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# MULTIDIMENSIONAL COLLABORATION IN TOURISM EDUCATION: Experiences and Examples from Finland, Germany and the Netherlands

Satu Pekkala & Heli Ilola (Eds.)

Learning Tourism (LeTo) Project

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# Foreword

**Satu Pekkala & Heli Ilola**

University of Lapland, Multidimensional Tourism Institute (MTI)

Work-integrated learning, work-based learning, learning at work, work-oriented teaching methods, apprenticeship, internships, working life skills – these are common and overlapping themes in tourism education and training. One definite shared feature is that they do not happen on their own. The need for intense cooperation between educational institutes and other tourism stakeholders, especially tourism enterprises, is recognized both in vocational education and training and in higher tourism education in Europe. Furthermore, international cooperation is an essential part of both the tourism industry and tourism education.

This collection of ten articles discusses multidimensional collaboration in tourism education by way of examples and experiences from Finland, Germany and the Netherlands. Perspectives from all levels of tourism education – vocational education and training, universities of applied sciences and universities (master’s level) – are presented. We aim to provide good examples and to raise questions that encourage the reader to find new ways to strengthen partnerships internationally, nationally, and locally.

A few repeated themes emerge from the articles. First, it is noteworthy that various challenges of communication, and distributing and sharing information are emphasized in almost all articles. Despite the huge possibilities afforded by new information technology and varieties of communication tools available, implementing new technology is all but simple. Further, there is a need for various types of communication channels as technology cannot replace personal communication. Moreover, even sharing information within an individual educational institute is not without challenges. When there are partners from different organizations and countries, the complications are multiplied.

Another theme that emerged is the recognition of the necessity of close cooperation between tourism education and the tourism industry. The forms of cooperation differ depending on the level of education. For instance, in vocational education, the topics and concepts used may be “practical training” or “on-the-job training” while at the university level, we can talk about “generic competences” or “integrating theory and practice”. Nevertheless, the importance of having a close connection between education and working life is clear to students and teachers of tourism.

A common theme regarding international cooperation is that managing cooperation in practice is not simple. Taking into consideration the technological, multi-level and multi-party challenges of communication, as well as the different cultural and administrative environments and practices in different countries (even within Europe) there are many challenges to be met and problems to be solved. It seems that especially in vocational education and training there are still many obstacles that hinder the utilization of the available possibilities for international internships and other forms of cooperation that are, in principle, available. In addition to other challenges, an interesting realization is that in customer services in Europe, a good knowledge of English is not enough but other languages are highly valuable or necessary, like German in Germany.

The authors of the articles represent the partners of the Erasmus+ project *Learning Tourism: Creating Innovative and Permanent Methods and Practices for Multidimensional Education Collaboration* (LeTo). From Finland, the project partner was the Multidimensional Tourism Institute (MTI), including Lapland Tourism College, Lapland University of Applied Sciences and University of Lapland.

The Netherlands was represented by NHTV Breda University of Applied Sciences. The German partners were Kempten University of Applied Sciences, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Swabia (IHK Schwaben) and Allgäu Marketing.

The closing article in the collection shows that the challenges in managing international projects are not so different from the challenges in international cooperation in tourism education and training. Project management demands careful planning and clear and effective communication. Flexibility must be allowed to a certain extent as the partners and their environment are in a continuing state of change. And, finally, Internet and web-based tools may look promising, but finding tools that are suitable for different actors can be difficult.

We wish to thank all the authors of this collection: thank you for your contribution and patience during the writing and editing process. We also want to thank the director of MTI Antti Honkanen for reviewing the manuscript, as well as the project manager Niko Niemisalo for his active cooperation and for taking care of administrative issues.

# Finnish Students' Practical Training in Germany - Developing Vocational Education and Training (VET) Mobilities

**Päivi Kontiokoski**

Lapland Tourism College, Multidimensional Tourism Institute (MTI)

## Introduction

Lapland Tourism College (LTC) aims to provide tourism businesses in Lapland with professional workers who have a good knowledge of different cultures and the ability to work with international customers. Towards this goal, the LTC is cooperating with tourism operators in the Allgäu region of Germany where Finnish students can gain work experience to apply towards their degrees. The Allgäu area has vibrant year-round tourism based especially on spa and wellness enterprises. The idea is that in contrast to the limited Lappish mid-winter peak tourism season, cooperation with the Allgäu area would provide Finnish students with year-round apprenticeship opportunities in hotel, restaurant and catering services. At the same time, providing labour might be attractive for the Allgäu area since there is a current labour shortage in Germany.

This on-the-job training opportunity is part of the Learning Tourism (LeTo) project, which falls under the umbrella of the European Credit System for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) and has been implemented in Finland as part of the development of the basic vocational training and adult education degree system (Opetushallitus, 2015b, p. 6). The ECVET is a system for the transfer and accumulation of points based on learning outcomes. The basic principle is to support the identification and validation of studies or otherwise acquired knowledge to be applied as part of a degree. Using ECVET, the curricula are made to be transparent, to promote the mobility of students and the labour market, and to support lifelong learning (Opetushallitus, 2015b, p. 8). A basic principle of the ECVET is that knowledge can be obtained anywhere and anytime and know-how can be estimated by experts other than teachers in the student's school as long as the co-operation and learning agreements ensure that the desired expertise and know-how assessment of equivalent qualification criteria and other national requirements are fulfilled (Opetushallitus, 2015b, p. 11). The credit transfer system is thus based on contracts and mutual trust.

From the perspective of vocational education and training, the main goal of the LeTo project was to develop an international student mobility process in the Allgäu Tourism region of Germany, together with the local Chamber of Commerce. When German students come to get work experience in Lapland, the LTC usually acts as an interpreter of Finnish vocational training for companies. The well-established German dual (study-practice) model of education has led to LTC developing the on-the-job training co-operation omitting German educational institutions.

Developing the mobility process has emphasized an administrative perspective, since a fluent and high-quality mobility process requires agreements and common understanding of the activities of the partner countries and the organization of training models, as well as the host country's labour practices.

The following section is a brief introduction to the two educational models: Finnish vocational education and training and the German dual model. The second section describes the development of the

mobility process that LTC started together with its partners in June 2016 and has continued in the current year. The third section focuses on practical experience and the process of developing proposals.

## Vocational Education and Training in Finland and Germany

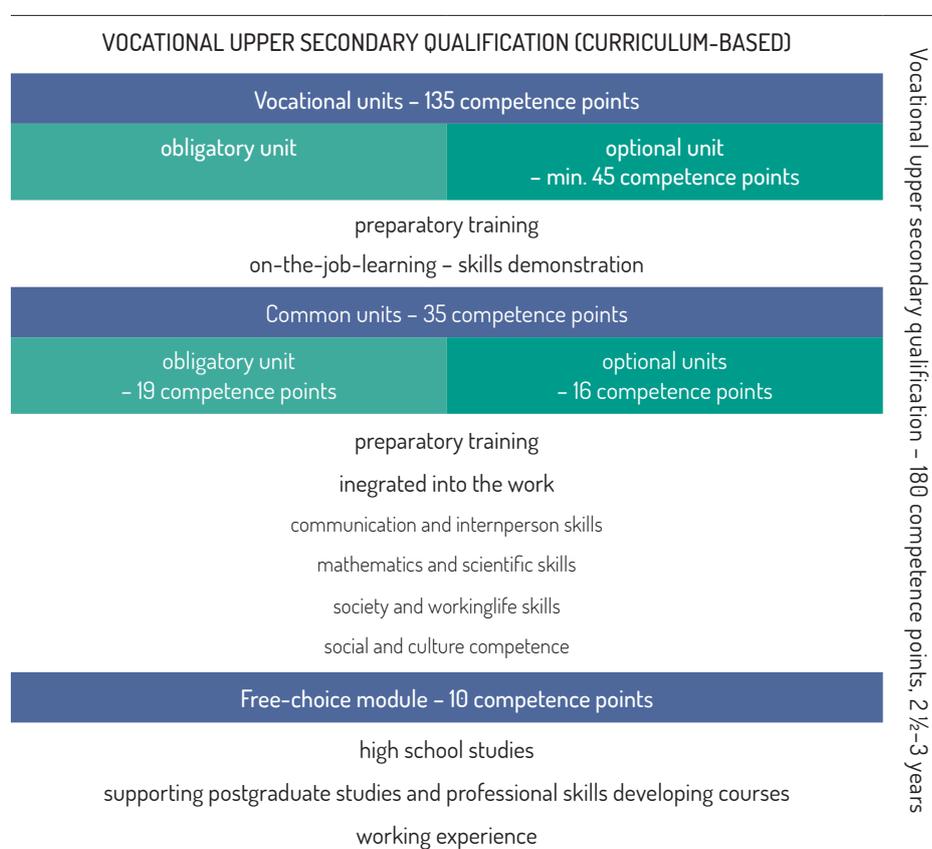
### Basic Vocational Qualifications in Finland

Finnish vocational qualifications (vocational upper secondary qualification, further upper secondary qualification and specialist qualifications) are based on the skills requirements of the labour market. Currently, graduates can obtain either a curriculum-based (youth education) or a qualification-based (adult education) degree, or via parties that have received a permit from the Ministry of Education that allows them to arrange Vocational Education and Training.

Curriculum-based education is implemented by theory lessons and workshops as well as working in real working environments. The basics of professional qualifications are drawn up by the National Board of Education and the education provider's curriculum is based on those qualifications.

The scope of an upper secondary vocational qualification is 180 competence points (Figure 1). The degree structure consists of vocational qualification units and common units, both of them have obligatory and optional units. In addition, the studies include a free-choice module of 10 competence points. Practical work in the workplace is required by each unit. At least 30 competence points are required to be acquired in real work environments (Opetushallitus, 2015a, pp. 20–21).

Every student has an individual learning path that is realized with a unique, flexible progression and optionality (Opetushallitus, 2015, p. 29). Personalization takes into account previously acquired knowledge and other factors affecting students' learning. Thus, the time spent on the acquisition of skills by each



**Figure 1.** Structure of curriculum-based vocational upper secondary qualification in Finland.

student is unique. Plans for on-the-job learning goals are made on the basis of the evaluation criteria and the skills requirements of the degree while taking into account the student's personal learning path. Students demonstrate their skills of expertise for a unit in a real working situation. Skills are based on qualification requirements and evaluation items and criteria (Opetushallitus, 2015a, p. 31).

A large-scale reform is currently underway in Finnish vocational education and training. The reform concerns, for example, funding, the removal of barriers to adult and youth education, personalized and flexible student learning paths that take into account previously acquired knowledge and enable the optional modules of a degree over borders, as well as increasing the amount of work-based learning (Opetus- ja kulttuuriministeriö). Education providers have taken the reforms into action progressively; they will be realized in full starting from January 2018.

## **The German Dual Model of Education**

German vocational training is based on a dual model where the student learns at school and at a workplace (Maatieto.net). In practice, this means that the student works at the workplace for approximately 3-4 days per week and 1-2 days are for school workshops or theory lessons. Students are responsible for finding their own workplace for their apprenticeship and the student remains in the same company for the duration of their study period; the company is responsible for guiding the student in the workplace.

On the one hand, the apprenticeship model's strength lies in pragmatism and manual skills development, problem-based learning, students' control in arranging the workplace and gaining working-life skills. The model also has the advantage that companies can coach the student's professional expertise to serve the company's own needs. On the other hand, from the student's point of view, their experience of professional expertise can remain narrow in scope, depending on the activities of the company. Furthermore, for small companies, the apprenticeship model can be cumbersome and expensive and they might not necessarily provide a sufficiently rich and diverse learning environment. Nevertheless, the model allows rapid employment and graduate placement directly in the company. It should be noted that for the realization of educational equality, students who do not achieve an apprenticeship are offered training by educational institutions, though this form of training is not as highly regarded as apprenticeship training.

In the German system, the Chambers of Commerce operate as coordinators and supervisors of the operations between the company, the student and the educational institution. The Chambers of Commerce are responsible for organizing workshops and theoretical training, workplace instructor training, the licensing of companies that can serve as an apprenticeship certification of companies, job counsellors, as well as to award diplomas (AEL, 2016; Suomen Yrittäjät, 2016).

## **The Mobility Process**

### **Building an International Work-based Learning Model**

Our goal was to build an international work-based learning model to act as a flexible and efficient guidance tool for future interactions between both parties. When Finnish students embark on learning at work, their aim is to acquire skills in accordance with the criteria and vocational requirements of a specific unit. Skills are acquired in practical work under the guidance of a professional. Thus, the host country must have an understanding of the Finnish system of vocational training so that skills acquired by students abroad can be recognized as a qualification.

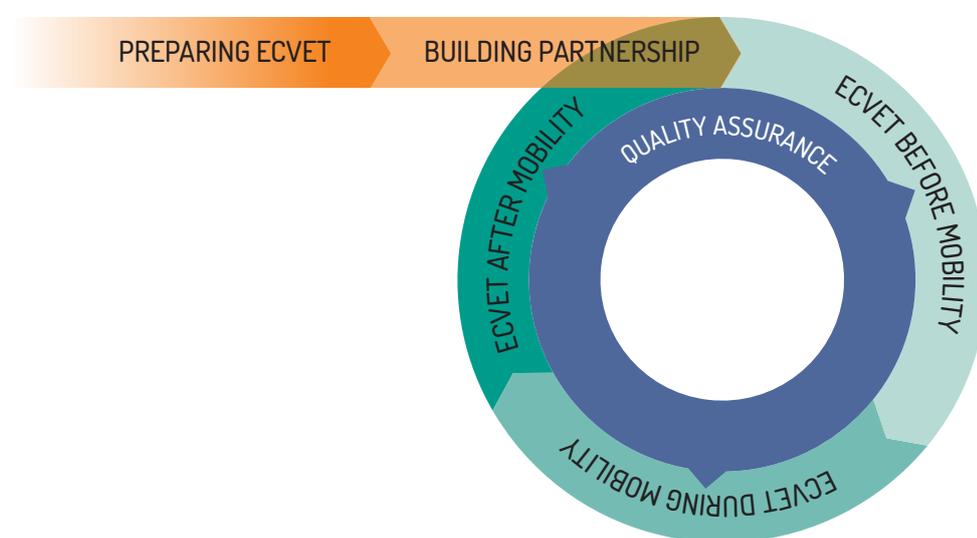
Consequently, students' international work-based learning involves a lot of administrative and preparatory work before the students arrive in a foreign workplace to learn. The project partners – Ms. Berthele, Marketing Ltd, Ms. Weber, IHK and Ms. Hurtig, Lapland Tourism College and signatory – had a meeting in Kempten in June 2016. During those days we outlined the international exchange process and continued the development afterwards by Skype. To study the various stages of mobility,

we utilized the mobility ECVET process modelled in the FINECVET project funded by the Board of Education (Opetushallitus, 2015b) (Figure 2).

The education provider is responsible for the implementation of ECVET, which in practice involves the establishment of cooperation agreements and learning agreements, recognition of prior learning, skills assessment taking into account the degree of professional standards and learning outcomes, as well as recording the estimated movement of knowledge during the study attainments and diplomas (Opetushallitus, 2015b, p. 16).

In the June meeting, we also dismantled the administrative process into three phases: 1. Before the Mobility, 2. During the Mobility and 3. After the Mobility. (Figure 3)

Lapland Tourism College developed a process chart of students' mobility from its point of view. The description has been compiled from various phases and roles of actors in accordance with the movement of the ECVET process and, importantly, it has taken into account the translated virtual vocational school perspective (Appendix 1). The description helped to identify the various stages of mobility from an administrative perspective, as discussed in the following sub-sections.



**Figure 2.** ECVET: Different stages of mobility process. (Source: ECVET Toolkit.)

BEFORE MOBILITY	DURING MOBILITY	AFTER MOBILITY
Prepare Memorandum MoU	Provide Learning <Activities	Validate Learning Outcomes
Identify Units of Learning Outcomes	Carry Out Assessment	Recognise Learning Outcomes
Discuss Assessment	Document Assessment Results - Personal Transcript	Evaluate Process and Results / Added value
Agree How to Document Learners' Achievements		
Clarify Validation and Recognition		
Sign Learning Agreement		

**Figure 3.** Before – during – after the mobility. (Source: ECVET Toolkit.)

## **Before Mobility**

Co-operation with our partners in Germany started by introductions to the vocational education and training system and the nature and practices of the German tourism and hospitality industry. We had to think about corporate enthusiasm for taking foreign students for on-the-job-learning periods, as in the German model, students have their practical studies in the same company for the duration of the entire studies. We considered how to create motivation and what makes a win-win situation for both parties. The labour shortage in Germany and our partners' experience of our college students' vocational skills were high, so we thought to contribute to their interest. As a result of these considerations, we agreed that the Chamber of Commerce would identify companies' interest in the region by means of a questionnaire.

We gathered all coaching contracts and forms to ensure a high-quality learning process in accordance with the Finnish system. In the before mobility stage, agreements need to be drawn up where parties agree on the responsibilities and obligations between the sending institution and the receiving operators. For instance, the contract agrees on liability for control, communication, evaluation, and other practical aspects. In the future, contracts will be drawn up with the host company directly, because the co-operation institution or the Chamber of Commerce will not be supported. Therefore, our goal was to create a list of interested companies and their contact persons. In addition, we agreed that the student learning assessment process would be opened for the host company, thus, the workplace instructor and the teacher need to communicate to clarify the evaluation process, performance criteria and professional requirements.

Preparing for international mobility begins at school with information about mobility opportunities, funding, countries and requirements. There needs to be flexible and personal support for students during the application process. When student permission to apply for a grant is awarded, mobility-related preparations are started in co-operation with the teacher, the student and the coordinator. A large part of preparations is related to completing various forms and arranging practical matters. The student and teacher prepare a Learning Agreement describing the objectives of student learning. In addition, together with the student, the teacher and the coordinator go through various forms dealing with qualification criteria, evaluation criteria and evaluation.

The content and extent of pre-departure training depends on the funding, but as a rule, students become familiar with the culture and customs of their destination and the various tasks at their workplace. When LTC partners thought about job training places in Germany, the skill of German language – or lack of it with Finnish students – was raised as being a significant hindrance. The German tourism industry is comprised of 90% domestic tourists and the remaining 10% come from German speaking countries. We realized that our students do not have adequate language skills in customer services. Thus, in practice, our cook-students have the most potential for mobility, because the working language in the kitchen is often English. The necessity of language skills points to the importance of language training in school and, above all, it needs to be incorporated in the long-term personal study plan, so that the preparation for mobility is on time. The school should offer German language teaching at an early stage, before the mobility. In addition to language, the before mobility period includes organizing practical arrangements, for example, accommodation and how to create links with students in Germany.

