

MEASURING THE QUALITY ASPECTS OF TEACHING MOBILITY

- CONCEPT PAPER -

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I. Project aims

The Leuven Communiqué (signed by 46 countries of the Bologna Process in 2009) highlighted the importance of increasing the number of students (20% by 2020) and staff participating in various mobility activities internationally. The Erasmus Impact Study 2014 identified staff mobility (including teachers) as a key factor to be included as one of the top priorities in the internationalisation strategies of Higher Education Institutions (HEI) to reach the targets of the Leuven Communiqué.

Based on the results of the EIS, several research efforts have been carried out to analyse the different characteristics of higher education teachers' mobility. These studies discovered several reasons and obstacles that prevent staff from making full use of this opportunity which is primarily linked to suboptimal strategy, misaligned management, poor promotion/dissemination and issues with recognition. These obstacles are particularly pertinent for junior researchers, which often lack personal networks abroad.

The **Teach with Erasmus+ project (TWE+)**, as a **logical continuation and extension of the staffmobility.eu website of the IMOTION project**, aims to create an online *'Marketplace'* for teaching staff in order to **facilitate, encourage, and promote teachers' mobility across Europe**. The project aims to **enable greater access to teaching mobility and to compile innovative teaching methodologies and pedagogical tools** all over Europe. This would be an unprecedented and crucial innovation for the European Higher Education Area, which would address some of the most pressing concerns and obstacles to academic mobility in the EU.

In order to help to fulfil this aim, the project has the objective to **identify and define quality teaching mobility**. This particular Intellectual Output (IO1) consists of an exploratory research on quality aspects of teaching mobility that is followed by the development of the actual **"Quality & Impact Tool for Teaching Mobility Assessment" (QITMA)**, and is one of the four main pillars of the TWE+ project. In the premises of this research, an exploratory survey on elements connected to teaching mobility needs to be undertaken. This research will feed into the development of the actual tool.

The primary aim of the research is to develop and validate the main dimensions and indicators for the quality measurement tool. The development process is formed by a literature review and qualitative data gathering from consortium members via interviews. A **survey instrument** has been developed based on the interviews containing the most important indicators, possible benefits and hindering factors of realising quality teaching mobility. Psychometric properties of the instrument will be assessed, and multivariate statistical analysis will be carried out in order to finalise the tool. The results of the tool development will be published in high ranking scientific journals. The tool will be uploaded to scientific measurement tool databases as well, such as the Measurement Instrument Database of Social Sciences (<http://www.midss.org>) or PsychTests (www.ebsco.com).

The results of the research will make it possible **to create a concise, understandable measurement tool for public use**, which will be disseminated in different newsletters, homepages or social media channels of the consortium members, on the project website and on a public conference, in order to invite more higher education institutions to use the tool for their own quality measurement. The tool will

help HEIs or organisations **receive a tangible, up-to-date, evidence-based and objective picture about the current quality of teaching mobility** at their institution.

II. The rationale of the research

1. Definitions and frameworks of the research

Internationalisation became a strategic priority in higher education development, especially in the European Union, as a means of aligning learning outcomes with labour market needs and to enhance innovation capacity. The loose policy mechanism of the Bologna Process is an important drive for the internationalisation agenda, but it is an important task to assess its results, especially in the light of recent international challenges like Brexit, increased migration, the debate of English vs. local language etc. These challenges bring about the need to rethink our standpoint regarding internationalisation and consider it from a value-based approach in order **to further the goals of developing global citizenship and intercultural understanding** (Wilhborg & Robson, 2017; Teichler, 2009). An extended understanding of internationalisation considers the phenomenon as **“the intentional process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions and delivery of post-secondary education, in order to enhance the quality of education and research for all students and staff, and to make a meaningful contribution to society”** (de Wit, Hunter, Howard, & Egron-Polak, 2015).

While the idea of internationalisation has been around since the dawn of universities, it is now **influenced by globalisation and the raising of the knowledge society** which gave a new breadth and depth to the concept. Internationalisation is often mentioned beside **increasing reputation** (rankings), **visibility and competitiveness**, the **competition for talent** and the **focus on employability and social mobility** (de Wit et al., 2015). Institutions could have many **reasons for engaging in internationalisation**: increased international awareness of global issues by students, enhanced internationalisation of the curriculum, improved quality of teaching and learning, strengthened institutional research and knowledge production capacity, enhanced profile for the institution, opportunity to benchmark institutional performance within the context of international good practice, enhanced institutional cooperation and capacity building, increased international networking by faculty and researchers and increased/diversified revenue generation (Seeber, Cattaneo, Huisman, & Paleari, 2016).

