main source of data were the photos. In addition, for triangulation purpose, six in-depth interviews were used. Observation was another source of data. It came in the form of analytic memos and reflections after the different activities and in-depth interviews. The data was prepared and given acronyms to be referred to in the findings and discussion section.

Reflexivity

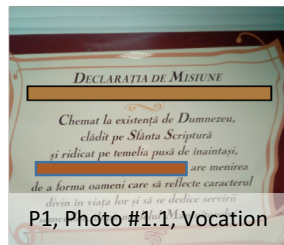
As a Christian researcher and educator, I believe that education can empower people. I also believe that growth appears when people are opened to facing some aspects of reality which need improvement. I do not consider that by recognizing some weaknesses, one becomes weak. On the contrary, recognizing the need for improvement is necessary and can be the first step in acting in a mature way to address some issues. I also believe that, because school is made for students; their voices need to be heard and their expectations should be fulfilled. In this way, schools can continuously improve their internal and external activities and the students can become mature through their contribution in the school's growth. Another important aspect is that, students should feel free to speak with the university policymakers. However, they should know that a Christian attitude has to be manifested in this dialogue. Further, they should manifest a positive and constructive attitude to foster positive change both at the personal and the collective levels. As an educator, I consider that an educational institution must prepare today's students for tomorrow's society and educate them to fulfill the faith-group's mission.

Findings and Discussion

In the codifying step, the participants grouped the photos by themes through the photo essay. As the study had the first two D's of AI, the first D—Discovery, and the second D—Dream, the themes were presented in two parts. The first part addressed the first research question regarding the positive aspects of the participating university from the students' perspective. The second part presented the dreams of the participants of their school in response to the second research question regarding what could be improved in the participating university from the students' perspective.

Recurring Themes I

In presenting the positive aspects of the university, the participants identified nine themes: (a) understanding the mission, (b) natural environment, (c) social relationships, (d) spiritual activities, (e) faculty support, (f) integration and adaptation, (g) academic development, (h) administrative care, and (i) diversity.



P1, Photo #1.1, Vocation

Understanding the mission. The participants understood the importance of the university's mission. Participant 1 (P1) said, "It is a real privilege to study, to grow, and to be formed within an institution 'called to existence by God, built upon the Scripture' whose purpose is a holistic education. . . we should realize this and live in a responsible manner" (Photo #1.1—Vocation, Folder 1).

In an in-depth interview (Id-I) P5 said, "I think that the perspective of being prepared for the future from the missional point of view is the factor which can radically change the learning process here" (Id-I, P5). In faith-based institutions, students appreciated and knew that their preparation should be not only academically but also biblically, and in relationship with the mission of the denomination. By upholding this important aspect, the mission of our schools can be fulfilled (Knight, 2017).

Natural environment. The location of the university, surrounded by a natural environment, is appreciated by all participants. P4 expressed his excitement by entitling his picture "My Dream. . . a Reality". Here is his description: "The tree house is. . . a nice refuge for meditation and relaxation for students burdened with papers and exams. The natural space offers students the privilege to discover God

P4, Photo #1.4,
My Dream...a Reality

within the nature and quiets his inner stress generated by the exams" (Photo #1.4—My Dream. . . a Reality, Folder 4). P2 said, "I like the natural environment of this campus very much. . . . It is like a breathing time in life because in other places you cannot find nature like here" (Id-I, P2). A faith-based institution has the responsibility to organize the natural environment in order to fulfil the students' needs. Thus, the expected high quality for Christian schools can be accomplished (Taylor, 2017).

Social relationship. Open and positive relationships were considered by the participants to be constructive for the campus life. P5 commented, "A potluck is organized by the chaplain together with the students whenever possible. Many times, quality relationships are created, started or developed around the fulfilment of the basic needs like food" (Photo #1.2—Togetherness, Folder 5). P3 highlighted the importance of learning in an environment where social interaction is promoted: "You develop yourself holistically in a place where you have the possibility to socialize, communicate, be involved, [and] discover new things" (Id-I, P3). An important role in developing a proper social environment

P5, Photo #1.2,
Togetherness

comes from the part of the administrative team. Taylor (2017) stated that this happens when the leadership positively influences the internal relationships.

Spiritual activities. The participants gave special attention to the important aspect of life, spirituality. P4 share the story of every day morning routine: “Students meet early morning to start their day in nature enthusiastically, praising God through songs and prayer. As such, the students find support for their spiritual life, [and] friends whom they can count on” (Photo #1.1—Morning Prayer, Folder 4).



