

THE ANALYSIS OF FOREIGN STUDY IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE PERSPECTIVE OF HUNGARIAN EXCHANGE STUDENTS

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Abstract: The motivation to study abroad, the foreign experiences of university students and the possible effects of an Erasmus stay on their lives and future careers are all very important factors considering the internationalisation of higher education. In the study, a primary research has been conducted by interrogating Hungarian students who have participated in a foreign study. The opinion of students on their study abroad and at home could lead to a comparison of the host and home institution. The best practices, methods and notions could be shared and used for the improvement of the higher education system. Moreover, the success and benefits of mobile students as a prospective workforce could add to the competitiveness of the European Union.

Key words: internationalization, student mobility, motivation, satisfaction, development

Introduction

Student mobility could have a substantial effect on the lives of people who participate in it. During a foreign study they could experience individual development and growth, like learning a language and widening their horizons via intercultural encounters. In an exchange period they could develop their personal skills, build networks or gain entrepreneurial skills, which are essential in finding employment. In the times of economic troubles and youth unemployment, the beneficial effects of student mobility cannot be ignored. [1] In an exchange programme, students experience another culture, learning environment, teaching methods and higher education institution than their home university. This could lead to a comparison of home and host university on the basis of several factors. Besides student satisfaction on institutions, administration and programmes, their motivation to travel and study abroad is also an important factor to analyse.

Materials and methods

This study follows a qualitative and quantitative approach by analysing the foreign studies of Hungarian university students. A primary research has been conveyed as a questionnaire has been sent to Hungarian current or former university students who have participated in a study abroad. For instance, the international departments of higher education institutions have sent the online questionnaire to their current or former students. The data collecting period lasted from September 2013 to January 2014. The focus was mainly on outbound Erasmus students, altogether 187 participants filled in the questionnaire, among which 128 women and 59 men. Most of them studied in the field of management,

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business and economics, but there were for example agricultural, engineering and informatics students, too. The majority, 61% of the respondents fell into the age group 22-25 and 24% of them in the age group 26-30. They were most often spending a semester abroad between 2010 and 2013. Considering their highest level of education, 43% of the respondents had BA/BSc/college degree at the time of data collection and 32% of them passed their secondary school leaving exam. (Table 1.)

Table 1. The distribution of respondents considering gender and highest level of education

	Gender		Total		
	Male	Female			
Highest level of education	Secondary school education		13	22	35
	Post-secondary (non-tertiary) education		0	5	5
	College degree (BA/BSc)		24	56	80
	University degree (MA/MSc)		19	40	59
	PhD/DLA student		2	2	4
	Finished PhD/DLA studies		1	3	4
	Total		59	128	187

Source: Author's own work

The vast majority, 91% of the people participating in the survey, spent part of their study programme abroad, which was most commonly an Erasmus study. In popularity, this was followed by an internship abroad, a language course in a foreign country, a full programme abroad and a summer university. Some respondents took part in more than one form of study abroad, like an exchange study and an internship, as well. If they pursued more than one study abroad, they were asked to choose one apart from an internship and a language course, which they thought the most important to write about. After choosing one and the most important study programme abroad, the results show that 87% of the respondents embarked on an Erasmus study, 4% on a dual degree programme, only 1% on a Ceepus study and 8% on another form of study abroad. 98% of the interviewees received scholarship to study abroad, which was mainly an Erasmus scholarship. Considering finances, 94% of the students secured state-funded places, and 6% of them paid the whole tuition fee for their home university during their foreign studies. Financing tertiary studies has been always a crucial point for students and their families. State-funded places for management, business and economics students have been cut off dramatically lately in Hungary. [2] This could negatively influence the possibilities of studying abroad for these students because the fees at the home university must be paid for the semester spent abroad, too. Besides, Erasmus mobility scholarship cannot provide full financial support for the students abroad, it can only cover part of their expenses.

Choice and motivation of students

The countries of destination to study abroad were mainly from Western and Southern Europe. According to the students, they chose the host institution on the basis of the country, some people mentioned the city or the region where the host university was located or the proximity of Hungary to it. Some people considered the reputation of the host institution appealing or the active exchange programme between the host and home university. Some people decided on the basis of personal reasons or recommendations from former Erasmus students. Others mentioned the relatively low costs of living in a particular country, or the existing research connections or other professional reasons. If they could find more information about what subjects to take, the time schedule or other aspects affecting their studies, the students could make an easier decision on where to study and what subjects to choose. The possibility of learning a certain foreign language in the native environment is one of the greatest motivations to study abroad. English and German languages were mentioned most of all. If we want to determine other motives for a study abroad, these could be professional development, building a network or gaining new and lifelong experiences. Some students were eager to know if they were able to cope with the challenges abroad. They wished to live independently and making their own decisions in a foreign country. Getting acquainted with another culture or cuisine, with new people, broadening their horizons are all were appealing to them. Adventurousness and the improvement of self-knowledge were raised as motivations for going abroad. Considering their future career, some of the respondents thought that a foreign study would be perfect in their curriculum vitae.