## **During Mobility**

When the student is abroad, it is important that a job counsellor has adequate information about the objectives of the Finnish students' learning and vocational requirements and criteria in the field. Lapland Tourism College has developed support material for workplace supervisors in order to coach the student and provide feedback. Support materials facilitate the guiding of professional development. The package includes the English versions of the qualification criteria and professional requirements, the student's

## À LA CARTE FOOD PREPARATION

20 Points of expertise (Optional)

Vocational Qualification in Hotel, Restaurant and Catering Services

### VOCATIONAL SKILLS REQUIREMENTS

#### The student

- plans daily chores and phasing
- pre-prepares and prepares à la carte menu dishes, sides and desserts in a restaurant according to portion cards
- uses ingredients and food preparation methods in a versatile manner
- finishes and displays dishes for serving
- co-operates with service personnel in customer service
- prepares à la carte dishes for customers with special diets
- tidies and organizes the working environment
- applies gastronomic principles in the preparation and assembly of dishes
- observes the in-house control plan

#### How do I show my skills

- I plan and phase my chores
- I pre-prepare and prepare à la carte menu dishes
- I use ingredients and food preparation methods in a versatile manner
- I display the dishes and co-operate with service personnel in customer service
- I take care of special diets and apply gastronomic principles
- I observe the in-house control plan and participate in tidying



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**Figure 4.** Qualification unit – card. À la carte Food Preparation.

personal Learning Agreement, the English version of evaluation forms, the Europass Mobility certificate<sup>1</sup> and a translation of the vocational unit's qualification requirements summarized on cards. The cards are easier to use for daily vocational tasks than the official 15 pages of qualification criteria. The Chamber of Commerce helped with the German language translation work. (Figure 4)

The student, teacher and workplace instructor each have guidelines to support the mobility period. The guidelines have been made in accordance with the international mobility project called Synergy. The guidelines are described from the perspective of each operator according to the various phases of the international mobility, tasks, checklists, etc.

To guarantee the quality of the learning process, it is important to make sure that the teacher, the workplace instructor and the student are in contact with each other during the mobility period. The teacher's task is to ensure that the student's learning process proceeds and that the student acquires the skills required in that vocational unit. If necessary, the teacher clarifies the Finnish qualification criteria for the workplace instructor and assists in the assessment. Furthermore, the teacher knows the student better and can bring out the student's personal qualities that are relevant to learning. The work instructor organizes the kinds of tasks that enable the student to acquire the skills needed.

Giving feedback during the learning process is important, and the purpose of keeping in contact with the teacher is to ensure the acquisition of skills advancement. The student's task is to keep teachers up to date about the progress of his/her own acquisition of skills and also to tell about everyday life situations, challenges and successes. This can be done with, for example, pictures and video recording using social media platforms like WhatsApp and Facebook or via e-mail. Students are also required to produce a learning diary which may take the shape of a report, blog, video blog, etc. Recognition of skills can be

<sup>1</sup> Europass Mobility is a personal document recording knowledge and skills acquired in an organised period of time (a mobility experience) that a person spends in another European country for the purpose of learning or training.

made more effectively and widely when students have done a good job describing their vocational, linguistic and cultural, information and communication, etc. and everyday experiences.

Challenges with communication relate to the variety of tools used, the skills of the actors and differences in the cultures using them. Based on past experience, e-mail is still the most used and easiest communication channel between teachers and work instructors. Additionally, teachers feel that Skype telephone conferencing is quite useful. Regardless of the means of communication, it is important from the beginning of the student's mobility period for the teacher and workplace instructor to agree on how and when they will keep in contact.

The work instructor's task is to guide the student's work by providing feedback and by coaching in various tasks. Together, the work instructor and the student ensure that the work supports the vocational skills' requirements. The workplace instructor assesses skills when the student has the skills demonstration. The evaluation is based on the criteria of the qualification and the skills requirements. The teacher supports the evaluation if needed.

### **After Mobility**

When students return to their home country, they have to contact their teacher. The teacher ensures the students' skills by interviewing them based on the assessment of the workplace instructor, student learning diary and other possible material. The identification of skills are broadly viewed, so the accrual of non-professional skills is also taken into account. In practice, the identification and validation of skills and competences must be gathered by a teacher team consisting of, for example, teachers of vocational units and common modules. The teacher of the vocational unit represents the student's performance in the study register. Finally, feedback on the mobility process is gathered from the various operators in order to further development.

## **Experience and a Summary**

Our goal was to pilot student mobility during the spring of 2017. In building a partnership and collaboration, it is important to include already in the negotiating process persons who have decision-making powers and a wide perspective of the field of studies. Thus, during our visit to Germany in June 2016, we made a preliminary oral agreement with Hotel Panorama's Marketing Manager Ms. J. Lerch that we could send one or two cook students to Germany during the next semester.

In our mobility information events in autumn 2016, we began marketing the possibility for students to go to Germany for their apprenticeships. The LeTo project had a meeting in October 2016 in Rovaniemi. During the meeting we arranged for the Director of Allgäu Marketing Ltd, Mr. Fischer, to meet our students and tell about the Allgäu region. The introduction seemed to have good results, as one cook student immediately announced her interest. Before the meeting, a waitstaff student with strong German language skills declared her willingness to go to Germany. Our language teacher thought she had sufficient language skills in customer service. Before Christmas, both students did on-the-job learning periods in different parts of Finland. At the beginning of January, when the practical arrangements should have been started for the mobility period, it became evident that both of the students retreated for personal reasons. Despite the setback, we re-opened the search and quite soon found two customer service students who were interested. One student had studied German for five years in elementary school, but the other student did not have German language skills. After discussing the students' language skills, we decided, in agreement with the students, to proceed with the preparations. The students completed the required forms and prepared their CV and Motivation Letter in accordance with the process. We sent the documents to Hotel Panorama and waited with excitement for the answer. In the end, a negative answer for both of them arrived. The students were disappointed, but we decided to offer them positions in a country where the working language is English. We were forced to face the realities of our language skills:

our vocational students' German language skills are not sufficient for customer service, so in the future, focus on the implementation of mobility will only be on chef-students' mobility.

Because the pilot failed, we did not get feedback on the process from Germany. Instead, we have had to exploit the process to the extent that it has been possible in the past year. We made a small-scale survey of students who participated in international mobility during their studies. The number of responses was, predictably, weak. The international mobility period is usually realized in the final phase of their studies, so it is difficult to reach graduates in their working life or post-graduate courses and enthusiasm to answer is not high. However, we did get three answers from the Webropol survey and one of the students answered a telephone interview. The students' mobility had taken place two months to two years previously.

Based on the feedback, the institutions' own mobility process has to develop, especially with regard to the output of coaching, ensuring personal coaching, and getting help with completing the forms. The students felt that there is such a huge amount of paperwork that a lot of things are forgotten. Meanwhile, the guideline is good help if the student uses it. Students also felt that it was important to have a person at school who is available, who has a complete picture of the different stages of mobility, and who can help with different, even small, issues. For many students, the international mobility may be their first fully autonomous mission abroad.

Opinions on communication between the teacher and the student during the mobility covered the entire spectrum: Some kept in regular contact, while others had no contact at all. On one end, the student did not feel they got teachers' guidance during the mobility, while on the other end, students experienced that communication was sufficient and they did not need more guidance from a teacher.

From previous mobility processes, it has been noted that the feedback and guidance discussions with the workplace instructor did not take place on a regular basis. Even so, students felt that the amount of coaching was sufficient. The coaching and feedback were, therefore, strongly linked with practical tasks. All but one did a skills demonstration during their mobility. At the end of the mobility period, assessment discussions were realized with different variations. In some of them, the student was involved, in some the school teacher, the workplace instructor and the host country coordinator. One student had no assessment according to the criteria of the unit, but they held a general discussion about the period. Another student clarified the assessment form with the workplace instructor. Based on the feedback, the student assessment process should be reviewed and clarified.

The international mobility process and the teacher's own role in it is largely unclear. The school has drawn up different base materials to help the teachers, but their usefulness only becomes concrete when one of their students is going abroad. The "old hands" teachers, who are themselves enthusiastic about international mobility and dedicated to supporting student internationalization, are driven by their own interests. The majority of teachers feel the same confusion with the forms as their students. Communication with a work instructor feels difficult and responsibility to initiate the contacts, unclear. Instead, the expertise identification process after a period of mobility seems fairly obvious if the student has all the required forms with him.

When developing the process in the future, we should focus on careful preparation of the first phase. A students' personal skills development plan should be carefully made at the beginning of the studies. That would be the right time to plan for international mobility. If a student is interested in mobility, they should be guided to more robust language studies already at the early stage of their studies. However, the economics of the Finnish vocational education and training will challenge the supply of a broader development. Thus, the education provider should identify alternative routes for acquiring skills and competences, for instance, to increase the supply of optional language courses in Community Colleges. Ideally, a student would plan the implementation of their international mobility together with the tutor teacher already at the beginning of the studies. The current mobilities design does not anticipate students' willingness to go abroad before the last year. In practice this means they decide within only a few months of when they should participate in the mobility. The education provider should also invest in the imple-

mentation of centralized pre-coaching courses to achieve economic efficiency and quality of operations.

An orientation for teachers should be given time and international guiding for students should be a part of the teachers' work. In practice, a number of interested teachers take care of the process and coach students well, but most of the teachers do not know how the whole process proceeds. Ignorance of international learning opportunities will also affect the offering of mobility periods for students. Teachers have a key role in promoting various possibilities when students and tutor teachers prepare a statutory personal learning development plan. The development should also be directed to the introduction of guiding tools. Digital opportunities are enormous, but the work culture of different countries can challenge the implementation.

This article highlights the development of mobilities – before, during and after – from an educational institution perspective. The realization of a mobilities pilot project with Germany, particularly in light of the German labour market, has brought insights into the development of the mobility process and has opened up the perspective of Finnish student learning, guidance and assessment processes as well as co-operation with Finnish vocational education and training. This cooperation has led to important understandings and the developing work continues.

## Guidelines for Mobility

LapinTNO-palvelut:

<http://www.edulappi.fi/fi/Tyoelamalle-ja-Asiakkaille/Hankkeet/EU-hankkeet/TNO---Ohjauksen-kehittaminen>

Teachers' Guideline:

<http://www.edulappi.fi/loader.aspx?id=5fe43f0d-aabo-47f7-8a79-ad4c4aa7cbd2>

Student's Guideline:

<http://www.edulappi.fi/loader.aspx?id=cc967f73-6feb-4a34-b9b9-9a36546c6fcd>

Workplace instructors' Guideline:

<http://www.edulappi.fi/loader.aspx?id=bfobcfcb-8f33-4d32-aob3-a5f14510cbdo>

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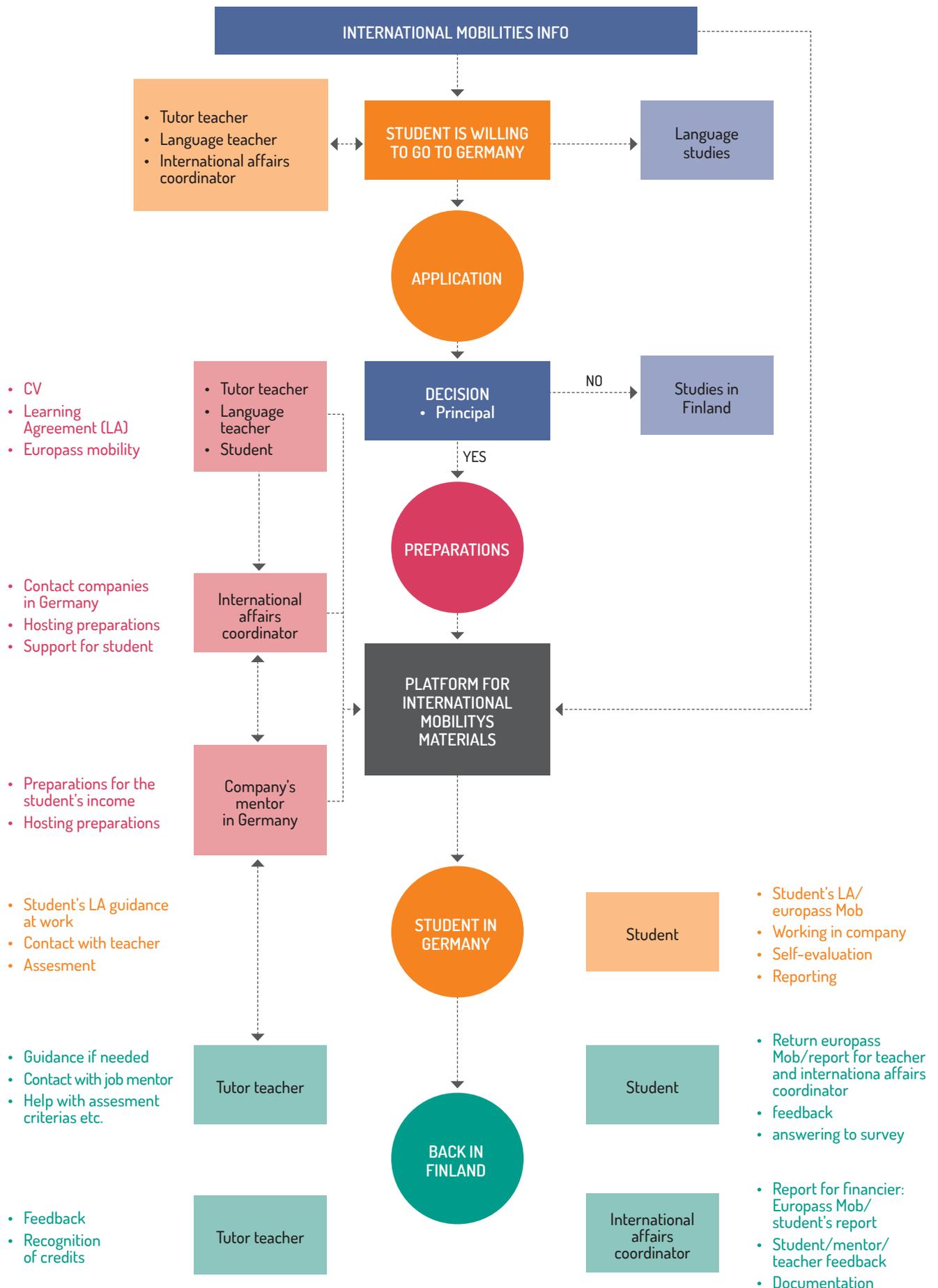
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Appendix 1. Mobility structure – VET.

# International Trainees – Experiences and Expectations of Tourism Companies in the Bavarian Swabia Region, Germany

**Ulrike Weber**

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## Introduction

This article deals with both the fundamental and specific features of the dual vocational training system in Germany and its effects on the participation of training companies in international exchange programmes. The experiences and expectations of tourism businesses in the Bavarian-Swabia region are illustrated more closely with respect to readiness to provide practical training opportunities. These primary issues are then expanded upon with a view to further encourage and increase motivation amongst companies to take on international trainees.

## Vocational Training in Germany

Whilst higher academic education has been harmonized to a great extent throughout the countries of Europe by means of the Bologna Process, in the field of vocational training, the procedures in Germany differ considerably from systems in other countries. For centuries, work-integrated learning has been practiced in Germany. Since the industrial revolution 140 years ago, the practice of work-integrated learning has been transferred into an organized system, the *dual vocational training system*. The system aims at meeting the rapidly increasing demands of qualified workers in the market. It allows the apprentice to spend the greatest part of his or her apprenticeship at work in a company, and this period is regulated by contract.

Teaching content is by means of attendance at a vocational college and, depending on the occupation, represents about one third of the training scheme. Of the seven professions in the field of vocational training in hospitality and tourism industries, five prepare the apprentice for a career in hotel and gastronomy.

*The Chambers of Industry and Commerce* (IHK) as public corporations fulfil independently and on their own responsibility more than 50 functions assigned to them by the state (IHK/Wir über uns). One of the most well-known functions is the commitment to dual vocational training, whereby for generations, young people have started their professional careers. The task of the IHK is to allocate training qualifications to companies. In addition, the IHK is responsible for recognized trainer qualifications within the companies and ensures that training scheme courses run as planned. The IHK verifies and administrates training schemes, as well as organizes and carries out intermediate and final examinations.

Vocational training is regulated by law in the *Vocational Training Act*. The act specifies amongst other things, that apprentices are allowed to spend up to one quarter of their vocational training time in another country. Thus, mobility of apprentices, the acquisition of intercultural competence and international experience are seen as important components in occupational training and are promoted by

a number of programmes; nevertheless, only 4.5% of apprentices take up this offer. The Federal German Government aims to increase participation in international apprenticeships to 10% over the coming years.

## Tourism Employment Market in Germany

At present in Germany, every eighth workplace is directly or indirectly linked to tourism. According to prognoses for sustained growth, this branch will remain a diverse and reliable employer also in the coming years. The German tourist industry not only ensures employment directly for 2.9 million employees but also for two million additional jobs which are dependent on tourism, with a rising tendency. The spectrum of this economic sector covers leisure and cultural undertakings together with the catering trades, traffic and commerce. The restaurant sector is the biggest employer, with a total of 1.1 million employees. The second biggest employer is the hotel trade with some 800 000 employees. (For more information, see *Die Tourismuswirtschaft*.)

According to Klein (2011, p. 21), the core personnel in the hospitality industry are employees who have vocational training qualifications (59%). These are supplemented by persons with no professional qualifications (25%) and apprentices (14%). Employees with higher qualifications, for example, in business administration and university graduates are employed only to a limited extent. (Klein, 2011, p. 21.)

## What Do Companies Think about International Exchanges? A Survey in the Bavarian Swabia Region

If one takes a closer look at the system of vocational training with its strong connection of the apprentice to the training company and the high value placed on the dual training system in the tourism sector, it soon becomes clear that in the past the hotel and catering sector has had relatively little experience of international exchange of apprentices or offers of practical training places for foreign students. Because of the diversity of training systems focussing on in-company or on college training, the international exchange of apprentices is often not comparable and not entirely compatible.

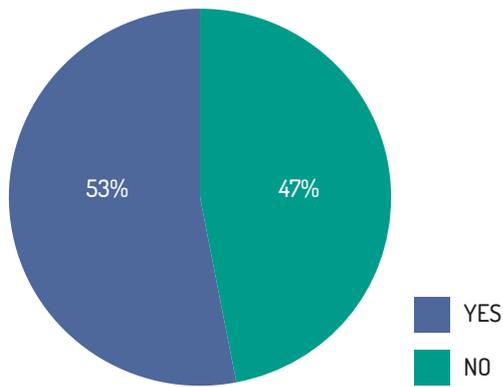
The administrative region *Bavarian Swabia* (Bayerisch-Schwaben) in southern Germany has its primary tourist attractions in the well-known Alpine holiday area, *Allgäu*. In 2016, the Allgäu region recorded around 17 million overnight stays in approximately 2 000 tourist accommodation facilities (Bayerisches Landesamt für Statistik, 2016). The destination has a rural structure and the accommodation offers for tourists are predominantly by small and medium-sized, or family-run establishments.