P6 mentioned in the in-depth interview, “I feel that there are people who are interested in our spiritual life and they are preoccupied to help us. For me, this is a very important aspect” (Id-I, P6). Even if the students were young adults, they manifested interest for spiritual life and showed good understanding that a secular institution cannot fulfill this need. It is also the aim of the Christian education to create a favorable environment for the spiritual growth of its students (Knight, 2016).

Faculty support. Teachers have an important role in modeling students’ lives. They give formal and informal supports to their students. P1 mentioned that “The time spent with the teachers outside the class discussing academic as well as non-academic issues is important. Barriers are removed, and relations are strengthened, increasing the efficiency of the pedagogical acts” (Photo #1.3—Investments, Folder 1).



Faculty support is seen as a protection in students’ process of becoming professionals. P3 said that “Some of the teachers are kind and they are personally interested in taking care of us” (Id-I, P3). This care was well appreciated by the students. They recognized the important role of the teachers in their education. Teachers need to understand their influence in preparing students to make a difference in the society. Teachers should be also accessible; they should offer their personal time to their students (Taylor, 2010).



Integration and adaptation. By replacing their home with a new one, students can develop uncomfortable internal feelings. However, P5 mentioned that “Home can be anywhere, even far away from ‘home’. Home is where acceptance and

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integration can be found. . . . we can contribute to a friendly integration of all into the campus family” (Photo #1.4—New Home, Folder 5). P7 also considered that “Here, the students’ creativity and their ideas are appreciated. We can say that in the campus are ‘children’ who have found their place in the lives of the big people” (P7, Folder 7). A positive school environment has many benefits including developing the sense of belonging to the school (Schreiner, 2013), internalizing its values, and making spiritual decision for life (Taylor, 2017).

Academic development. The participants appreciated the university library and the multitude of books they can explore there. P2 stated that “We are blessed to have so many facilities in the campus. Tens of thousands of books are at our disposal to facilitate our harmonious development, including the academic one.

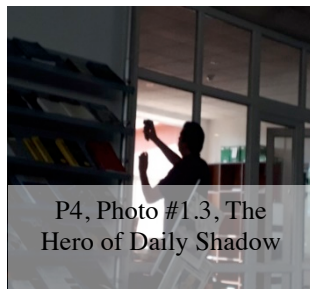


P2, Photo #1.2,
Passion for Books

Here, the students are challenged to read, to spend more time in the library, and to understand the value of knowledge” (Photo #1.2—Passion for Books, Folder 2). P4 also highlighted the opportunity they had to learn: “We have here a library with a pretty high number of books. We have many possibilities to be informed” (Id-I, P4). By understanding the value of knowledge, students can develop the desire for excellence which is an important aim in the Christian education (Geraty,

2002).

Administrative care. In their institutional evaluation, students identified the important role the employees played within the university. P4 stated that: “Our librarian assures that the windows are clean. He is doing this because in his employee mindset, two essential traits are present: sacrifice and excellence. This employee is ready to help efficiently and also enjoys a clean space in the library. All these because the university identified a valuable person and invited him to be



P4, Photo #1.3, The
Hero of Daily Shadow

a part of its work team” (Photo #1.3—The Hero of Daily Shadow, Folder 4). The administrative care was noticed also by P6 who said, “What we have around us, on this campus, is beautiful because there are people who take care of these things. We should support those who work here” (P6, Folder 6). Reciprocal care is important. Taylor (2017) states that is important to have an accessible leadership, willing to listen, and to prioritize the needs of the university students.



P1, Photo #1.2,
Variety

Diversity. The university offered a variety of activities to its students. P1 expressed her appreciation: “We have various options and

possibilities, not only gastronomic, sportive, recreational, relational, musical, but also academic. One can develop holistically by being involved in the various projects and activities which take place here” (Photo #1.2—Variety, Folder 1). P3 said, “We have here a variety of spaces. We have fields for football, volleyball, basketball, tennis. . . and this shows us that the administration is engaged in this...they thought of our needs” (Id-I, P3). As the aim of the Christian education is a holistic development, the students’ needs can be fulfilled by giving a diversity of activities throughout where they can develop in different areas (Taylor, 2017).

In concluding the findings for the first research question, when leaders choose a positive approach for the institutional evaluation, there are encouraging outcomes. By identifying the strengths of the university, the students learned to share their personal reflective input regarding the institution’s positive aspects (Fifolt & Lander, 2013). Additionally, this approach developed a positive attitude among students when they were asked to look at the positive aspects of the university (Bloom et al., 2013). Last but not the least, the AI approach seemed to increase the students’ satisfaction regarding the university life (Schreiner, 2013).