Student satisfaction

The personal and professional development of young adults taken into account in the motivation for a foreign study are in line with the needs of a modern labour market. Foreign studies can provide the international competences that the knowledge-based economy needs. [3] Previous studies measured the possible outcomes of a study abroad, like language improvement [4], the development of intercultural communication skills [5] and international understanding [6]. The respondents of the questionnaire have been asked to evaluate their experiences in connection with their home and host institution on 6-level Likert scales. The satisfaction of the students have been expressed regarding the quality of the programme, technical equipment, university life, administration and an overall impression on both universities. They were least satisfied with administration at the home institution and most satisfied with the technical equipment of the host institution. The average scores for the Likert scales represent differences in satisfaction with the home and the host universities. Students have cultivated the host institutions in every aspect on average. The greatest difference in satisfaction relates to technical equipment and administration, with 1,77 and 1,31 points of

difference on average, respectively. However, students valued administration at the home and host university the lowest, too. In the quality of the programme there is a 0,72 point difference, while there is the least difference (only 0,60 point) in university life. (Table 2.)

Table 2. The average of Likert-scale points

	Home university	Host university	Difference
technical equipment	3,60	5,37	1,77
administration	3,37	4,68	1,31
quality of the programme	4,09	4,81	0,72
university life	4,27	4,87	0,60
overall impression	4,05	5,11	1,06

Source: Author's own work

The level of overall student satisfaction on home and host university differs in 1,06 points on average, students are more satisfied with the host university altogether, compared to their home university. 41% of the students were only fairly satisfied (that means 4 points out of the 6) with their home university, while 44% of them were totally satisfied with their host university (that is 6 points out of the 6).

(Figure 1.)

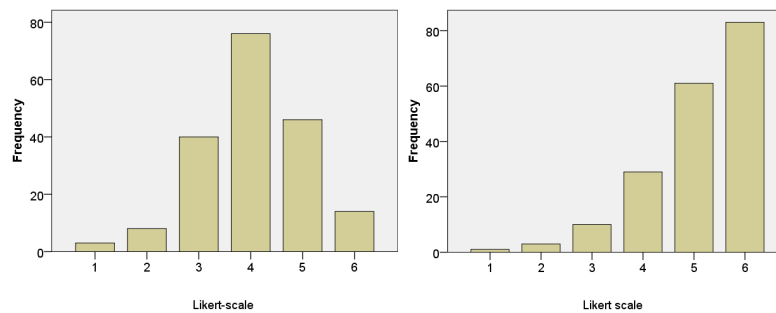


Figure 1. The distribution of the level of overall student satisfaction on home and host university respectively

Source: Author's own work

One-Way Analysis of variance (ANOVA) has been applied to test this difference in satisfaction on home and host institution considering five categories. Because the calculated F-ratio = 27,6417 is more than the critical value=5,3177, the null hypothesis is rejected at a significance level of 0,05. Therefore, there is sufficient statistical evidence to conclude that there is difference in the mean student satisfaction by institution. [7] (Table 3.)

Table 3. ANOVA table

ANOVA						
<i>Source of Variation</i>	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>P-value</i>	<i>F crit</i>
Between Groups	2,9812	1	2,9812	27,6417	0,0008	5,3177
Within Groups	0,8628	8	0,1079			
Total	3,8440	9				

Source: Author's own work

Besides quantitative results, the respondents provided information on both the host and home institution for further qualitative analysis, too. At the host institution they preferred the methodology of teaching, the practical system of assessment, the positive attitude and motivation of teachers and students. The innovative forms of teaching, smaller groups, field works, interesting case studies, group works were mentioned as a great inspiration for study. At another case, a project work was organized and was under the continuous supervision of a coach, and meetings with foreign companies were arranged and financed by the host institution. At another occasion the plan of a marketing local travel agency was the task for the students in groups. The best work of theirs was taken into account by the agency. These practical, real exercises gave useful knowledge to the students. Some mentioned more conversations and interactions during classes when not purely the frontal method of teaching was applied. Due to smaller groups of classes, they could elaborate more on the practical exercises and build a better relationship with classmates and teachers, who were helpful and created a friendly atmosphere during lessons.