A survey conducted amongst tourism companies in the Bavarian Swabia region was intended to bring clarity about experiences, interest and expectations with respect to international trainees. In November 2016, questionnaires were sent to 196 Allgäu tourist businesses which were registered as training companies with the IHK Schwaben<sup>2</sup>. Of the 196 questionnaires sent out, all were delivered and 37 were filled out and returned to IHK Schwaben, representing a return rate of 18.9%.

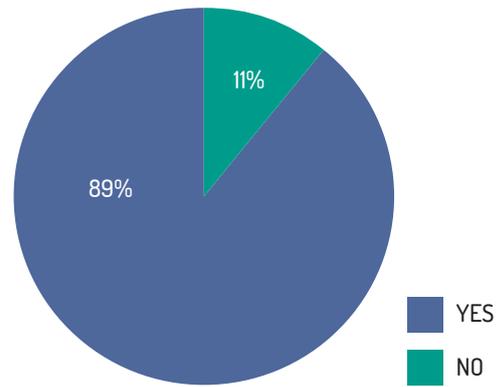
Almost 60% of the companies questioned had employed trainees within the last three years. Almost half of the companies had experience with international trainees (Figure 1). In answer to questions about the country of origin of the trainees, mostly countries of EU nations were stated. The most common country of origin was Italy, followed by Austria, Spain, Poland and Slovakia. A few countries outside the EU were also mentioned. Experience with international trainees was predominantly positive. In some cases, difficulties due to lack of language skills were mentioned.

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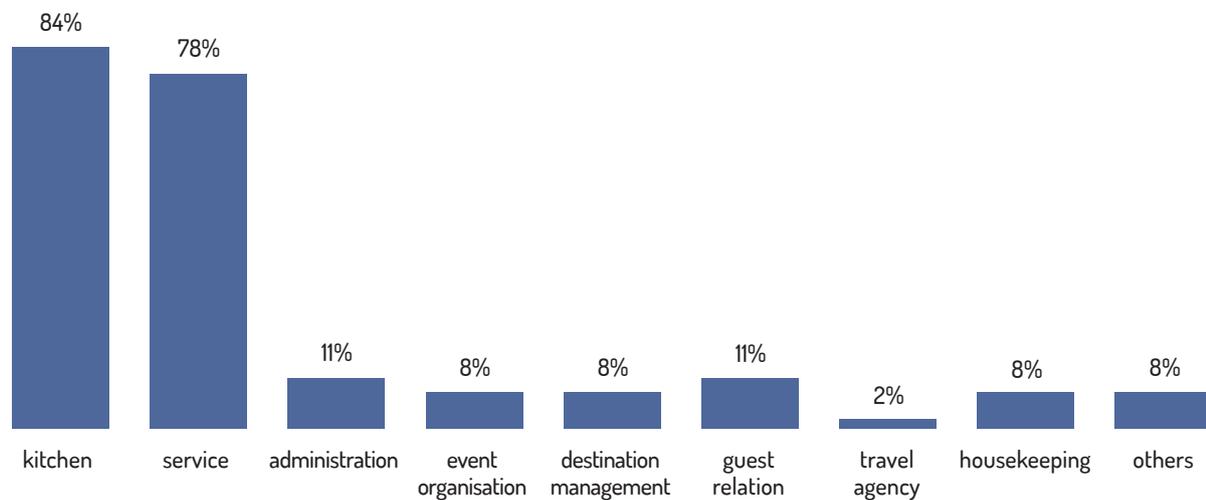
<sup>2</sup> The area of responsibility of the IHK (Chamber of Industry and Commerce) for Swabia is identical to that of the administrative region Bavarian Swabia.



**Figure 1.** Experience with international trainees in surveyed companies. (n=36)



**Figure 2.** Opportunity to employ trainees from other European countries in surveyed companies. (n=37)



**Figure 3.** Potential work areas for trainees in surveyed companies. (multiple answers possible)

The majority of tourism businesses in Bavarian Swabia were interested in taking on trainees from other countries of Europe; 89% could envisage offering a traineeship (Figure 2). If we differentiate traineeships or internships according to the training system, then 86% of the companies saw themselves in a position to employ an apprentice, 22% would be able to offer work placements for bachelor degree students and 0.5% for master degree students.

Since most (around 90%) of the visitors in the Allgäu region come from other parts of Germany, the employers expect knowledge of the German language in almost all work fields.

In conclusion, it can be said that there is definitely interest in international trainees on the part of the Allgäu tourism industry. The hotel and catering sector offers places predominantly for trainees from vocational training courses, whereas students from universities of applied science have some opportunities in destination management and in the travel industry.

## Encouraging the Recruitment of International Trainees

Tourism companies in the Allgäu region show keen interest in international students. However, recruitment for traineeships is challenging. Furthermore, many companies in a region with a structure of small

businesses are not aware of the benefits of taking part in international exchange programmes. Hence, it is important to raise the awareness of these benefits among the companies. The benefits include, among other things, a better position in competing for the best trainees, as companies with international relations in the field of vocational training can offer an attractive training period abroad for their own students. Besides, international trainees bring new stimuli into the business. An international exchange in the training field can also represent a possibility for companies to increase and improve their business connections with other countries.

Educational establishments often have painstaking work in finding companies to provide traineeships, especially abroad. One possibility could be the collaboration with regional chambers of commerce, business development agencies, associations and vocational colleges. These have the knowledge of the companies' structure in the respective regions and also have the necessary contacts.

Nothing motivates a company more than an insight into the successful business models of other enterprises. Presentations of companies which have already recognized the benefits of making international traineeships available can provide encouraging examples for other companies.

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# International Internship Development at Lapland UAS

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## Introduction

This article discusses the tourism education at Lapland University of Applied Sciences (UAS) from the perspective of international internship and its impact on international cooperation. Each year more than half of the students for instance in the Degree Programme in Tourism complete their internship periods outside Finland. The yearly amount varies somewhat depending on the interest and motivation factors of students. Students are entitled to get financial support for their internship periods from the UAS through a grant system in order to cover most of their costs and expenses abroad (Lapland UAS/Grants for student exchange). This is the way the UAS encourages its students to gain international work experience, to learn new working habits and new cultures as well as to have a possibility to create an important contact network already during their studies.

Even though current practices are working rather well, new forms and ideas of developing internship cooperation further are necessary. Therefore, new and innovative models between the educational partner institutions of the Learning Tourism project are an important part of future cooperation giving different perspectives and development ideas to be shared. In addition, it is essential to find new international cooperation partners, both educational institutions but also companies and organisations, in order to create a network of operators in terms of internships. On the other hand, the quality aspect cannot be ignored – the internship period should give concrete value both to the student and to the internship company.

## Current Situation

Lapland University of Applied Sciences supports and encourages its students and personnel to get valuable work experience outside Finland. Internationalisation is defined as one of the key competence areas in the curricula of Lapland UAS. Therefore, internationalisation and internships are often combined and it is commonly acknowledged how important it is to learn about foreign work habits and cultures, especially when working in the international tourism and hospitality field. Hence, Lapland UAS has paid particular attention to international internship possibilities (Lapland UAS/Practical training). In addition to students' personal career-related development, it is also important to teachers and other members of the personnel to update their knowledge and competences in the tourism and hospitality field. Teachers have a possibility to visit international partner institutions and give lectures, work in projects or benchmark good practices to be adopted to their own use. Small steps have also been taken towards the real work-integrated visits where teachers update their skills and competences by working in tourism and hospitality companies or organizations instead of teaching in partner institutions. These kinds of practices should be developed even further in order to gain professional, field-related core competence and update one's expertise.

In the tourism education at the universities of applied sciences in Finland, it is often recommended that students complete at least one of their internship periods outside their home country; this is especially the policy in the English degree programmes. At Lapland UAS, there are altogether 5000 students

of which approximately 20 percent are of foreign origin. Lapland UAS offers education in English in four degree programmes; tourism, international business, nursing and ICT. In the school of Tourism and Hospitality, there is a *Degree Programme in Tourism*, which has now been operating for almost two decades. This is the reason why the programme is already quite experienced in international internship practices. Obviously, foreign students are encouraged to complete their internship in Finland. This helps them to integrate better into the Finnish working life, its manners and policies. Consequently, it also forms an important channel for non-Finnish students to create working life contacts and networks in Finland and possibly be recruited in Finland after their graduation.

The Degree Programme in Tourism in Lapland UAS has long-term international, systematic cooperation with *DEHOGA* (Der Bayerische Hotel- und Gaststättenverband); the head organisation of the hotel and restaurant field in Bayern in southern Germany and it is constantly being developed further. The organisation promotes the hotel and restaurant industry in the area and aims at developing the industry in question and maintaining its quality standards (DEHOGA, 2017). In the Kempten area in Bayern small, family-owned hotels are looking for work force and Lapland UAS is hence able to offer internship possibilities in those hotels to its tourism students according to the mutual cooperation agreement. Twice a year the degree programmes in the tourism and hospitality field send students' applications to DEHOGA which in turn finds suitable internship places for them. After this step, the student contacts the hotel in question directly and starts the normal internship process with all necessary documentation. This documentation includes the written *internship contract* with the company and the *Training Workbook* where he/she plans and agrees on the contents of the internship, reflects his/her own skills and competences and sets personal goals for the internship period (Lapland UAS/Practical training instructions and forms). This cooperation model has brought an excellent option for students to gain international work experience in a simple and efficient manner. At the same time, it has developed the systematic international internship cooperation of the whole institution functioning also as an example for other departments of the UAS. This option is especially suitable for purposes and learning objectives of the *Basic Training*, which usually takes place after the first study year (Lapland UAS, 2016a). However, there are also development needs of finding internship places suitable for the requirements of the *Advanced Training* period through this cooperation model (Lapland UAS, 2016b).

On the whole, Central Europe and Thailand have been the most popular training destinations among the tourism students of Lapland UAS during the past few years but new destinations e.g. in Asia are now gaining more interest as well. Along with the development of social media it has been easier for students to start broadening their horizons and to look for interesting, even more exotic internship destinations outside Finland. Hence, internships are a natural internationalisation tool for students already during their studies.

## Discussion and Development Needs

Internship operations have been in focus when developing e.g. research and development actions of Lapland UAS. Special attention has also been paid to the contents of the curricula of the degree programmes. It is inevitable that new forms of internship cooperation are needed to give more opportunities to students to become more international and to gain valuable work experience during their studies.

The Learning Tourism (LeTo) project has offered an opportunity to develop international internship issues in addition to other forms of internationalisation. One purpose of LeTo is to give a possibility to create new and deepen already existing forms of international cooperation networks in terms of internships. It has been agreed that between the three institutions involved (Kempten UAS, Breda UAS and Lapland UAS) there will be a systematic internship model created offering the students of these educational institutions in question a useful channel of getting work experience abroad. This will be done according to the specific objectives and requirements set and approved between these three institutions. Developing new and innovative models between educational partner institutions is an important form of future cooperation.

Internship issues have to be developed systematically also in the future because they bring an important practical element to tourism studies. New international cooperation partners have to be found to make the internship process easier for the student. However, the quality aspect cannot be ignored either so that the internship period gives concrete value to the student but also to the internship company.

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# International Internships – An Empirical Inquiry into the Student Journey to a Work Placement Abroad

**Raija Seppälä-Esser & Linda Bernadette Glätzle**  
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## Introduction

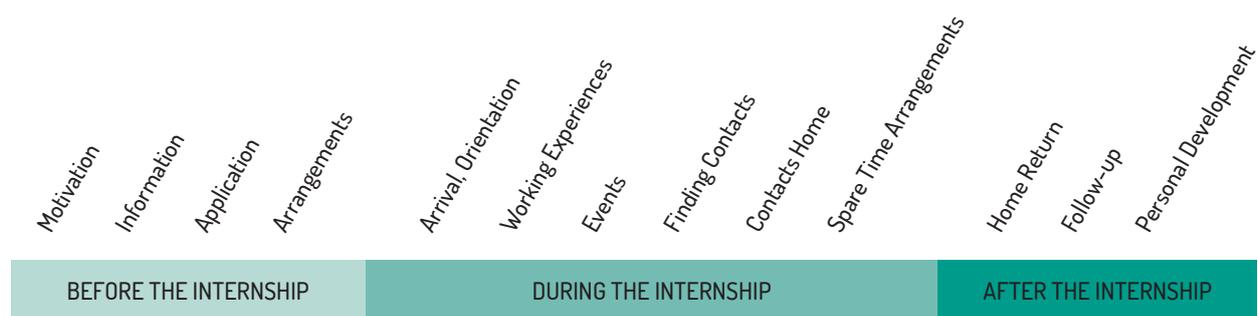
In an age of internationalization, the degree holders of higher educational institutions could greatly improve their employability by spending some time studying or training abroad during their studies. The European Commission has set a mobility target stipulating that by 2020 at least 20% of the higher education graduates should have gained international study or training experience (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015; European Commission, 2017). This goal, however, based on the development of student mobility reported by the European Commission in 2015, seems not to be within easy reach (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015).

Nevertheless, there are various benefits of international training for students. Along with learning to work and live in a different working and social environment and improving language skills, personal development is achieved. Learning to adapt to a new environment helps students, for instance, to learn to think globally, become more flexible and gain independence (Jacoby & Vollmers, 2014). These are qualities that future employers are increasingly expecting from their employees (Seifert, 2016). Moreover, companies hiring degree holders with international experience may benefit from young employees' know-how, improved competences, new ideas, and different ways of thinking and problem solving (Assaf & Lurie, 2008).

This research set out to find ways to facilitate international internships of students in higher education institutions by asking: What motivates students to get vocational training abroad? What kind of obstacles do students perceive or, indeed, encounter during the planning process? How could educational institutions facilitate this process? What kind of support do students need while on their work placement?

## The Student Journey

For a better understanding of the process students face when planning an international internship and staying abroad, a Student Journey (Figure 1) was used. It is a concept developed during the LeTo project



**Figure 1.** *The Student Journey.* (Source: Seppälä-Esser & Heinz, 2016.)

(Seppälä-Esser & Heinz, 2016) and is based on “Customer Journey”, a well-known concept in contemporary marketing and customer management (Manning & Bodine, 2012). It depicts every step that a student might take whilst planning a work placement abroad and then proceeding to carry out the plan.

The Student Journey has three distinctive phases: time for planning and preparing for the work placement, time spent abroad, and time after returning home. Motivation activates the Student Journey and leads to a search for information. Information needs are diverse, ranging from information about working possibilities and regulations in different countries to options for financing the stay. Besides handling job applications and being interviewed by potential employers, various practical issues must be taken care of before leaving home. During the internship, experiences are gathered and even unexpected events (illness, problems at work) have to be faced and dealt with. After returning, feedback is given or reporting done, and the reflection on experiences is gone through. By the end of the journey, personal development has been achieved.

## Research Methodology

The empirical research conducted among the tourism bachelor degree students at the Kempten University of Applied Sciences (Germany) consisted both of qualitative and quantitative research. To achieve an understanding of students’ motives, obstacles perceived and encountered when planning an internship abroad, as well as their need for support, a qualitative investigation was first carried out. For data collection, two moderators facilitated and video recorded group discussions were organised. The aim of the explorative analysis was to get deeper insights into the research issue. Focus group discussions helped to gain information about the attitudes, motivation, and opinions of participants. Based on the findings, hypotheses for constructing a survey instrument for the quantitative study were developed. (For more on methodology, see Fantapié Altobelli, 2011; Kuß, Wildner, & Kreis, 2014; Weis & Steinmetz, 2011).

For the quantitative study, hypotheses were operationalised by converting them into variables and questions. Questions regarding motivation, information, support, and financing were thereby the focus of the final survey. Depending at which stage of the Student Journey the respondents were by the time of the survey (before, during, or after the internship), two slightly different versions of the questionnaire were used. The questionnaire consisted of 26 questions, of which 19 were closed questions and six semi-open. The survey was conducted in the form of an online survey from October until November 2016. The invitation with a link to the questionnaire was sent to all 610 students who were at that time enrolled in the bachelor degree programme of the Faculty of Tourism at the Kempten University of Applied Sciences. In the following sections, the word “university” will refer to Kempten University.

## Results of the Quantitative Research

For the data analysis, 120 completed questionnaires could be used as 67 questionnaires were returned incomplete. The overall response rate was 19.7%, which corresponds quite well with the annual share of the tourism bachelor degree students who complete their internship abroad (about 22% in 2016) (Kempten University, 2016a; Kempten University, 2016b). Students in the basic study period – and therefore at the “Before Internship” stage of the Student Journey – were somewhat more active in participating in the survey (20.9% response rate) than students who had already accomplished the compulsory internship (15.9% response rate). At the time of the survey, according to the university statistics, 20 tourism bachelor degree students were in an internship and six of them were working abroad (Kempten University, 2016b). All interns abroad completed the survey.

Most respondents were female (95%). The high share of female respondents in this survey does not mean a skewness of responses, since only about 14% of all the tourism students in the tourism management bachelor degree programme are male. About 58% of the respondents were between 19 and 22 years of age, some

39% between 23 and 26 years. Figure 2 shows the current study semester of the respondents. The average duration of study in the Tourism Management Bachelor's degree programme is 8.3 semesters (Bauer, 2017).

### Motivation for International Internships

Most of the 52 respondents gave multiple reasons for their decision to work abroad, as shown in Figure 3. A possibility to polish one's CV with international work experience and to improve language skills were mentioned by most of the participants in the survey. Also, the opportunity to learn more about a foreign country and its tourism industry motivates the students to seek work experience abroad.

What are the students' motives when they choose a country for their internship? The main reasons behind this decision were less professionally grounded: the attractiveness of the country was the main motivator (71%), with possibilities to travel during the stay coming as the second (38%). One third of the respondents regarded good chances to find a job as a motive to choose a country. Some 19% of the respondents named other reasons as well, such as plans to live in the country in the future, recommendation of a friend, and a warm climate during the German winter.

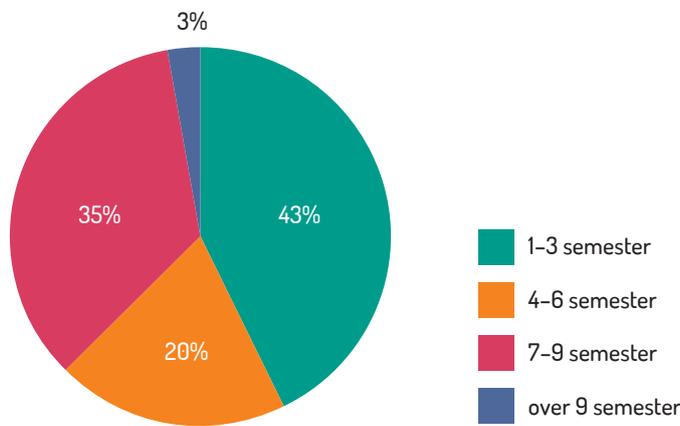


Figure 2. Respondents' study semester (n=120).