Recurring Themes II

In presenting their dreams for the university, the participants identified seven themes: (a) positive attitude, (b) academic excellence, (c) fulfillment of students’ needs, (d) updated regulation, (e) higher requirements, (f) order and cleanness, and (g) punctuality.

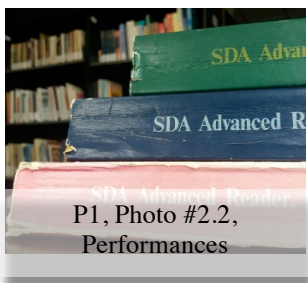
Positive attitude. Positive attitude does not always come naturally. P4 mentioned the importance of the correct action: “The students went by this space without realizing how many benefits they would have if the space was taken care of. We can plan a project to cultivate the terrain and submit it to the administration



P4, Photo #2.5,
We Love Green

for approval” (Photo #2.5—We Love Green, Folder 11). P2 stated also that “The first aspect that should be improved is the students’ attitude. Here on the campus, there is a general attitude of dissatisfaction. I can understand that we have different cultural backgrounds, we come from different parts of the country. There may be some reasons behind this attitude but generally speaking, nothing satisfies our students. . . . If we could see a positive attitude in the people who lead this campus

maybe we will be ‘contaminated’ too” (Id-I, P2).



P1, Photo #2.2,
Performances

Academic excellence. Students dream of academic performance. P1 identified in her picture some issues: “Usually we limit ourselves and we have low standards, thus leaning towards

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mediocrity. But when we decide to perform and to practically push our limits, the results can surprise us. Performance is reached only if it is strived for or asked for. Professors must ask for it; students must strive for it” (Photo #2.2—Performance, Folder 8). In her interview, P5 also mentioned their needs: “I consider that the university should stimulate performance, rigor in teaching and learning” (Id-I, P5).

Fulfillment of students’ needs. The traditional teaching style is not appreciated by the students. P4 presented a different case: “The professor uses a pedagogical method designed to create interaction, debates, and moving beyond the classical pattern of the lecture. The student needs to concentrate, and he or she does not have time for yawns or checking his or her smartphone. We can ask for a



P4, Photo #2.1,
Better Two Than One

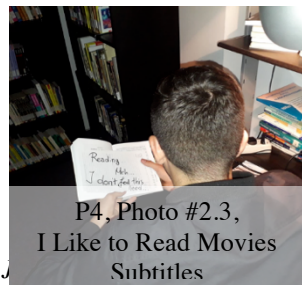
better pedagogical training of our professors, who prefer monologue and we can support this training by our active involvement” (Photo #2.1—Better Two Than One, Folder 11). P2 expressed another need: “The teacher should really believe in the students, to see their potential, and to encourage them to achieve that level which even themselves do not know they can achieve. . . . As students, we need someone who believes in us and encourages us to arrive there. . . . If students feel bored in class, maybe it is also a problem with the teaching style” (Id-I, P2).

Updated regulation. Students expressed the need of updating the actual regulation of the institution in certain areas. One of the students stated that “It is



P4, Photo #2.2,
Good Food, Lack of
Relaxation and

very hard for the students to be attentive in class after they eat lunch. Students need a break to take a short walk, a brief respite. Our interest is not to try to stay awake, but to absorb information by having a clear mind, not drowsiness. As students, . . . we can ask for a schedule review so that immediately after lunch there is a short break” (Photo #2.2—Good Food, Lack of Relaxation and Learning, Folder 11). P6 said that “In reviewing the regulation, it is important that the students are involved through their representative. . . . Students are partnering with the university” (Id-I, P6).



P4, Photo #2.3,
I Like to Read Movies
Subtitles

Higher requirements. Academic mediocrity was condemned by the students who participated in this study. In the university, “the library is not frequently visited by the students, the chairs in the library are not too used, and the books need to be cleaned from the dust pretty often. Students need motivation from the professors and also the

guidance to stimulate them to read. Sometimes, the academic standards are not so high, thus indirectly favoring mediocrity” (Photo #2.3—I Like to Read Movies Subtitles, Folder 11). P1 stated that “Unfortunately, some of the teachers, in most of the cases, have minimum requirements. A low standard. And, of course, we are not challenged to achieve our maximum potential. We are doing what is required, the professors are content, and then we remain at the same level. . . we are not using the potential we have. I will be glad if our professors require more from us” (Id-I, P1).