The improvement of competencies

On a 6 level Likert-scale, participants were asked to indicate the possible improvement in four different competencies. 24 % of the interviewees stated that their language competencies fairly improved during their study abroad. 37% of them reported an improvement at a large amount, while 32% of them stated a total improvement in their language skills. 45% of them indicated a large, and 41% of them indicated a total improvement in their social and intercultural competencies. Their personal competencies were also improving during their foreign studies, 43% of respondents reported a large amount of, while 32% of them stated a total development in this field. The least, but still considerable improvement on average was observed in the field of professional competencies. 34% of the answerers accounted for a large and 12% of them reported a total improvement.

Considering personal competencies in more details, respondents were asked to estimate the degree of their personal improvement during their foreign study according to seven positive personal traits or values. The average points of Likert-scale results all indicate high levels of development. The order of the average scores begins with the autonomy in studies (4,31 points) and ends with openness and inquiry (4,97 points). (Table 4.)

Table 4. The average points of improvement in personal competencies indicated on a 6 level Likert-scale

autonomy in studies	ability to make a decision	tolerance	self-confidence	self-knowledge	adaptivity	openness and inquiry
4,31	4,54	4,59	4,67	4,72	4,83	4,97
not at all – 1, little – 2, sort of – 3, fairly – 4, largely – 5, totally – 6						

Source: Author's own work

Professional development

Considering their professional development, the respondents were asked to value how much their foreign studies helped their professional career and mobility. On average they valued them 4,79 and 4,92 respectively. The students also evaluated how much six different following factors could influence the competitiveness of their diploma. The knowledge of foreign languages is the most important factor according to students, while the study programme itself and the reputation of home university ranked the lowest on the scale. The results could be seen in Table 5 below.

Table 5. The average points of improvement in professional competencies indicated on a 6 level Likert-scale

study programme	reputation of home university	diploma preferred by employers	internship	study abroad	knowledge of foreign languages
4,01	4,07	4,34	4,56	4,56	5,27

Source: Author's own work

If we want to measure the relationship between the ordinal variables then non-parametric Spearman rank correlation could be used for statistical calculation. Results show that under 0,01 significance level there is rank correlation between the influence of a study abroad on the competitiveness of diploma and professional development ($r=0,423$) and professional mobility ($r=0,429$) respectively. [8]

Summary

This study has explored many aspects of international student mobility by analysing the foreign studies of Hungarian university students. Besides their choice of foreign country and institution this study has analysed the motivation and mostly positive experiences of exchange students. Student satisfaction has been measured on the basis of several factors like technical equipment, administration, quality of the programme, university life at the home and host university. The results have

shown significant difference in the satisfaction of students who preferred the host university in every aspect. Students have reported a large development in their language, personal, social and intercultural competencies. They have stated that their study abroad would certainly help their professional career and mobility in the future.

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ANALIZA NAUKI ZA GRANICĄ W SZKOLNICTWIE WYŻSZYM Z PERSPEKTYWY WĘGIERSKICH STUDENTÓW Z WYMIANY

Streszczenie: Motywacja do studiowania za granicą, zagraniczne doświadczenia studentów wyższych uczelni i możliwe skutki pobytu na Erasmusie mające wpływ na ich życie i przyszłe kariery zawodowe są bardzo ważnymi czynnikami biorąc pod uwagę umiędzynarodowienie szkolnictwa wyższego. W badaniu, zostały przeprowadzone podstawowe prace badawcze na grupie węgierskich studentów, którzy studiowali za granicą. Opinia studentów na temat ich studiów za granicą i w kraju ojczystym mogłaby doprowadzić do porównania instytucji przyjmującej i macierzystej. Najlepsze praktyki, metody i koncepcje mogłyby być udostępniane i wykorzystywane do doskonalenia systemu szkolnictwa wyższego. Co więcej, sukces i korzyści z mobilnych studentów jako potencjalnej siły roboczej mogłyby zostać dodane do wzrostu konkurencyjności Unii Europejskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: Internacjonalizacja, mobilność studentów, motywacja, satysfakcja, rozwój

作者國外高等教育的匈牙利學生交流視角的分析

摘要：動機出國留學，大學生的國外經驗和居住在伊拉斯謨影響到他們的生活和未來的職業生涯可能帶來的影響是非常重要的因素，在考慮高等教育的國際化。這項研究已經進行了一組誰曾留學匈牙利學生的基礎研究。學生對出國留學和母國的意見可能會導致主辦機構和家長進行了比較。最佳實踐，方法和概念可以共享和使用，以提高高等教育體系。更重要的是，成功和流動學生的利益作為潛在的勞動力可以被添加，以增加歐盟的競爭力。

關鍵詞：國際化，學生流動，激勵，滿意度，發展。

关键词：国际化、学生流动、动机、满意度、发展。