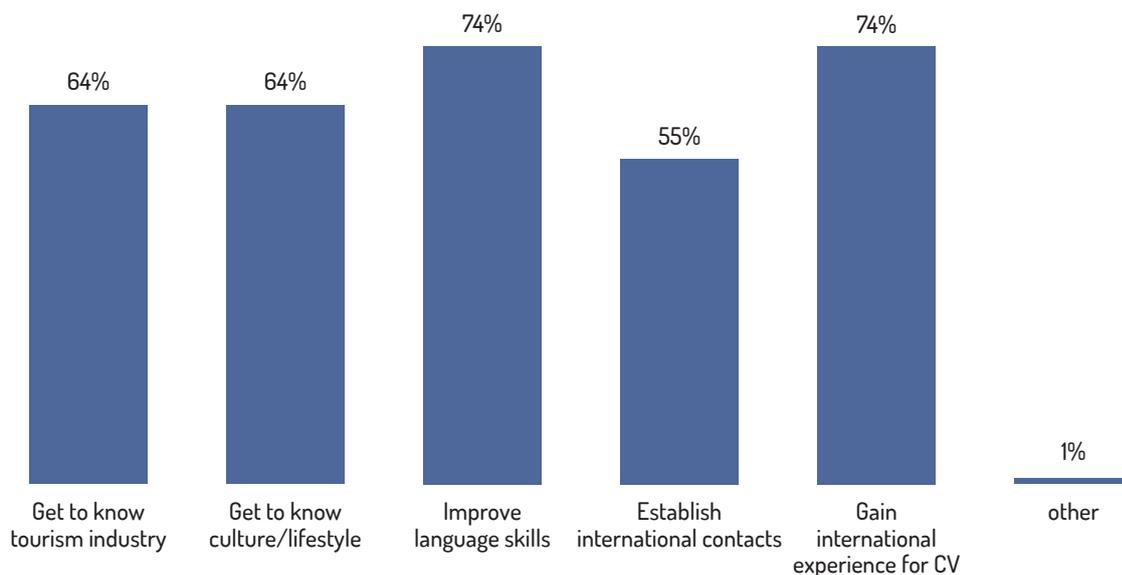


Figure 3. Motives for international internship (n = 120, multiple responses).

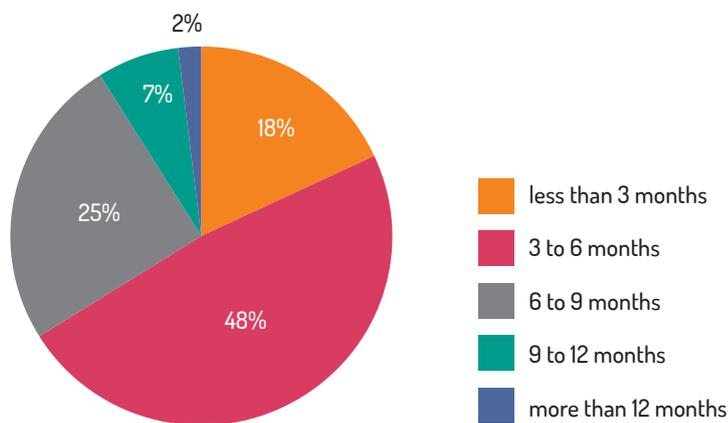
## Planning and Arrangements for an Internship

The German Academic Exchange Service recommends a time span of 12 months for the arrangements for job training abroad (Deutsche Akademischer Austauschdienst, 2013). Most respondents, however, start the planning of their internship less than nine months before and almost half of the respondents use only up to six months for the arrangements (Figure 4).

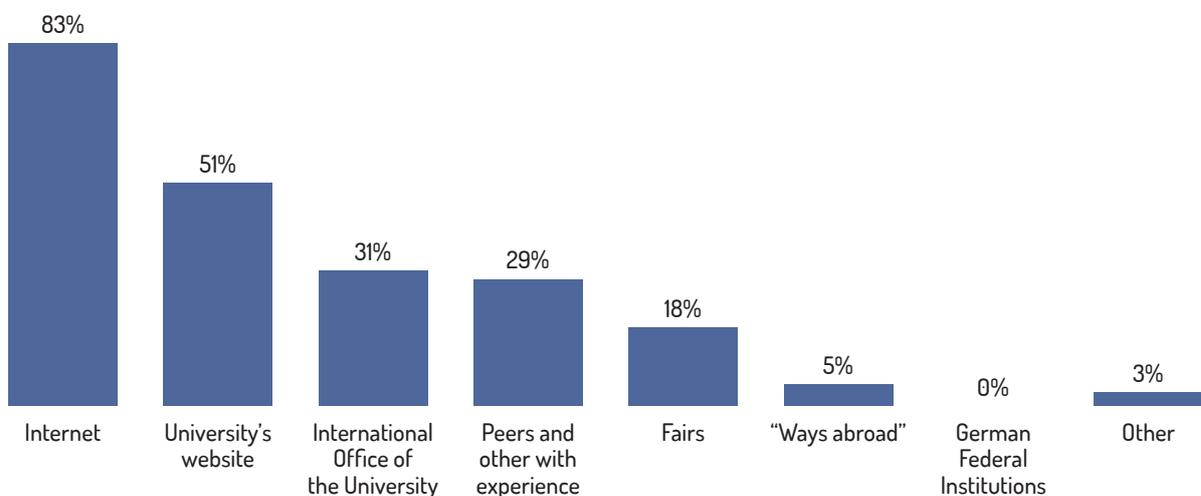
When comparing the distance of the destination from home and preparation time, quite surprisingly the distance does not seem to change this picture a lot. Even when the destination is as far as over 9 000 km away from Germany, the planning starts three to nine months ahead of the departure (Figure 4).

## Information Needs and Sources during the Student Journey

The Internet is the first option used to search for information when working abroad is being considered, as shown in Figure 5. In addition, the university has an important task in providing information through diverse channels both at the beginning and at the end of the Student Journey. Information was also searched for from peers and others who have first-hand international work experience. Every sixth respondent visited student exchange fairs.



**Figure 4.** Time spent for planning and arranging an international internship (n=120).



**Figure 5.** Information channels used by students at the planning stage (n = 120, multiple responses).

About half (49%) of the respondents indicated being quite well informed after using different information channels and 4% were highly satisfied. However, room for improvement was voiced by the other half, who state being poorly (40%) or somewhat inadequately (7%) informed. Based on the importance of the university's information channels for students, improvement of the information provided through these channels seems to be necessary: Almost one fifth (19%) of the respondents felt inadequately informed by the university. After returning from the internship, students are more critical regarding this issue.

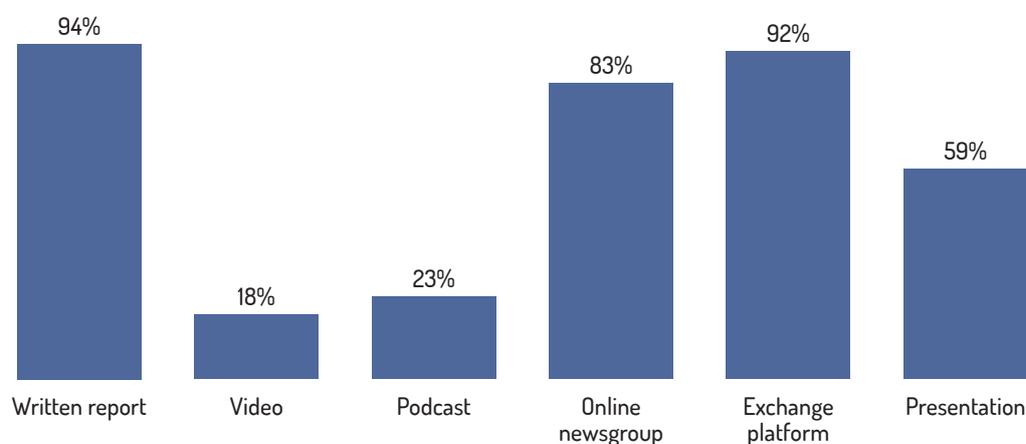
Figure 6 illustrates the willingness of the respondents to share their experiences after the internship with their peers. A written report seems to be one of the preferred channels for information sharing. Since an internship report is a compulsory part of the internship study module at the university, this finding might be skewed and should therefore be considered cautiously. Moreover, the respondents appear to be highly willing to share information through online newsgroups (83%) and exchange platforms (92%).

The students' reports on their experiences during their internships were regarded as useful by the respondents. Before the internship, 93% of the respondents would have liked to use their peers' reports about companies, 71% of these regarding them as highly useful. In addition, learning about other students' experiences in different countries was considered helpful by 90% of the respondents (34% very useful/56% useful) at this stage of the Student Journey. Furthermore, the respondents at the more advanced stages of the Student Journey predominantly regarded such reports as useful. However, reports of experiences in companies rather than in countries were of interest to them at this stage of the process.

### Support during the Student Journey

When asked about the support students received or had received from their university during the Student Journey, 65% of the respondents reported that no further support was needed. Those 35% who had expected to get more assistance when going abroad expressed diverse needs, such as better and consistent provision of information, information about the university's requirements and guidelines regarding international internships, assistance (also individual) with various arrangements (visa, scholarships, required documents etc.), support during the internship when problems arise, and encouragement from the university staff to go abroad, to name a few.

Of the survey respondents, 75% stated that a contact person in their destination country would be helpful. Another 51% would regard a contact person at the university during the internship helpful. Only 47% of the respondents were aware that such a contact person already existed in their faculty.



**Figure 6.** Willingness to share information about internship through different channels ( $n = 120$ , multiple responses).

The step for work placement abroad also seems to require parental support. Most of the respondents (67%) reported getting or having gotten support from their parents. Only 5% of the students in the survey had not received any kind of parental support.

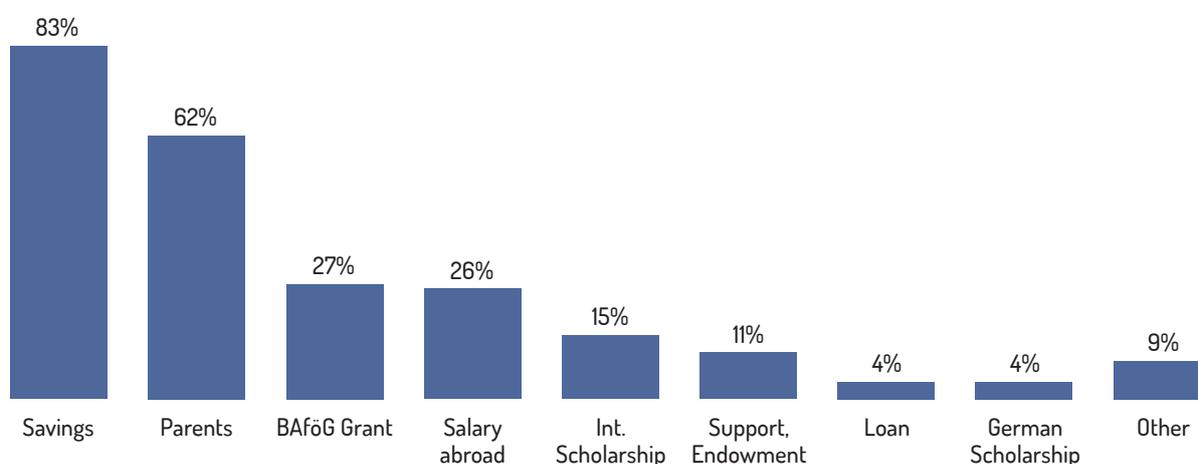
Most of the respondents subsisted on their savings during their international internship (Figure 7). For a large number of respondents, the financial support of parents was crucial. Scholarships and grants were options for quite many students. Even loans were raised to finance the internship. In “other” financing options Erasmus, part-time job abroad and a holiday job were mentioned.

## Summary and Conclusions

Gaining international work experience during the studies benefits students in many ways. The decision to go abroad is not always easy to make. Many obstacles and uncertainties complicating the decision may be encountered along the way. The concept of the Student Journey was developed to better understand the process and the decisions faced by students going on an internship abroad. To improve the process, it helps to understand the needs and wants of students at the different stages of the journey.

A survey among the tourism students revealed some issues and room for improvement. First, universities should actively encourage students to take this step. Personal counselling might be required to dispel doubts and insecurities. A broad array of information should be offered and easily found, preferably by using the information channels of the university. Checklists, an orientation guide for most common destination countries, and information events are some of the activities proposed. Exchange of international experiences between students should be facilitated, since this form of information is regarded as very useful. The establishment of online communities could fulfil this task. The University should name a contact person in case of problems. Awareness of the availability of personal assistance during the Student Journey might reduce the feeling of uncertainty. Lastly, financing an international internship should not be dependent on parental support, savings, and loans, but should be within the reach of every student.

While this study gives an overview of some central aspects potential interns encounter along the Student Journey, an essential question remains: Why do some students decide against going abroad? Without an intrinsic motivation, a Student Journey towards an international internship can never start.



**Figure 7.** Sources for financing international internship ( $n = 120$ , multiple responses).

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# Exchanging Practical Experiences: Innovative Practices for Knowledge Transfer between Returning and Outgoing Students at UAS Kempten

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## Introduction

The Erasmus+ Project Learning Tourism (LeTo) aims at enhancing the exchange of experience, knowledge and best practices regarding international work placements of students between partner institutions of Kempten, Breda and Lapland. This article presents innovative practices for exchanging experiences between returning and outgoing students at Kempten University of Applied Sciences (UAS Kempten).

One of the practices operated by UAS Kempten is the *Infomarkt* (Information market) where the Faculty of Tourism proactively organizes an annual exchange between returning and outgoing students. This interactive walk-around event is appreciated by most students and it contributes positively to the motivation of students to complete an internship abroad. The outgoing students gain insights based on the experience of the returning students while rotating from one station to another. However, research conducted among the students showed that they would like to choose the ways and content of the information that is transmitted. Therefore, this article examines additional opportunities for knowledge transfer practices based on an analysis of innovative practices.

## Preparation for Knowledge Transfer

Within businesses, the exchange of international cultural experiences between so-called ‘Repatriates’<sup>3</sup> and their to-be delegated colleagues is considered important to enrich the company’s international insight. Julia Hormuth (2009) investigated core communicative competences and challenges of this knowledge transfer. Her findings serve as the foundation of this paper because they describe which competences students should possess if they are willing to share their experiences with prospective fellow students.

Hormuth (2009) describes two pre-conditions for a successful exchange of experiences. Firstly, the returning as well as the outgoing students must be conscious about their competences and experiences and about their personal lack of knowledge. Secondly, students must prioritize topics that seem interesting and relevant for them.

Furthermore, Hormuth describes three additional tasks that follow these pre-conditions. The returning student should illustrate the experienced cultural imprint and answer the question, “What did you experience regarding characteristics and behaviour of people, habits, values, rules and facts about the culture?” Additionally, individual consternation should be reviewed to record the situations that led to emotional involvement. Lastly, the returning student should be able to express intercultural advice and to

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<sup>3</sup> Returned ‘Expatriates’ - employees who have been sent abroad by their company.

formulate recommended actions. This insight can serve internship commissioners in the institutions to prepare the students for interactive communication and knowledge transfer.

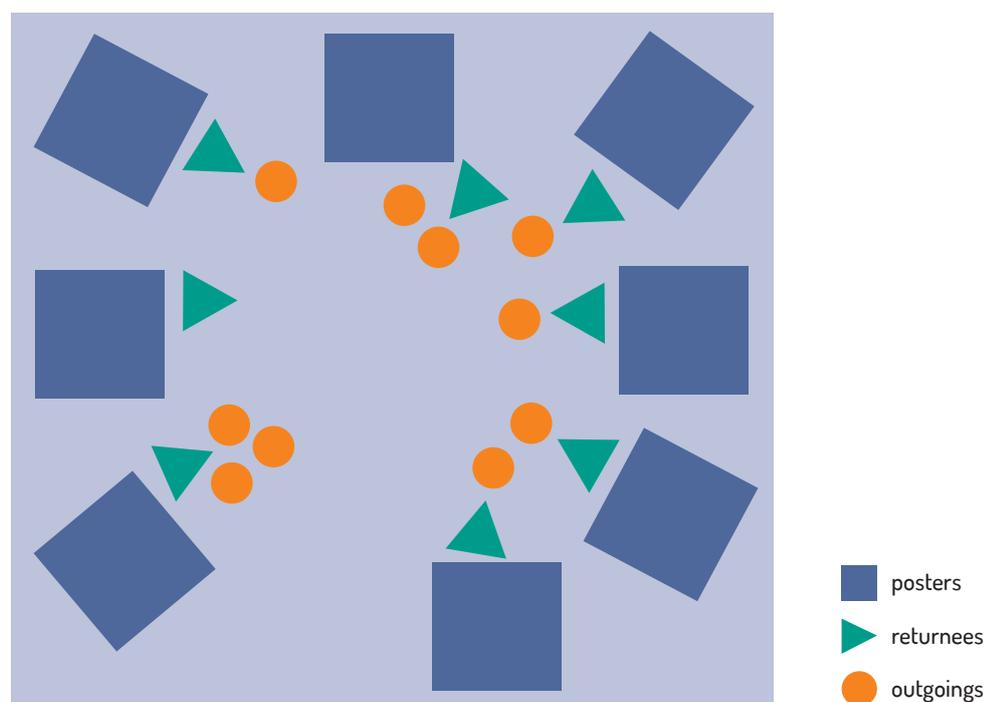
## “Infomarkt” – Fostering Verbal Knowledge Transfer between Students

Research at UAS Kempten by Seppälä-Esser and Glätzle (2017) showed that the implemented Infomarkt, which takes place once per year, is highly appreciated by Kempten students. The findings are based on qualitative group discussions between students of the Faculty of Tourism followed by a quantitative survey amongst students completing or having completed their internship abroad. For this, the concept of the Infomarkt is presented as a best practice example for exchange of experiences between returning and outgoing interns.

For this group event, up to five fields of interest (e.g. 1 Tour Operation, 2 Hospitality, 3 Events, etc.) are arranged in separated rooms. The returning students prepare posters to present their work placement in the related field. Like this, in one single room many students with a great variety of international working experiences can be interviewed by fellow interested students. The only limitation is space, as there is a maximum number of posters that can fit in the room. The interested students, divided into smaller groups (of ten), are allowed 45 minutes in every field of interest to talk to whoever seems interesting while rotating from poster to poster (Figure 1).

The convincing advantage of the Infomarkt is the nearly unlimited number of participants and the interactive workshop atmosphere. If given enough time, everybody can gain a great amount knowledge in their individual field of interest by walking around.

A disadvantage noted by the students of UAS Kempten during the group discussions is the unpredictability of companies and countries presented at the Infomarkt. Students who already have contacts with a company or know – because of language or other preferences – in which country they will spend their stay abroad seek more precise information than what this group event can offer (Seppälä-Esser & Glätzle, 2017).



**Figure 1.** Exemplary room arrangement Infomarkt (compiled by the author).

## Podcasts and Written Internship Reports – Reasons for Abolishment

A possible form to record more detailed information was attempted by UAS Kempten. Tourism students who had completed an international internship in 2013 were asked to record their experiences in podcast format. These were meant to be available for every prospective student. Nevertheless, these podcasts have never been used for their intended purpose.