Order and cleanness. In keeping the campus clean, the responsibility pertains to all the residents. One of the participants said that “Cleanness is the foundation of health and the mirror of the heart. If the space around me is disorganized, then my



P1, Photo #2.5,
Thirsty of...

mind and feelings tend to reflect that, and the results are not the best possible. Here, the glassware is clean because a conscious person took care of it. It would be nice to have the whole campus shining like this! We can all contribute by cleaning up” (Photo #2.5—Thirsty of. . . , Folder 8). Another student said, “There is a need for more rigorous order on campus. Sometimes, the dormitory is untidy. . . it is a low interest from the students’ part...regulations exist but they should be applied” (Id-I, P4).

Punctuality. Time is precious, and for this reason, the students manifested their desire for more punctuality in campus activities. P5 presented this issue as follows, “The image illustrates lateness in class, experienced by both professors and students. Teaching is affected by unpunctuality, idle time, and a permissive attitude. As students, we can organize our personal time so that we may avoid



P5, Photo #2.2,
Beyond the Big Band...

lateness. Also, we can report repetitive and significant unpunctuality of the professors” (Photo #2.2—Beyond the big bang. . . , Folder 12). P6 presented the same aspect as an issue: “Punctuality in the university activities is a problem. This leads to frustration and develops certain bad behaviors. There is already a habit in starting late and the persons responsible for this are doing nothing to make things work better. As students, we must express the desire for more punctuality in our activities” (P6, Folder 13).

The second research question findings showed that, by giving students the opportunity to express their dreams for the university, the leadership team stimulated a shared vision. When the students see that the policymakers are listening to them, they feel valued. Thus, they manifest openness to share freely

their desires for the university's improvement (Doggett & Lewis, 2013). Additionally, the participants revealed the desire for an open dialog between the students and the policymakers. They reflected maturity in making all these recommendations and in creating a positive dialogue (Dewar & Sharp, 2013). Finally, they mentioned that the regulations should be established together by the students and the policymakers, according to the students' and the institution's needs. When this happens, both parties are interested in implementing the regulations according to what was decided (Fifolt & Lander, 2013).

Policy decision-making. The photo exhibit created a favorable atmosphere for the policymakers to express their opinions regarding the institutional evaluation through the photovoice and AI. Being impressed by the positive way the students made known their dreams for the university, the policymakers decided that the university will have (a) an annual institutional evaluation through photovoice; (b) an annual photo exhibit for the university' Open Doors Days; (c) an annual report of the students' suggestions implemented by the policymakers; (d) a permanent photo exhibit of each photovoice edition in the university's classrooms; and (e) financial support for the needed materials for the annual university's evaluation through the project "The School of My Dreams."

Conclusion

Transformational leadership inspires a common vision and shared aspirations. It also challenges the process, looking for creative ways to improve an environment. The present study showed that an appropriate approach can develop positive attitude in both groups—students and policymakers. The creative methodology of PAR through photovoice and AI revealed what the students considered positive in their university and also what their dreams for the university were. They received a voice in the university growth.

Students showed that they understood the mission of the university and that they appreciated its natural environment. They perceived as positive various aspects of the campus life, social relationships, spiritual activities, faculty support, students' integration and adaptation in the university life, academic development, musical activities, diversity of the activities, and administrative care. They dreamed for more positive attitude and academic excellence. They dreamed that the university should fulfill their needs, update its regulations, set higher academic requirements, strive for more order and cleanness, and require punctuality in all kinds of activities.

Several recommendations have been developed through this study. The university staff should not forget that the school is for the students. The students can be given a helpful "voice" in the school's improvement. The university teachers should be open to new ways of collaborating with their students. They should never stop improving. The students' voice is important and can lead to

change when it is effectively heard. Students should never stop believing in the positive way of influencing policymakers.

For further studies, in the institutional internal evaluation through photovoice, the employees can be taken into consideration as participants together with the faculty, as this design reveals several advantages. Further, it is recommended to use the SHOWED framework for contextualization and storytelling as developed by Wallerstein and Bernstein (1988). The empowerment element that is missing in this study can shed more light on how the participants can be empowered by the situation related in their photo stories. Additionally, the steps of writing down the stories can be accomplished by the participants. They are the ones with a clearer perception of the meaning of the story behind the picture. Thus, the researcher can simply become a facilitator in this process.

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