The main reason for this is the great workload, notes Prof. Dr. Peter Reißner, internship commissioner at the Faculty of Tourism of UAS Kempten. He also states that written internship reports, which are obligatory for every student of UAS Kempten, cannot be used for public use. Experience reports that are not made unrecognizable regarding author and company could negatively influence the universities relationships with the industry.

As a result, podcasts and written reports are identified to be an effective but complex way to archive information, but not to inform prospective international interns for UAS Kempten. For other institutions this practice might be applicable, depending on the internal circumstances and data security regulations.

## Moodle Praktikuide – Platform for Internal Exchange via Internet

The research of Seppälä-Esser and Glätzle (2017) revealed a need for detailed and archived information. Thus, an experience exchange tool of some kind is needed. The major requirements for such an experience exchange tool are data security and respect to industry partners of UAS Kempten.

For this, together with the university's International Office, the Moodle learning platform was judged to be a suitable tool allowing student communication without the UAS Kempten being officially involved. As a result, a Moodle workspace called *Praktiguide* ("Praktikum" is the German word for internship) was launched in April 2017 during the university fair in Kempten. Figure 2 illustrates the sitemap of the Praktikuide. It features a layout for a short internship report, which can be downloaded, filled out and then uploaded again in the suitable database. The categories of the databases follow the logical structure of the university's faculties. Like this, reports can be uploaded regarding internships in Germany in the field of engineering, social and health management or business and tourism management. Regarding internships abroad the categories are EU and non-EU. Also a report database for incoming students completing their internship in Germany is implemented.

Additionally, the Moodle Praktikuide allows communication regarding certain questions. The forums that broach the issues of tips for internships (e.g. application, insurance, etc.) and information about the countries (culture, visa, etc.) serve as question and answer platform.

Most importantly, the information is explicitly from student to student. At the end of the page, the students find a cross reference to the university's International Office and contact details of the internship commissioners. All other information is without guarantee. Possibly, this leads to an open and uncritical discussion between students who just want to help fellow students with their decision-making.

## Innovative Internet-based Forms for Exchange of Experiences

In terms of digitalisation, internet-based software will ease the process of social networking and experience exchange in future. A series of guest lectures organized by the team of the Allgäu Research Centre tackled this issue. Two guest lectures were held at UAS Kempten in 2016. A third one was planned but had to be cancelled.

The theme of Professor Sonja Ganguin's (2016) lecture was announced to concern the potential and challenges of digital media in teaching. Examples of innovative methods given in the announcement were mobile learning, video-based learning as well as gamification. Sadly, this guest lecture was cancelled. Nevertheless, the keywords mentioned above draw an idea about prospective future teaching methods that might be suitable to be used as knowledge transfer tools.

## WILLKOMMEN BEIM PRAKTIGUIDE !

ES GEHT GANZ EINFACH - [Nutzungshinweise](#):

- 1 - vor dem Praktikum: durchsuche die Datenbanken und Foren (geordnet nach Zielregionen) nach nützlichen Infos über potentielle Praktikumsstellen im In- und Ausland. Nutze auch den Link zur hochschuleigenen Jobbörse, um mögliche Stellen zu finden.
- 2 - nach dem Praktikum: Lade einen kurzen Erfahrungsbericht in die jeweilige Datenbank (nutze dafür das untenstehende doc-Layout). Hinterlasse nützliche Tipps und Hinweise für die folgenden Praktikanten in den Foren.
- 3 - Bewerte den PraktiGuide im Feedbackbereich, sodass wir ihn stets für dich verbessern können.

## WELCOME TO THE PRAKTIGUIDE!

EASY TOOL - [Usage](#):

- 1 - Prior to your internship: Search the database and discussion boards for useful information and potential internship companies within Germany and abroad. Moreover, use the link to the university's "Jobbörse" to find recent job postings of companies.
- 2 - after your internship: Upload you personal experience report using the report doc.-layout below. Leave useful information and tips for future interns in the discussion boards.
- 3 - Give feedback in the feedback section at the end of the page to help us improve our service for you and future interns.

 [Layout für deinen persönlichen Praktikumsbericht](#)

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### Praktikum im Inland

-  [Erfahrungsberichte Inland BW & Tourismus](#)
-  [Tipps zum Praktikum im Inland](#)

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### Praktikum im Ausland (EU)

-  [Erfahrungsberichte EU BW & Tourismus](#)
-  [Tipps EU](#)
-  [Länderinfo EU](#)

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### Praktikum im Ausland (Nicht-EU)

-  [Erfahrungsberichte Nicht-EU BW & Tourismus](#)
-  [Tipps Nicht-EU](#)
-  [Länderinfo Nicht-EU](#)

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### For International students: Allgäu internships

-  [Experience reports of International students in the Allgäu/Germany](#)
-  [For International students: Tips for an internship in the Allgäu/Germany](#)

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### Jobs

-  [Hochschul-Jobbörse](#)

"Kontakt" ist nicht verfügbar

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### Feedback

Diese Moodle-Seite ist im Rahmen des Leto-Projekts entstanden.



Zur kontinuierlichen Verbesserung sind wir auf **EUER Feedback** angewiesen.

Deshalb nutzt das Forum, um Vorschläge, Lob und Kritik loszuwerden

und/oder

beteiligt euch an der Feedback Umfrage.

Vielen Dank !

-  [Deine Meinung - Umfrage](#)
-  [Deine Meinung - Forum](#)

**Figure 2.** Sitemap of Moodle Praktiguide I (Source: UAS Kempten, 2017.)

Brian Mulligan (2016), programme manager of the Institute of Technology Sligo in Ireland, gave a lecture on low-cost approaches to the development of online learning. IT Sligo offers most of its courses on an e-learning basis and thus, has a great share of online students. The software used is comprehensive: with *Adobe Connect*<sup>4</sup> live lectures become possible. Mulligan also reported on free online tools like *Merlot*<sup>5</sup> (an open source keyword search), *Office-mix*<sup>6</sup> (a plug-in for PowerPoint software creating interactive online videos) as well as *Telegram*<sup>7</sup> (a communication tool similar to *WhatsApp* but with fewer data security issues). Mulligan thinks of massive open online courses as the future of teaching, so why not use them to create massive online knowledge about work placement experiences?

Professor Franz Hofmann (2016) of Salzburg University held his guest lecture about the motivational aspects of innovative teaching and learning methods. He states that inductive teaching methods allowing students a particular sense of self-organised learning require a certain motivational mode of students. For students whose performance motivation is defined by a fear of failure, self-organised learning tools should not be used. They prefer classical ex-cathedra teaching and thus tend to dislike e-learning approaches. Though exchanging experiences between students represents a different setting for communication than teaching, it is good to in mind that students are different, so no single method or tool is ideal for everyone.

## Conclusion

The Infomarkt as well as the Praktiguide on Moodle are meaningful tools for exchanging experiences for the students of UAS Kempten. Nevertheless, in future, innovative practices should be tested and implemented.

Self-organised platforms like Moodle tend to address only a certain kind of student. Hence, additional ways should be developed and analysed to include all students in the knowledge transfer process. This requires a close collaboration of all faculties of UAS Kempten. Especially the faculty of Computer Science and studies of Game Engineering allow great potential to develop or implement innovative digital tools for knowledge transfer between students.

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4 adobe.com

5 merlot.org

6 mix.office.com

7 telegram.org

# Case Description: Work Integrated Learning and the On-campus Learning Company Newways

**Mylene van der Donk & Sabine van Steen**

NHTV Breda University of Applied Sciences, Academy for Tourism

## Introduction

Higher educational institutes are challenged to deliver students who are capable to deal with the increasing dynamics in the cultural, economic and social environment in which companies and public sector bodies operate. Simultaneously, students are increasingly focused on the pay off from their investment in education. They value progressively more the employability of the studies that they choose (Abeysekera, 2006). Students, companies and public sector bodies and educational institutes are thus benefitted by an integration of learning and practice.

Work Integrated Learning (WIL) is internationally recognized as a strategy for ensuring students are exposed to authentic learning experiences with the opportunity to apply theoretical concepts to practice-based tasks (Knight & Yorke, 2004; Peach & Matthews, 2011). WIL has been developed as a reaction to the expressed growing concern about teaching and learning performance and outcomes in business education. Freudenberg, Brimble, and Cameron (2011) even talk about an emerging gap between graduate attributes and industry requirements describing their employment readiness and their generic skills.

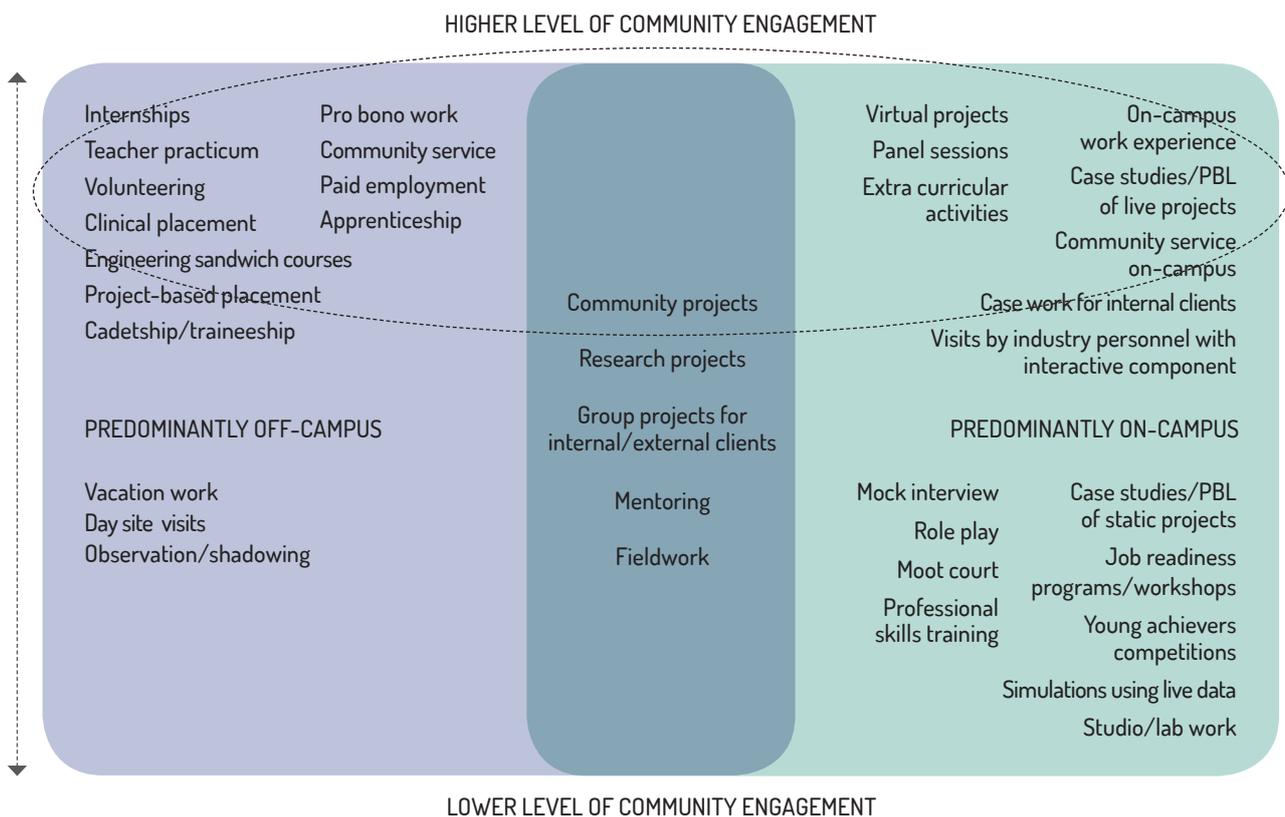
This case study describes the on campus Learning Company Newways as an example of WIL of NHTV Breda University of Applied Sciences.

## What is Work Integrated Learning (WIL)?

WIL is a term that originates from the Australasian context to describe the myriad experiences that engage students in the workplace (Ferns, Campbell, & Zegwaard, 2014). The term experience based learning is also used to describe similar activities. WIL is an umbrella term for a range of approaches and strategies that integrate theory with the practice of work within a purposefully designed curriculum (Patrick et al., 2008, p. iv). As such it includes as discussed by Rowe, Winchester-Seeto and Mackaway (2012) on-campus and off-campus activities that require predominantly a higher level of community engagement. In this context, community engagement is interpreted as the direct involvement of industry partners in the explanation, supervision and implementation of the assignments and activities of the students. This is visualised in the model presented in Figure 1.

In the model, the full scale of WIL activities are plotted. It shows that activities can differ on many characteristics such as:

- Different models of practice (e.g., community, professional, industry)
- Continuum of experiences, i.e., from classroom to the workplace
- Specific types of programs and models (e.g., cooperative, service learning)
- Types of activities (e.g., fieldwork, simulations)
- Pedagogical foundations
- Purposes of the activity/course
- Types of evidence, including: case studies, interviews, theory, reviews of literature



**Figure 1.** A typology of WIL. (Source: Rowe, Winchester-Seeto, Mackaway, 2012.)

A comprehensive definition is given by Billett (2009, p. v) and will be used in this case study to define WIL as “the process whereby students come to learn from experiences in educational and practice settings and integrate the contributions of those experiences in developing the understandings, procedures and dispositions required for effective professional practice, including criticality”. This definition is in line with NHTV’s thinking about WIL whereby the experience is perceived of additional value when it contributes to greater understanding of theoretical concepts, an increase of obtained skills, the dynamics of the working environment and the development of the ability of critical reflection.

## Learning Company Newways

Learning Company Newways is an educative and professional learning company within the Academy for Tourism of NHTV, Breda University of Applied Sciences. It offers graduating students the chance to gain one year both on-campus and off-campus work experience in their field of study. The company is responsible for the organization and implementation of global field trips and excursions, the organization of events, seminars, conferences, graduation ceremonies, guest lectures, company visits and orientation days for new students. Assignments are coming from both internal (NHTV) and external commissioners.

In the academic year 2015–2016, students organized 29 field trips, 60 events and 10 conferences or seminars; all varying in size and length. For example, they supported the organization of the fieldtrip with approximately 60 students to Dubai and Thailand for 2 weeks as well as the Conference on Business Travel and Aviation Management (both internal commissioners). The total spend of these activities was approximately € 498.000 (Van Steen, 2016).

Furthermore, during the European Council Presidency of the Netherlands until 30 June 2016, Newways worked in close collaboration with the European Council organizing two three-day trips in The Netherlands for ambassadors, deputy ambassadors and their assistants from all EU countries. Another

external commissioner is the ANVR, the Dutch Association of Travel Agents and Tour Operators, a representative body for the travel industry. For this association, Newways organizes an annual five-day conference abroad.

Furthermore, students are responsible for the Newways Travel Desk, which arranges all business trips for employees of NHTV. The travel desk is an implant of the strategic partner BCD, the market leader for business trips and travel management in the Netherlands. In the calendar year 2015 the Newways Travel Desk made some 620 transactions leading to a total spend of approximately € 150.000 (Van Steen, 2016).

Currently 14 students are employed at Learning Company Newways. Three days a week the students work on the activities for the organization and 2 days a week they focus on writing a thesis report.

## Success Factors of Learning Company Newways

The success of Learning Company Newways can be assigned to various factors. The first of them is *the academic study year* in which the students are hired. The students have their Newways experience during their final year of study. They have by then become more professional and are more focused on the job market, as the end of their study is approaching. As a result, the objectives of WIL are possibly realized to a higher extend in Newways than in those WIL activities that are implemented earlier.

*The responsibility and autonomy given* to the students is both a motivating and a distinguishing factor. The activities of the students are real life projects. Commissioners and the final customers expect and require professional performance. The consequences of mistakes made can be significant both financially and reputation-wise. For the Newways Travel Desk, students receive a *training* from the strategic partner BCD. After the start of the year, ongoing support is provided by a BCD consultant. The students from the previous year also hand over the running files and train the new team for a set period, thus assuring the continuity of the activities.

The team is clearly *structured*. The group of Newways students forms a real team in which each person has its own responsibility. Within this team, the students jointly work on the organization of the activities and projects. In addition to that, they have specific function for example concerning planning, financial topics, marketing and communication or human resources.

Students *work with both people they know* (their lecturers) *and for unfamiliar external commissioners*. Students are responsible for the organization of activities and events that they have experienced themselves (e.g. fieldtrips). They are thus familiar with the importance of good and professional organization. In fact they *are* the target group of most of the activities that are organised. The Newways students cannot hide in anonymity. They are the face of the organization and are responsible from A to Z. In the beginning of the year, an official and *professional introduction* takes place. The students become part of the NHTV organization. All staff receives an introduction of the new Newways team.

*Critical selection of students* is important. The selected students should be enthusiastic and motivated, independent and team-minded, stress resistant, accurate and systematic, creative with budget and time, with a strong customer focus, innovative and creative, communicative and service oriented and in possession of a positive and energetic attitude. Students cannot have a 9.00 to 17.00 working mentality.

*A pleasant working environment* is provided. In the midst of the hectic environment, the students have their own spacious office with all necessary equipment. None of the supervisors is working with them in the same office.

## Evaluation of Learning Company Newways as a Form of WIL

The objectives of WIL include the development of skills and knowledge, the development of attitude, insights in the dynamics of the industry, network creation, increased employability and the development

of the ability of critical reflection. Learning Company Newways offers possibilities to develop these professional attributes. At some attributes, Newways offers more possibilities than at others. In this section, the mentioned WIL objectives and the Newways characteristics are compared.

### **Development of Skills and Knowledge**

The practical skills are highly developed in one year. The growth of professionalism in both written and verbal communication is impressive. Students become used to speak in front of a group, to make decisions and to be flexible when things do not proceed as scheduled. Especially during events abroad, this requires stress proof organizational skills.

The students work fully on practical activities during their time at Newways. The organization of events, meetings, conferences and fieldwork requires limited theoretical knowledge or research. Students apply for example financial skills by drawing up an estimate, being account manager for various budgets. They apply experience development skills and knowledge in order to design concepts and products. All tour operating aspects, customer oriented skills, and knowledge are applied since everything done by Newways is tailor made.

Newways students work 3 days a week in the office and have 2 days to write a graduation report that includes a theoretical framework. In this way, they can show their ability to incorporate and apply theoretical concepts. This qualifies them for all competencies needed at this level of education.

### **Insights in the Dynamics of the Industry**

The Newways team changes every year. Students from the previous year pass on the knowledge from earlier years. The lecturers are committed to this programme for many years. The changes in the industry are experienced to a limited extend.

Students value their learned business communication skills, the experience with high work pressure, working simultaneously on multiple tasks with tight deadlines and high expectations from the commissioner and the customers.

### **Development of Attitude**

The combination of working for Newways and the writing of the thesis is perceived by the students as a heavy workload, especially during the second semester of the year when many time consuming activities have to be organized. This includes the organization of field trips of more than 60 people to Asia for example. Students prefer to be well prepared for such an activity and as a consequence their thesis writing process delays. Therefore, not all students manage to finalize their thesis in time.

During their time at Newways the students learn professional verbal and written communication. These skills are highly appreciated by the industry. The commitment of students to perform professionally is high.

### **Network Creation**

Students work with many organizations and suppliers in order to make all the arrangements. This happens at local, national and international level. In addition they accompany the tours and facilitate meetings and are therefore in direct contact with (external) commissioners and participants of, for example, events. It depends on the social skills of the students whether these contacts result in network creation. However, quite many of the students working at Newways acquire their thesis subject via their Newways network.

### **Increased Employability**

Students have the work experience from Newways which is highly appreciated by industry partners and which is advantageous in the job selection process. Graduation projects and jobs are frequently offered

via partners, or external commissioners or clients. Newways has a positive reputation and is well known in the Dutch tourism industry as well as within other colleague Universities of Applied Sciences. Quite a few students continue their study at Universities.

## Development of the Ability of Critical Reflection

Each activity is completed with an evaluation by the commissioner, the supervisor of Newways and by the student. These evaluations are used to improve performance in succeeding activities and for the students to gain insight in their performance. Besides these evaluations, performance and assessment interviews with the supervisor are held three times a year. These interviews provide an extensive view of the development of each individual Newways student. After their performance interviews they have to set new learning objectives for the following activities.

## Conclusions

Based on the discussion above it can be concluded that Learning Company Newways is of added value and meets many of the WIL objectives. At a university of applied sciences students are required to integrate theory and practice. The Learning Company Newways offers this to certain extend, though not all WIL objectives are realized to their full potential.

Learning Company Newways offers students one year of work experience in a relatively safe and protected environment. Students learn by doing and are responsible for the quality and the professionalism of the activities they organize. Based on the evaluations of students, internal and external commissioners and customers it can be concluded that the activities and learning outcomes are highly appreciated.

Newways is gaining more awareness and more trust both internally (at NHTV Breda University) and externally. While lecturers earlier preferred to keep in control, they have now learned that Newways is able to deal with complex (inter)national projects. Newways is not only active in the Academy for Tourism but operates within the entire university and beyond. This is also why the learning company is growing. This is beneficial for the organization, since the work pressure of lecturing staff decreases. Furthermore, it is beneficial for the learning experience of the student team since the variety of assignments is broader and the number of projects increases accordingly. Students are required to work as professionals on complex projects. For students interested in employment opportunities in this spectrum Newways is an ideal learning company. For the organization, it is a valuable asset.

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# Current and Past Actions Related to Internship Development at Lapland UAS

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## Introduction

According to the Finnish legislation concerning the universities of applied sciences (UAS), one of the core tasks of these institutions is to develop working life (Polytechnics Act 351/2003). Since the creation of the UAS in Finland in the 1990's, it has been commonly understood and agreed that UAS studies have to be practice-oriented whereas studies in the traditional universities are more focused on scientific, theoretical knowledge. Both forms of higher education studies are necessary but the UAS works more closely in direct contact with the working life. Thus, education at the universities of applied sciences relies heavily on concrete cooperation with the working life. There are several ways how practical studies are integrated into the learning processes. These issues are discussed in this article in more detail. Furthermore, special attention is paid to internship practices in tourism studies at Lapland University of Applied Sciences.

Tourism studies at universities of applied sciences are very practical and often integrated into the real working life cases in the tourism and hospitality field. In addition to projects and real, concrete study-related commissions from the local tourism and hospitality industry, internships as well as internationalisation periods form an important part of studies. That is why new forms of flexible study methods, such as pedagogisation of work, have been taken into use during the past few years. This method offers a possibility to complete one's studies in the work place according to a specific, individual study plan with detailed content requirements and assessment criteria. Prior competences and skills of students are also paid close attention to, especially when compiling an individual study plan for each student of Lapland UAS at a very early stage of one's studies (Lapland UAS/Incorporating prior learning into a degree). Therefore, prior work experience of the student is also regarded important and the institution recognises it already during the first semester it. This enables the student to plan in advance how to proceed and which option to follow in order to get his or her degree at a suitable pace.

## Pedagogical and Curriculum-Related Aspects

Practical training (internship) is a compulsory part of the studies at the Finnish universities of applied sciences and it usually comprises 30 ECTS divided into two periods; the Basic Training (15 ECTS) and the Advanced Training (15 ECTS). The requirements and objectives for these internship periods are naturally different.

In the *Basic Training* period students get experience of the basic tasks and duties in the tourism and hospitality field, the internship usually taking place after their first-year studies (Lapland UAS, 2016a). One of the objectives is also to learn to create working life contacts and to reflect one's skills on the actual tasks and duties in the internship company.

The *Advanced Training* period usually takes place during or after the third-year studies including higher task requirements than in the Basic Training (Lapland UAS, 2016b). Students get experience of superior-level tasks by handling for instance sales or marketing-related duties of a tourism company. In

addition, they have to negotiate and complete a specific development task for the use of the internship company during the Advanced Training. This task is always specified by the company and it is connected with real development cases of the company. In addition, it brings more depth to the internship benefiting both parties involved. The development task may also function as the final thesis written by the student. Therefore, the student meets the research and development objective of his or her studies as well and is able to give his or her input in order to develop the local tourism and hospitality industry. The development task can also be regarded as an asset in the recruitment process later on.

New ways to value previous skills and competences of the student have been developed. This method is called the *recognition of prior skills and competences* (Lapland UAS/ Incorporating prior learning into a degree). There are occasionally students who have a long work history and a lot of different work experience already when starting their studies at Lapland UAS. In such cases, the student reflects his or her skills on the objectives and requirements of the internship periods described in the curriculum and compiles a personal portfolio where he or she can describe the skills and competences already achieved. All necessary documents to certify these skills, such as testimonials, reports and certificates, are attached to the portfolio. The teachers or coordinators who are in charge of the internship issues assess the portfolio and give personal feedback to the student. Internship can thus be recognised and the student does not need to complete the compulsory internship period(s) during his/her studies. This enables him/her to even graduate at a faster pace.

A new form of granting credit transfers and enabling a new method of studying for students is a *pedagogisation* process. According to specific criteria and objectives described in the curriculum, the student can complete part of his or her compulsory studies while working in the tourism and hospitality field. This method is not solely connected to internships but learning specific field-related themes and issues at work is also recognised through this process and can therefore be seen as part of work-oriented learning.

In addition to the compulsory internship periods – the Basic and Advanced Training – students have a possibility to complete *internship as part of their Free-Choice Elective studies*. The number of credits achieved is based on the total number of hours completed during the internship. This form of internship is useful especially when the student wants to get more practical experience during his or her studies or if he or she would like to prolong the duration of the Advanced Training period. Some employers consider the duration of the normal internship period too limited and free-choice internship is a solution to this problem. It is also a useful option for those students who do not have very much work experience yet and would like to get better chances to be recruited after their graduation.

In the curriculum development process, close attention has been paid to the possibility to *combine the Advanced Training period and the Thesis process*. Therefore, the timing of these studies has been planned in the curriculum so that it enables the student to work on his or her thesis while completing the internship in the commissioning company. In addition, it is obviously easier for the student to do his or her actual research part of the thesis during the internship period and for instance gather all research data and handle other thesis-related issues and contacts. This option also meets the demands of the development task of the working life that the UAS has been allocated (Polytechnics Act 351/2003). Furthermore, it gives valuable information to the company itself to develop its services and operations with the help of the research done by the student. Consequently, it gives special benefit to the student because he or she can complete the internship and the thesis simultaneously, graduate sooner, and most importantly, gain valuable knowledge, experience, and learn more in practice. It may even help him or her to get a job after graduating.

Lapland UAS has its own internship policies and requirements (Lapland UAS/Practical training instructions and forms). The internship is seen as a very valuable part of the learning process of the student. It also supports the student's need to get experience e.g. of the recruitment process and field-related tasks. New working methods and cultures, different operating environments and forms of company hierarchy are very relevant issues from the perspective of field-related expertise in the tourism and hospitality industry in particular. One of the core tasks of the student is to monitor and get new information on the

specialisation area of his or her studies, such as *Experience Design* in the case of the Degree Programme in Tourism. Learning how to create memorable, ever-lasting experiences for tourists in practice and knowing how to market and sell tourism-related experiences to potential customers develop the student's practical knowledge and expertise of the specialisation area. That is why internship always follows a certain process with specific pre- and post-assignments and requirements set for the student so that he or she can get full benefit from the learning experience and is thus able to define his or her own development needs as well. Therefore, more attention has been paid to the contents and assignments of the internship in the development process of the curriculum of the tourism and hospitality field than earlier; the internship periods have to be based on certain objectives and criteria (Lapland UAS 2016a).

## Developing Operations

It is important to remember that internships are only one form of work-integrated learning. However, because of the length and the total number of ECTS gained through the internship periods, they form a very wide and efficient gateway for students of universities of applied sciences to get valuable work experience of the tourism and hospitality field and to develop their field-related core competences. They also improve recruitment possibilities of students after their graduation. Internships are therefore seen as real cooperation forms between the Finnish universities of applied sciences and the working life. In Finnish Lapland where the tourism and hospitality industry is one of the main and growing sources of livelihood of the area, local tourism companies' need for skilled work force has naturally increased. Internships suit especially well for seasonal work in tourism. During the past few years, many tourism companies – both local and foreign ones – have started to contact the UAS directly to get interns. This shows that it has been worthwhile to develop internship operations, cooperation models and marketing channels of the tourism education of Lapland UAS.

It is very essential for companies and entrepreneurs in the tourism and hospitality field to commit themselves to the cooperation with the educational field so that both parties will get the best possible benefit from it. Lapland UAS has nowadays common guidelines and documentation of the internship process in all its degree programmes (Lapland UAS/ Practical training instructions and forms). In addition, the tourism programmes at Lapland UAS have started to gather all information on companies they are cooperating with in an electronic customer database (Microsoft Dynamics, a programme of customer relationship management). It is thus easy to find e.g. contact information of all companies where tourism students have had their internship if the information is necessary for statistics, reports or documentation purposes of other kind. Among other things, this information is useful for students when they try to find a suitable training place e.g. in a specific country. The personnel can also benefit from it when seeking information on the form of the already existing cooperation with some specific company and when developing it further.

Nevertheless, new development objectives have been recognised such as the necessity of further development of common guidelines between all actors involved. Even though the working life nowadays knows about the internship possibilities more than in the past, mutual discussion is still necessary to develop cooperation even further in the future. Companies and various actors involved have to find ways to support and guide the student in a more efficient manner during the internship period. The tasks offered have to be suitable for the student to meet the requirements and objectives of the internship set by the degree programme. It is also essential that working life representatives give constructive feedback to the student during and after the internship period. It is inevitable that the educational institution and the working life have to have continuous discussion with one another to develop common operations together and to be able to make possible changes. This means that direct cooperation between the UAS and the tourism and hospitality industry has to be enhanced and new contacts have to be created, in our home country but also with companies and networks abroad.

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# Working Life Skills in Curricula: Making Them Visible to All

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## Introduction

The discussions on working life skills, work-oriented learning, work-based learning, and working life-based curricula in higher education have lately gained momentum in Finland. Studying at a university is no longer seen merely as an academic effort but also as a means to gain sufficient skills to work as a competent specialist in one's field regardless of the actual work placement. Owing to the paradigm shift, more attention needs to be paid to the generic competences that students learn during their studies. Until now, the emphasis of university studies has been almost entirely on academic substance. Thereby graduates surely gain a strong and in-depth knowledge of the theories, concepts, issues, and discussions of their field of study. Since everything is in a constant state of change, however, people also need transferable skills to be able to adapt to new situations. It is said that the employee of the future should have knowledge in two dimensions: in-depth (vertical) knowledge of the academic substance as well as transferable (horizontal) knowledge, such as social, argumentative, analytic, communicative, and co-operation skills (Oivallus, 2012).

Hence, every year when the Finnish universities are preparing for their annual discussions with the Ministry of Education and Culture, they are asked to explain how the working life skills are included in their curricula, what work-based methods (for example internships, project work, excursions) they use in their teaching, and how their degrees correspond to the needs of business life. The number and significance of these questions have been rising, and the universities are now forced not only to think of these issues but to actually develop their teaching. The employability and employment of graduates have also been added to the financing model of the universities, which is why the universities are now redefining the learning and competencies of the professionals that they educate.

The subject of Tourism Research at the University of Lapland has been in the forefront of Finnish universities to add working life skills into its curricula. During the renewal process of its curriculum in 2013, the subject carefully mapped all the generic skills that students were to learn and the courses on which the skills would be taught. The next step is to further emphasise the significance of generic skills in terms of university degrees, university teaching, and of graduates themselves. This is done by including generic skills in the course contents and by evaluating students' performance in learning them. This makes it possible to increase the visibility of generic skills and the related studies to students, staff, employers, and the general public. This text describes why, where, and how the reformulating process took place and what is to be expected of it.

## Curriculum Environment – Tourism Research Studies, Multidimensional Tourism Institute, and the TYYLI Project as Forums of Curricular Development

The tourism research studies at the University of Lapland have taken working life skills into serious consideration. In the latest renewal of the curriculum in 2013, generic skills were mapped carefully. It was

also ensured that the skills are actually taught on several courses. The new curriculum emphasises professional and specialist skills, management know-how, and the creation of new knowledge through academic research. The graduates are to be able to work as experts and developers in the public, private, and third sectors in Finland and abroad. (See Vehkaperä, 2014.)

Through the Multidimensional Tourism Institute (MTI) the subject of tourism research is connected to the tourism education provided by the Lapland University of Applied Sciences, and it has gained a great deal from this co-operation. Some of the university courses are taught together with Lapland UAS. On these common courses the students cooperate with and develop new ideas for MTI's partner companies and organisations. In project studies the students can solve real-life problems related to the industry. The project studies are coordinated by Lapland UAS but there are also university students in the project groups. Furthermore, the close cooperation with Lapland UAS has broadened the views of university teachers about the forms of higher education, and the work-oriented teaching methods have also been used on the university's own courses. For example, the bachelor's theses written during an academic year usually address one larger development issue of a commissioner within the industry. The issue is then split into suitable parts and distributed to the students in the thesis group. A large number of courses also have business visitors, and student groups visit destinations to learn about the industry. There are also commissions received from the industry on several courses.

There are many national projects that are focused on developing work-based or work-related learning. One of the latest is *TYyli* (Työelämäjaksaja ja työssäoppimista yliopisto-opintoihin/Bridging the gap between university studies and working life; see <https://tyylihanke.wordpress.com>) organised by six Finnish universities and aiming for a better and more extensive understanding and employment of work-based learning in university education. The purpose of the project was to develop internship practices for universities and to find models for gaining credit and taking courses by working in real-life situations. The *TYyli* project included a course for teachers and curriculum developers to brush up on planning their own courses and curricula. The author took part in the course by focusing on curricular communication, and this article, as well as the development work described below, are part of the course work.

## Curricular Development in Tourism Research Studies – the 'Curriculum Explosion'

The latest curriculum renewal in 2012–2013 was a turning point in implementing working life skills into the Tourism Research Curriculum. The curriculum had been written in the form of learning outcomes already in 2011, but the contents, teaching methods, or aims of the degrees had not been discussed much. In 2012 the curriculum was 'exploded' and a new curriculum was built from scratch. Adding the work orientation was made in several steps. The first thing we (the author and the tourism research staff) did was to *find an answer to an elevator question*, that is, an answer you can give quickly and without hesitation when somebody suddenly asks, What should your graduates be like (in order to work efficiently) and where should they be working? In our opinion, they should be professionals in responsible tourism. Then we moved on to *depict the main themes and concepts* of responsible tourism and *formulated the learning outcomes* that could then be distributed to the actual courses. We also *identified the generic skills* that the students should learn during their studies. These skills were derived not only from our own experiences but also from research findings. Another source was the recruitment office, which had organised several surveys on graduates and employers. We also discussed the skills with representatives of the other educational institutions of MTI in team meetings. Finally, *the courses and skills were cross-mapped* in a vast matrix. Through the matrix we could ensure that all the topics and skills were included in the final curriculum. We found this method of curriculum mapping very useful (see more e.g. Spencer, Riddle & Knewstubb, 2012; Uchiyama & Radin, 2009; Vehkaperä, 2014).

In addition to curriculum mapping, we included several *working life connections* in the curriculum and courses. The industry-driven bachelor's thesis, course assignment commissions, and business visitors and visits have already been mentioned. We also built closer connections to our alumni and invited them to speak on our courses and in other events. We drew up the course assignments in such a way that they imitate real problems faced in working life and prepare students for their future jobs by providing them with specialised knowledge and skills. A major point was to include a *specialist internship* in the curriculum: At the end of studies the student spends 10 weeks in an actual workplace, learning to apply the information and skills he or she has learnt during studies to real workplace situations. Specialist skills are also enforced on a *field course*, where the students compile a development plan for a tourism destination. Furthermore, since many graduates end up working in projects, we added a practical *R&D project course* in the curriculum. During the course the students write an actual project plan and a financing application based on ideas they have developed during their studies. Finally, we introduced a great variety of *teaching methods*: lectures, diaries, videos, reports, argumentation, oral presentations, exams, group work, discussions, reading clubs, etc. This enabled us to offer the students practical academic training in many useful areas: writing, analysing, comparing, combining, arguing, organising, problem solving, communicating, creating, independent studying, working in groups, etc.

The above-mentioned skills are actually practical skills that university graduates should have and employers expect them to have. People tend to forget that the main professional skills of a university graduate are the ability to read, think, write, and speak. Graduates in tourism research do not necessarily need to know how to guide tourists through a busy airport. Instead, it might be more important to know why the airport gets so busy in the first place and what could be done about it. Based on this knowledge, it would then be possible to implement the required changes with officials. For university graduates, it is essential to be able to look far into the future – not just to be prepared for what happens at this very moment. For us curriculum planners, it was obvious that the new curriculum should offer all the knowledge needed to enter the labour market after graduation. Previously, however, this was not clear for the students. The written curriculum only described the substance and academic contents of the courses. The generic and practical skills were to be learnt alongside the “heavier stuff”. Consequently, the students had a hard time defining what they really knew and were capable of after the studies. It was also difficult to tell the employers how our graduates' proficiency would match their requirements.

## Curricular Development in Tourism Research Studies – from Explosion to Evaluation Mapping and Better Communication

The curriculum explosion executed four years ago was a risky effort. At worst, it could have ended up in a disaster where the academic core would have been lost, the pedagogical arrangements would have been ambiguous, and the students would have left the programme. But as it turned out, the renewal was a success. The students love the new teaching methods and feel that they learn a lot more now than before. The students also feel that what they learn is very relevant. The teachers have also learnt new things when preparing the new courses with new assignments. The new pedagogical approach has certainly not been a failure. On the contrary, it has proven to enable the combining of theory and practice naturally while maintaining a high academic level. The experiences have led us to *the following question*: If generic and transferable working life skills should be in the core of an academic degree alongside substance skills, should they not be a part of the course contents and requirements as well?

Our answer to the previous question was yes. *In order to emphasise the significance of generic skills, we added them to the course contents and subjects of evaluation.* Students only tend to focus on issues they have to accomplish. This is a universal truth when a person has many things to do and too little time for it. But now that group working skills, for example, are part of the course evaluation, the students make their best to learn them, whereas in the traditional model they only learnt them “by accident” when working

together with other students. Including a generic skill in course evaluation also makes it possible to verify the students' learning outcomes and their level. The students can then enter an attained skill into their portfolios and refer to it when looking for a job. It also helps the students to recognise their strengths and the skills that still require more practice. On the other hand, the evaluation of generic skills ensures that our graduates are trained professionals and ready for the labour market. Of course, we also have to pay more attention to the teaching and evaluation methods so that students learn the right things and we know that the right things have been learnt.

Generic skills should be learnt on several courses, but not on every course. To streamline our curriculum (no overlaps and no gaps) *we expanded our curriculum map and included new elements into the matrix*. First, we mapped all the generic skills and pinpointed the courses on which they can be learnt. Next, we chose the courses on which each generic skill is evaluated. It may be enough to evaluate a generic skill only once even if it is learnt throughout the studies. We also divided the evaluation process into more detailed parts to see how the evaluation is really done on the course. With respect to some working life skills, it may be more appropriate to use self- or peer evaluation, which are also used in the workplace, than traditional evaluation performed by the teacher. In addition to who performs the evaluation, the other detailed aspects were *when* the skill is evaluated (in the beginning, in the middle, in the end), how the evaluation *affects* the grade (yes/no), what *type* of evaluation is used (numeral, written, oral), *where* the evaluation takes place (in class, during group work, etc.) and what the *function* of the evaluation is (to control, to motivate, to guide further etc.) (Hyppönen & Lindén, 2009, pp. 55–64). Finally, we mapped out the actual assignments on which the evaluating is based (report, presentation, activity during lectures, etc.).

In the process of mapping the evaluation more precisely we found out that we also have to think of the *teaching methods* that support the learning of generic skills. We discovered that we had never discussed the courses in such detail. Thus, we added detailed teaching methods to our matrix. It enabled us to avoid using the same methods on too many courses. It also gave us a possibility to compare courses and to give suggestions to others to use a method that is more suitable for a specific course or generic skill.

Before moving on to writing course descriptions we still discussed the different working life connections of each course. Many already existed but others could still be added or amended to fully support the learning of working life skills. Our goal is to add these connections to as many courses as possible. After the mappings discussed above, the *course descriptions will be re-written*, including the new formulations of working life skills and connections (the process is still going on when writing this). Similarly, the learning outcomes required for the degrees will be reformulated. We also hope to be able to draw up a *visual presentation* of the working life skills taught on the courses. An extensive matrix is not feasible, but with the help of a good graphic designer we might end up with a user-friendly version. Feedback will be gathered from students and teachers, and revisions will be made for the next year, if necessary. If the model turns out to be another success, it can later be distributed to the other subjects of the faculty. The model has already drawn a great deal of attention.

## Conclusion

Regarding the core competences of university graduates, good working life skills are as essential as strong in-depth knowledge of academic substance. In the future, employees need to be skilled in both dimensions in order to easily move around in the labour market. To promote the learning of working life skills in higher education, they should be included in course contents and their attainment should be evaluated. This does not necessarily require any alterations to the courses or to the way in which they are taught. Instead, it can be accomplished by communicating the aims and results of the courses more explicitly. At the University of Lapland, we have employed curriculum mapping to reveal and to streamline every detail of our courses. It has helped us greatly in promoting the learning and teaching of working life skills as part of our degrees. As a result, we have a new curriculum that communicates clearly to the students, staff,

employers, and the general public what our graduates really can do and what their academic expertise consists of. In other words, we are educating increasingly skilful and self-reliant workforce for all sectors.

The new curriculum will be introduced in autumn 2017. It will take a year until we know whether the new skill-oriented perspective has been a success or a failure. The ultimate test will be the moment when the graduates of the new curriculum enter the labour market. After that, it might be a good idea to ask businesses whether they feel that the graduates are more capable and whether they have a better knowledge of the field than before. Most likely, there will be something new for us to add and learn.

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# Evaluation of the Internship Module in Tourism Research Studies

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## Introduction

In recent years, globalization, financial turbulence, demographical changes and high unemployment rates have prompted organizations to require their workforce to acquire particular competencies and engage in continuous development. This trend suggests that university students would benefit from new approaches and a workplace orientation in their studies, for these are now essential to increasing graduates' chances of employment. Traditionally, of course, university study has primarily been designed to give students theoretical expertise in their chosen field.

Several years ago, the University of Lapland introduced an internship in its degree program in tourism research. The present paper, a pilot study of feedback on the module, indicates that the internship could be improved to some extent. An in-depth study was not considered feasible, as the module is a relatively recent addition to the curriculum.

The internship module is topical and often discussed in informal contexts. The present study has been designed to illuminate the issue in broader perspective. Specifically, it explores how tourism research studies at the University of Lapland presently conceive of the internship and discusses some of the key challenges in developing the module and in managing partnerships with other organizations.

## Internship in the Tourism Research Program at the University of Lapland

There is a growing interest in Work Integrated Learning (WIL) in higher education; this is evident in the increasing number of initiatives from universities to include internships, field work, cooperative education or other variants in their curricula (Choy & Delahaye, 2011, p. 157; Gellerstedt, Johansson, & Winman, 2015, p. 39; Jackson, 2015, p. 350). Gellerstedt et al. (2015, p. 38) define Work Integrated Learning as a partnership among students, educational institutions and employers, with specified responsibilities for each party. Jackson (2015, p. 350; see Groenewald, 2004, p. 17; Kjellén & Svensson, 2014, p. 2; Orrell, 2004) in turn notes that WIL is an approach, ideology or strategy that includes a variety of activities encompassing education, research and cooperation with the surrounding society in order to support students' preparation for working life.

The module investigated here, offered at master's level and titled "Tourism Specialist Internship", is an implementation of WIL. Internship has its roots in the 1960s and 1970s, when it spread to several educational institutions (Katula & Threnouser, 1999, p. 247). The National Society for Experiential Education (1998, p. 1) defines an internship as a planned and followed-up working experience which is carried out in a real working environment and in which a student has defined learning aims.

The aim of the internship module in tourism research studies is defined as follows: "to strengthen students' occupational identity and to give them practical experience to work as specialists in challenging tasks in the tourism industry". This definition is very close to that of Katula and Threnouser, who argue that an internship is a two-pronged activity in that it offers students an understanding of organizational

and professional working environments while providing them with an opportunity for professional development. An internship also involves students reflecting on the experience throughout (Katula & Threnhouser, 1999, p. 247).

The minimum length of the internship in tourism research studies is 10 weeks, but it may be longer if the student and the employer so agree. The timing of the experience is not specified; it can be completed at any time of the calendar year depending on the student's personal study plan. Some 20 to 25 students begin tourism research studies as their major subject at the university each year. Those entering the program in any given year do not complete their internships at the same time, however, as they may follow different learning paths, take years off, study and work abroad or change their major.

The Tourism Specialist Internship has recently been made a compulsory module in order to ensure that students gain more working experience and are able to respond to the pressures of working life. It was optional until a few years ago. The importance of job experience has been noted and making the module compulsory was seen as an effective way to motivate students to do an internship before graduating. According to Jackson (2015, p. 350), the core aim of an internship is to prepare undergraduates to be members of the workforce. Jensen (2009) argues that to some extent combining theoretical studies and work experience will improve graduates' employment prospects. Harvey and Knight (1996) found that students who did an internship reflected positively on their university experience and found employment within their chosen field. Orrell (2004), in turn, stresses that students who completed a work-integrated learning experience, that is, an internship, were more likely than others to have enhanced motivation and accountability.

The aim of an internship is clearly ambitious and students face many challenges in completing one. For example, they might not have the long work experience often required for demanding positions. Moreover, robust self-confidence is required in the application process. Employers, for their part, might find it challenging to accommodate interns, as this requires finding suitable tasks, resources and infrastructure. For the tourism research program, the challenges lie mainly in using its limited human resources as effectively as possible and developing the partnerships between the university and workplaces involved.

## Materials and Methods

Our data comprise interviews and conversations with students and lecturers at the Multidimensional Tourism Institute and with representatives of the tourism sector in the city of Rovaniemi, Finnish Lapland. Drawing upon this material, we undertook to determine how persons involved in the internship process evaluate the process in its current form; of particular interest were its perceived shortcomings and suggestions for improvement.

The empirical data used in this article were gathered between 20 September and 26 November 2016. The informants comprised four students, three members of staff in the tourism research program and two representatives of the local tourism sector. The relatively small number of student interviewees is explained by the fact that only few students have completed the internship in accordance with the new curriculum. The companies participating in the research were those with long experience of cooperation in offering internships. The lecturers participating in the research were those responsible for the internship module.

We chose interviews to gather qualitative experiential data. As Jennings (2005, p. 102) notes, qualitative interviewing is a process in which knowledge, understanding and learning are exchanged. Using interviews also makes it possible to understand the experiences of other people in depth (Seidman 1991, p. 3) and connections between experiences and views (Jordan & Gibson, 2004, p. 222). Data from students and representatives of the tourism industry were collected using semi-structured interviews with a set of themes. In the case of staff, data were collected in a meeting that was conversational in format, with no set questions.

The themes presented in the interviews were divided into three different categories in order to systematically elicit the interviewees' expectations, hopes and experiences related to the internship. In addition to the theme-based questions, the interviewees were invited to respond to an open item asking for further remarks or comments. The tourist industry representatives were interviewed individually, whereas the interview with the students was conducted as a group interview, which is justified in the case of a personal or otherwise sensitive issue. The data from the tourism research staff were extracted from a recording of a meeting reviewing the current situation of the internship processes and cooperation between the component institutions of the Multidimensional Tourism Institute. The minutes of the meeting were used to check facts and avoid misunderstandings.

## Letting the Data Speak

All the data were analyzed in terms of themes, an approach justified inasmuch as our aim was to ascertain the expectations, experiences and views of the participating individuals. After the interviews and the conversation were conducted, the recordings were transcribed to extract the essential information in and key factors motivating the contributions of all three groups. The sample was small but this does not weaken the reliability of the research; saturation can be achieved even with a small sample. According to Bowen (2008, p. 140) it is more important to ensure that the key participants are included in the study than to focus on sample size.

### University Representatives

The internship in tourism research has progressed moderately since it became a part of the curriculum; each year there are a few students who complete one. The lecturers noted that many companies and organizations are unfamiliar with the module and thus are unable to provide placements. However, the lack of good placements has not yet become a problem. On the contrary, there are not enough interns to fill all the available positions, a situation which the lecturers consider to be potentially embarrassing. Students may prioritize some placements, such as those offering more pay or international experience. For the further development of the module it would be important to inform potential placement providers about its content and aims. As Gellerstedt et al. (2015, p. 38) note, higher education is entering a new era where the focus of education is to develop competencies for working life. Smith (2012; see Beckett, 2004, p. 497; Ward, McAdie, Bravington, & King, 2012) calls for closer cooperation between institutions of higher education and the surrounding society; mutual understanding and trust are needed to better encourage students to seek placements offering sound, challenging content and tasks. According to the lecturers interviewed, it would be ideal if there were a few permanent partners who would regularly provide placements and hire interns.

As the tourism research program has limited resources, the development of internship activities with the surrounding society poses a number of challenges. Indeed, Kjellén and Svensson (2014, p. 1) note that in collaboration with the outside world, the academic environment is often forced to face and to overcome certain obstacles, such as a lack of resources and inflexible practices. However, closer and richer interaction between students, educational institutions and business is needed. As Rampersad (2015, p. 203) observes, cooperation between three parties - students, educational institutions and enterprises - is fundamental. Rampersad (2015, p. 208) also stresses that efficient cooperation calls for credible and transparent communication and clear and credible coordination. Choy and Delahaye (2011, p. 157) claim that partnership can be demanding, as it challenges the traditional role of the universities as transmitters of specific knowledge. Abeysekera (2006, pp. 14–15) emphasizes that the cornerstone of cooperation is a set of responsibilities that is defined and shared between the parties.

According to Trede (2012, p. 159), lecturers have a responsibility to prepare students for their future work roles. In the case at hand, the lecturers interviewed noted that they should pay more attention to encouraging

students in the course of their studies. In this way, they would equip students to meet the demands of working life and to believe in themselves and their own abilities. Trede (2012, p. 159) further notes that lecturers are work-integrated scholars as well and thus it is their role to prepare students for their future work roles. In the interviews, the lecturers underlined that students do not have to know everything they will need to complete an internship successfully before starting it; they will learn by doing. It is important that the tasks given them are challenging enough, but these should not be too demanding. The experiences of former interns could be useful to prospective interns in understanding what an internship entails. Alumni could also be used more to provide information about working life and the competencies required. Siegel, Waldman, Atwater and Link (2003, p. 122; see also Rampersad, 2015, p. 221) emphasize the significance of alumni and indicate a number of opportunities to collaborate with them in placement programs.

Expertise is mentioned in the course description, and the lecturers responsible for the module emphasize the importance of expertise as one aim of the course. According to the lecturers, expertise allows interns to gain self-confidence, which is important particularly at the beginning of one's career. They note that it is not beneficial for a student to complete an internship that does not involve responsibilities commensurate with his/her studies and that there is good reason to keep the content and the aim different from that of the internship at the local university of applied sciences, for example.

## Students

The internship module starts with preparatory seminars, which received positive feedback from all the students regardless of whether the teaching was implemented online or in a classroom. The seminar's focus on self-examination was found to be an eye-opening experience. According to Trede (2012, p. 160), a professional identity is an important outcome of the work-integrated learning process, but there is no consensus on whether the development of an identity should be facilitated or not. However, in the present case, the students interviewed pointed out that a professional identity and readiness for practice were precisely what they expected the seminars to deal with. The students were also pleased that the focus was on self-examination rather than preparation of CVs, in which they already had experience.

The students considered the compulsory status of the module to be an indication that the university was putting more effort into helping students to find placements. Yet, this status also created more pressure for the students to find a suitable placement, and they proposed that cooperation between the university and enterprises should be improved to this end. Lee, Law and Luk (2015, p. 15) note that students prefer online channels in searching for internships. Orrell (2004, p. 3; see Siegel et al., 2003, p. 112) states that institutions of higher education and businesses should concentrate on enhancing cooperation in that area. Kjellén and Svensson (2014, p. 3) point out that there are some difficulties in incorporating WIL into the curriculum due to resourcing challenges, a lack of established learning objectives or outcomes and shortcomings in how programs are managed.

The students expressed a desire that the university would support them more in looking for an internship, in writing up the contract and in discussing the tasks which the internship entails. They were happy that the lecturers shared job advertisements in Optima, an online learning platform used at the university. This finding accords with the observation made by Lee et al., (2015, p. 150) that personal sources of information about internships are preferable to company or collective sources. The university's tourism research student association forwards job advertisements to students, which was also considered helpful.

According to the students, it is important to have the opportunity to communicate positively with prospective employers during the internship. By contrast, extensive cooperation with the other parties involved, such as having an academic supervisor visit the placement, was not considered relevant. Rampersad (2015, p. 214) claims that placement providers are key actors throughout the internship process as they influence the intern's learning process during the experience. Cooperation between all the parties after the internship was not important for the students themselves, but they believed it would ease the burden of finding a placement for other students in the future.

It is no longer a given that a university degree entitles one to a senior position in the labor market. This seems to be especially the case - and thus a particular challenge - in tourism businesses. Students had numerous expectations regarding their internships. All those interviewed had previous working experience in the tourism industry and thus expected the internship to be an opportunity to experience something new and different at specialist level. The fact that the module was a university-level course was highlighted as a reason why the internship should be somewhat different and more challenging. Being university students significantly affected students' expectations with regard to the internship tasks. So called "lower-level" tasks were portrayed as internship tasks better suited for students at universities of applied sciences or vocational schools. One student who had completed an internship found the challenging tasks to be the most rewarding, with these in fact exceeding her/his expectations. Most importantly, the work experience helped students to gain a great deal of self-confidence for future job searches.

Another issue closely related to the module's university status was payment. The students felt that it was unfair not to pay them a salary for their work considering that the tasks required the high level of knowledge and skills that the university provides. The lack of salary was seen as not only demotivating students but also as negatively affecting the nature of the tasks given them in the workplace. If an employer paid students for the internship, they probably would want students to do jobs that are more meaningful for the company. The students thought that 10 weeks should be the minimum length for an internship but that it could be longer if they received the requisite funding.

A crucial element in the financial support for an internship is a voucher, which may be provided by the university to cover part of the salary costs incurred by the employer in hiring an intern. Students in the tourism research program were eligible to receive vouchers before the curriculum was revised in 2014 and the internship made compulsory. As there would not have been enough vouchers for all students, considerations of equality led to the university deciding that students in the program could no longer receive financial support for internships. Student found the lack of a voucher to be a challenge in securing an interesting internship, because a voucher was mentioned in many job advertisements. The importance of vouchers was also acknowledged by the companies and the tourism research program. According to the companies, vouchers facilitate hiring interns and also allow for longer internships.

Many organizations and companies offer unpaid internships and expect students to have a voucher. The lack of financial support has upset students. If a student is not paid for an internship and has no other income than his or her student allowance, this causes financial difficulties. For example, they might not have enough money to move to and live in a different city unless their employer offers them accommodation during the internship.

The students were pleased to see alumni stories shared in the virtual study environment. Indeed, Bjerregaard (2010, pp. 104–105) has pointed out that, in addition to established processes, new relationships at the individual level are needed as they can strengthen existing relationships and thereby positively influence communication. According to the students, graduates would be an efficient source for creating good connections between the university, students and workplaces. Siegel et al. (2003, p. 122; see Orrell, 2004, p. 3) also emphasize the importance of alumni in cooperation between industry and educational institutions. Alumni are a positive signal of a program's success and their contribution helps students to gain self-confidence.

The students' expectations focused on their own competencies as well as on the employers. High expectations regarding tasks made students reflect on their own abilities and skills. The students were concerned about their ability to handle the tasks and expected employers to be supportive in this regard. Indeed, as Gellerstedt et al. (2015, p. 39) point out, completing an internship is a process where interaction between different parties is required. Smith (2012, p. 256; see also Patrick, Peach, & Pocknee, 2009) stresses the role of the employer's support in all processes in the host organization and the importance of that support for the success of an internship.

## Tourism Industry

In this research we selected entrepreneurs with long experience of internship activities with the program in tourism research. The tourism business sets expectations for the content of internships and the personal characteristics of the intern. The expectations that those offering placements had for internships seem to be very high due to very positive experiences with previous interns. According to Abeysekera (2006, pp. 19–20; see Jackson, 2015, p. 351; Katula & Threnhouser, 1999, p. 248), an effective internship requires careful scrutiny of different factors related to coordination, content, learning and support. The representatives of the tourism industry in the present case mentioned that they look forward to hiring an open and extrovert intern who has an active approach to his/her work. Eager and open interns were seen as assets, as there is a lot of work to do in any business. Interns were also considered an important additional resource, as organizations have little or few resources to hire permanent staff. However, interns were not seen merely as employees; rather, by providing them with meaningful and useful placements the enterprises hoped to support each intern's future career planning as well. As Katula and Threnhouser (1999, p. 248) point out, an internship should not only be work to earn course credits; it should reduce the student's uncertainty in dealing with working life.

The companies highlighted the importance of a prospective intern's personal characteristics. According to the representatives interviewed, employees can achieve competencies in the course of their careers, but their personal characteristics are usually permanent. Enterprises expect from interns a freshness and enthusiasm and, above all, new ideas and knowledge, which are often in short supply in ordinary working places due to a lack of resources. This is not to say the two interviewees in any way underestimated the knowledge and skills of the interns; both underlined the interns' ability to apply academic knowledge to practical assignments in working life.

In discussions on the content of the study module, the representatives of the tourism businesses questioned the name of the module, "Tourism Specialist Internship". They saw it as referring to a consultant coming for a visit, although the purpose is that the student goes to work to learn and grow to become a specialist later. The company representatives noted that the name of the module might also be misleading from students' point of view, as it does not give them a realistic picture of what working life is like. It may also present a challenge for the organization offering a placement, as it can create pressure to come up with appropriate tasks. The module title may also affect students' attitudes towards internships.

In discussions on how to improve the internship, the business representatives as well as the lecturers emphasized the need to promote the tourism research program in general and the module in particular. Such efforts would be desirable not only in Lapland, but also elsewhere in Finland. This aim, according to them, could be pursued through student associations and alumni. On the other hand, the tourism industry should market itself to educational institutions, to tell about its role in the field. This would be particularly important for actors in public sector, who would then be better able to compete for interns.

The representatives of the businesses drew attention to the cooperation between the tourism research program and the companies; communication and cooperation in general should be constantly improved. Systematic cooperation between educational institutions and organizations would certainly clarify the nature of the responsibilities that interns are called upon to handle in their placements. Improved cooperation would also help organizations to connect internships to their annual calendar, to have a person in charge of internship activities and not to operate on an ad hoc basis. As Choy and Delahaye (2011, p. 165) note, "the right people" are the cornerstone of the relationship between a university and industry. However, as they also point out (2011, p. 162), establishing an open relationship enabling one party to understand the needs of the others can take a long time. The businesses studied in the present case also stressed that one premise for the internship is that it should be a win-win situation and cooperation among all three parties can make it possible to achieve this.

A voucher policy was considered attractive from the perspective of organizations as well. The discontinuing of the voucher was seen as having hindered students applying for jobs in the public sector. The public sector is often not perceived as a significant player in tourism and the change in voucher practices has meant that it has to compete with private companies for interns. Some private enterprises pay bonuses to their interns, making the private sector more attractive.

## Conclusion

The research described in the article had two aims: to find out how the Tourism Specialist Internship module is evaluated by the parties involved in the process and to gather new ideas for improving the current content of the module.

Based on the empirical data gathered, we can state that the current content of the internship module is viewed rather favorably by the students, lecturers and representatives of the businesses involved. The compulsory status of the module is seen as a positive thing. The aim of module was considered to be challenging but, on the other hand, motivating. The aims were criticized most by the representatives of the businesses, who found them unrealistic to some extent. Students, enterprises and the tourism research program would benefit from a modest review of the module's aim(s).

All three parties clearly indicated what they considered shortcomings in the current system. Among other things, they noted that the lack of familiarity with the module was cited as a challenge. The findings clearly indicate the need for a few permanent partners from the field who would regularly provide placements and receive interns. The research also suggests that awareness of the internship module should be increased. Existing channels of communication, such as alumni, the student association and the resources of the tourism research program, could be used to this end.

Despite the criticism, the Tourism Specialist Internship is perceived as being a relevant course; interns, lecturers and companies have positive experiences of it. Some shortcomings have been identified, but the challenges noted can be tackled through closer cooperation between the university, companies and interns.

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# Management of International and Inter-organizational Projects: Experiences from the ERASMUS+ Project Learning Tourism

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## Introduction

One of the objectives of the Learning Tourism (LeTo) project is to foster mutual learning between academic institutions and the project's working-life partners in Germany, the Netherlands, and in Finland. This paper reflects on the experiences gained and lessons learned during the three-year process. Since *learning* was the focus of the project, learning from this process and the management of this kind of collaboration is elaborated on.

One of the initial activities of the project was to create a collaboration tool in the form of a knowledge sharing platform that would facilitate communication between partner institutions. It should also allow information sharing between project partners and their relevant stakeholders (i.e. students and companies). It soon became evident, however, that a knowledge sharing platform alone was not sufficient to maintain and enhance collaboration in this international project setting. Sound project management and leadership were also needed.

This paper explores the eight phases of successful project management suggested in the academic literature. The steps identified are then used as benchmarks for analysing the management of the LeTo project. As a learning outcome, suggestions for the improvement of the management of comparable international and inter-organizational projects are presented.

## Objectives of Project Management

Project Management as a method was established already in the 1950s, principally in the space and construction industries (Kuster et al., 2015). Today, many organizations conduct their activities as projects or even have a project-based organizational structure. Project managers and project teams, however, do often still lack skills needed for managing projects successfully. Although the methods for managing processes are widely known, they are not necessarily effectively implemented in managing projects or when working on complex tasks. Hagen (2009) argues that even the notion of "project" is often used misleadingly.

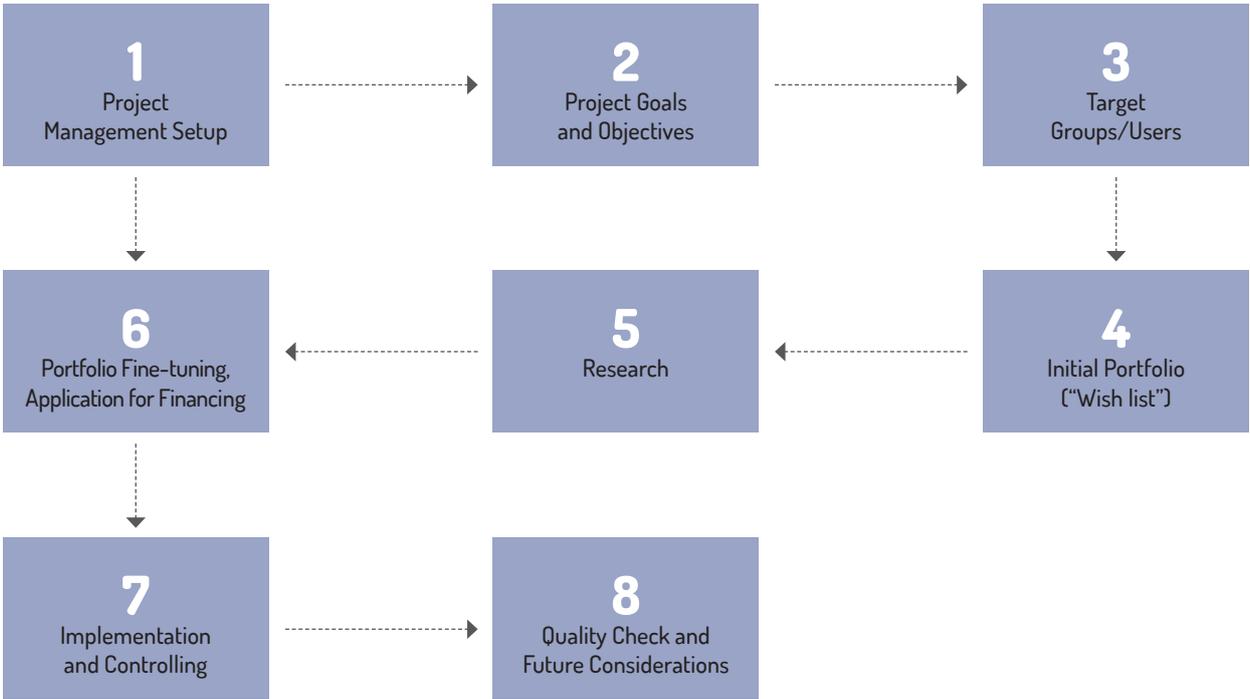
Kuster et al. (2015) have specified the features and tasks of effective project management. Project management needs to ensure a flexible and temporary organization suited to the project at hand. It should also encourage both direct and interdisciplinary cooperation. In a project organization, objectives, responsibilities, and competencies in each stage of the project are clearly defined, and the budget and resources are centrally managed. In addition, project team members are involved, enjoy an inspiring working environment, and are therefore motivated. Potential team conflicts are dealt with effectively. One of the key factors in project management is clear and precise communication. Therefore, communication tools should be available and accessible (Kuster et al., 2015).

Furthermore, according to Kuster et al. (2015, p. 12), the basic management principle of “structure follows strategy” is fundamental for the success of management of projects of any size. The objectives for the project need to be clear before implementation begins.

## Eight Phases of Project Management

In the academic literature, various definitions of project management steps or phases have been described. Here we identify eight phases of project management based on the current pertinent literature (Daud & Gühl, 2016; Drees, Lang, & Schöps, 2014; Hagen, 2009; Kuster et al., 2015; Meyer & Reher, 2016). (Figure 1)

Establishing the project management is the first and the most important step (Phase 1). Since it is vital to know who is leading the project, a leading project manager should be appointed first. Thereafter, a team with appropriate skills needs to be assigned. After the project management and the project members have been selected, goals and objectives of the project are set (Phase 2). This is followed by defining the target group, which creates a common understanding among the project team of the users of the project output (Phase 3). It is particularly important to make sure that all these three steps are taken at the outset of a project. In many projects, however, these steps are omitted. When the actors, objectives, and users of a project are known, a first portfolio, a “wish list”, should be created (Phase 4). Critical research questions regarding, for instance, the feasibility and scope of the activities are phrased in this phase. Field study and research (Phase 5) provide answers for the questions surfaced in the initial project portfolio. Only after this has been completed, can the project’s final activity plan and a portfolio be created (Phase 6). If external financing is required, the funding application should now be completed and sent for approval. After receiving the final approval for the project, implementation and controlling of the process starts, followed by constant and consistent quality checks and timely considerations for future development (Phases 7 & 8).



**Figure 1.** Project management phases. (Adapted from Daud & Gühl, 2016; Drees, Lang, & Schöps, 2014; Hagen, 2009; Kuster et al., 2015 and Meyer & Reher, 2016.)

An overview of the tasks in the various phases of the project management model developed above will be given in the sections below. Subsequently, the authors reflect on some of the experiences gathered during the LeTo project. Since the early stages of a project are of great significance to the outcome, details of the first three phases of the model are emphasised. The relevance of these three phases for the LeTo project examined in this paper has become evident for the authors as active participants in the project.

### **Role of Leading Project Manager and Project Team (Phase 1)**

According to Kuster et al. (2015) there are a variety of dimensions that the leading project manager needs to apprehend and embody when setting up a project, hiring its team members or even when assessing whether his/her own qualifications are appropriate for managing the project at hand. The *functional dimension* is related to procedural steps in the various phases of the project. Procedural steps include all the actions and activities needed to be completed as the project proceeds and when it is being concluded. The *institutional dimension* refers to all subjects related to the intra- and inter-organizational project management, such as setting up the project team, specifying the areas of responsibility, as well as finding project partners and defining their roles and functions. The *human, psychological and social dimension* refers to the “soft-skills” of the project manager and becomes apparent when recruiting staff, leading the project team, motivating and encouraging team members, and managing potential conflicts. Finally, the *instrumental dimension* refers to all tools and techniques such as IT support, processes, methods and best practices, supporting tools, as well as forms and templates.

Considering the variety of tasks that a leading project manager must accomplish, her/his long-term commitment is essential. Continuity is vital, especially at the initiation stage of the project when the direction and the organization of the project is being set. If consistency cannot be guaranteed due to an organisational setup, timely and orderly documentation becomes the key driver to successful project management. As a side effect, consistency, good documentation and effective communication have a positive impact on the motivation of the team members.

The importance of the continuity aspect of the project management became evident during the LeTo project. Frequent changes in the project management of the leading partner required several re-starts of the project. The onboarding of new project managers needed time and the change unavoidably affected the work flow in the project. Additionally, transfer of the accumulated knowledge gained during the project as well as an understanding of the needs, interests, and problems of the external project partners posed a challenge for the whole project organization.

### **Setting Goals and Objectives (Phase 2)**

After the project team has been selected and organized, its goals and objectives are determined. The complexity of this process is dependent on and affected by the type of the project (see Kuster et al., 2015). In the case of a *standard project*, standardized processes may be implemented, which simplifies the management of the project. Besides, project management can draw on existing experiences. This, in turn, facilitates the goal setting process. The same applies to *acceptance projects* since they are characterized by predetermined tasks with clearly set goals. *Potential projects* propose a more complex setting for the definition of project goals. Many questions must get answered, but also the experience from similar projects and existing feasibility studies, respectively, may be consulted. In *pioneer projects*, many (inter) organizational actors are involved, a high level of innovation is expected, and the attainment of goals and objectives is difficult to measure (Kuster et.al., 2015). Specifically, for academic institutions Holzbaur and Bühr (2015) add a fifth project type: a *teaching and learning project*. The learning process is in this case the project goal and the project focuses on knowledge transfer. Goals, such as project-based learning, student-to-student learning or learning through projects, are defined. The LeTo project can be identified as a “pioneer project” as well as a “teaching and learning project”.

Before goals and objectives can be specified, expectations and interests of the inter-organizational project team as well as those of the project partners must be elicited and their mutual compatibility assessed. Moreover, the initial position of each partner and possible challenges posed thereof, should be appreciated. The expectations and wishes of the project members should be in accordance with the actual needs discovered. Depending on the project context, goals might be set at the outset of the project or they might be developed as solutions and opportunities emerge while the project advances. Goals must be realistic and achievable and, hence, what kind of resources project partners possess and what each of them can deliver should be clarified. Reuter (2015) advises planners of international and inter-organizational projects to explore existing collaboration practices prior to evaluating the potential infrastructure limitations for the project at hand. The deliverables of the project are documented and the reasons why the project is the best solution for producing this output are stated (PMI, 2004).

In the LeTo project, as presumably often in these kinds of projects, goals and objectives were not developed jointly by all partners at the outset of the project. Consequently, a high level of commitment of the project partners may be difficult to reach later. Furthermore, the project goals, if not clearly communicated, might be perceived differently by the partners. In international projects, where geographical and cultural distances increase, assertion of the mutual understanding and internalization of the goals and objectives is vital. It requires open and frequent communication, initiated especially by the leading project manager. Use of a suitable documentation tool for facilitating communication is essential and should be used right from the beginning of the project. At this point, special requirements and barriers, which especially public institutions in different countries may face regarding, for instance, data security, must be carefully assessed and acted upon.

Occasionally during the LeTo project, differing perception and interpretation of the targeted project outputs among the project partners became evident. Also, during the implementation process, some of the initially defined project objectives or outputs were considered non-sustainable and needed adjustment based on a joint evaluation and ideation process among the participating partners. It is essential that goals and objectives documented in a project portfolio can be flexibly adjusted, where justified, to guarantee optimal outcomes at the end. Changes in the project management complicated communication between the activity leading organisations and the leading project manager regarding the issues mentioned above.

### **Target Groups/Users (Phase 3)**

Identification of the target group is interconnected with the project's goals and objectives. The project team should contemplate and answer the following questions when considering and defining the target groups:

- Who are the potential users of the project outcomes? Who is benefiting from this project? Where are potential beneficiaries located (internal and/or external)?
- Do all partners target the same user groups or do target groups vary among partner organizations?
- Which target group is the most important one? Is there a joint consensus among the partners regarding the importance of different user groups? Is there a joint consensus regarding the priority order of the target groups?
- Do potentially undiscovered users for the project output exist?

Similar problems as identified in the previous step may also emerge in this phase of the project management. If the participating partners are not yet definitely known at the time of drafting the application for project funding, broad agreement on the target groups or users of the project outputs cannot be reached before the implementation starts. Thus, flexibility provided by the project funding organization allowing

an adjustment of preliminary set target groups would possibly increase the commitment of project partners and, in effect, improve the overall project results.

### **From the Portfolio Wish list to Portfolio Fine tuning (Phases 4 to 6)**

The initialisation phase of the project focuses on the assessment of the available resources such as time, budget, human resources, tools, and techniques (Kuster et. al., 2015; PMI, 2004). The resources (input) that project partners are willing to invest are compared with the target outputs proposed for the project (PMI, 2004). The adequateness of the resources for the sound implementation of the plan, that is, project feasibility, is thus examined. Answers for any open questions remaining are then researched before the final portfolio and the project scope is endorsed by the project partners.

Often the application phase for calls for (public) funding does not allow thorough planning of the project by the potential partners. A systematic assessment of the project feasibility may also fall short due to the time limit. Especially in international projects the ideation for innovative but feasible ideas might not be possible prior to the application for funding. After the funding has been awarded, project partners have a chance to exchange their ideas, compare their capabilities, and learn about the barriers they might face. Therefore, a possibility to adjust the portfolio before the implementation phase starts should be permitted and even actively promoted by the leading project management.

### **Implementation and Controlling (Phase 7)**

The implementation and controlling phase of a project includes several management areas, such as time, cost, quality, human resource, communications, and risk management (PMI, 2004).

After overcoming obstacles and adjusting the project timetable, the LeTo project management optimized and ensured the workflow of the project. All project partners could fulfil their tasks according to the project portfolio.

### **Quality Check and Future (Phase 8)**

One of the fundamental targets of any project should be the sustainability of the outcomes. Therefore, a plan for further development should be created. The applicability of the project outputs in similar contexts elsewhere is a quality criteria for ERASMUS+ projects and it needs to be addressed when project goals and objectives are defined.

The central goal of the LeTo project was the creation of “[...]innovative and permanent methods and practices for multidimensional education collaboration” (ERASMUS+ Grant Agreement, 2014, p. 3). The schedule for some of the future activities beyond the completion of the LeTo project has been set by the participating partners, thereby ensuring their sustainability. The viability of other project outcomes is reliant upon the conviction as well as the willingness of the project partners and other European institutions to implement these activities in the future.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, experiences gained during the LeTo project emphasize the importance of continuity and consistency of the project management, a need for effective communication, and the demand for flexibility during the implementation. Continuity warrants better communication and the avoidance of communication gaps within the project organization. Effective management also supports the adherence to the project timetable. To ensure smooth communication, adequate tools, techniques, and procedures must be applied. The foundations for success are laid during the early steps of the project management cycle. Time constraints and a possible lack of opportunity for the project partners to cooperatively plan the outcomes of the project might complicate the creation of an ideal project proposal. Therefore, a certain degree of

flexibility for the project partners to adjust initial goals, objectives, and outcomes would be beneficial for and enhance the success of similar projects in the future.

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