2. Focus of the research

It is undeniable that **internationalisation can lead to a diverse set of desirable outcomes and impacts** regarding the operation of higher education institutions and academics' professional development, but it must be noted that universities are often considered along with such indicators like proportions of international staff, number of international students, research papers published with a co-author from another country etc., which **limits our understanding of the possible supporting and hindering factors behind internationalization**. In order **to better encompass internationalization, the evolution of institutions, structures, systems, functions, governance, administration and financing issues and the complex and interdependent nature of the positive and less positive dimensions of internationalisation must be considered as well** (Wihlborg & Robson, 2017).

While there are many aspects of internationalisation, this paper only **focuses on academics' mobility** and in particular, **teaching mobility**. Although it is our understanding that **internationalisation at home and internationalisation abroad initiatives should be considered**

comprehensively. In our concept paper, we put a special focus on the important role of **academics' mobility as a crucial factor in driving the internationalisation agenda** (de Wit et al., 2015). Considering staff mobility in recent years, we see an **increasing tendency in the European countries to utilize both incoming and outgoing mobility** as it is demonstrated by data from the European Tertiary Education Register.

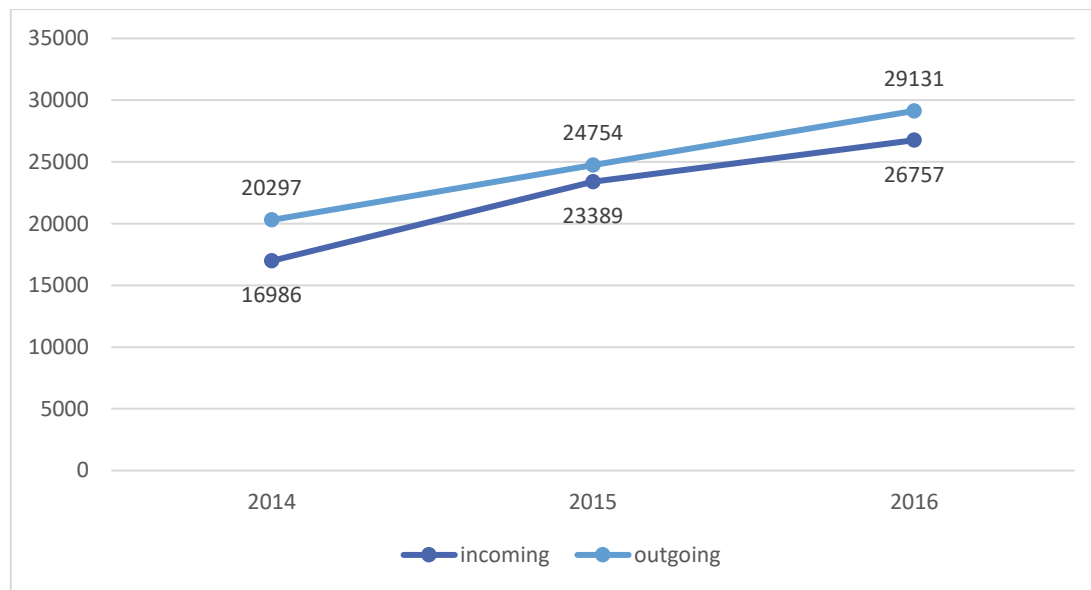


Figure 1. The number of incoming and outgoing staff mobilities in the European countries between 2014 and 2016 (Data source: European Tertiary Education Register).

3. Research on staff mobility

Generally, **staff mobility is given less focus in research** regarding the internationalisation of higher education and also, **institutional strategies seem to be rarely systematic in promoting this opportunity** (de Wit et al., 2015), and it is **rarely recognised towards career progression** (Racké, 2013). Previous research uncovered that a **strategic approach to academic mobility has clear advantages for research, teaching and professional development** (Colucci, Ferencz, Gaebel & Wächter, 2014; Svetlik & Braček Lalić, 2016). The **strategic role of academic mobility** was reassured by Postiglione and Altbach (2013) as well. Teaching mobility can also play an important role in **joint programmes, and through them in the internationalisation at home** agenda of institutions (Erdei et al., 2018).

Despite its strategic importance and possible impacts, **outcomes assessment of staff mobility strongly focuses on input and output indicators and lacking important contextual and process elements** (Deardoff, D. K., & van Gaalen, A., 2012; Chang & Lin, 2018). Therefore, a **more rigorous and complex measurement** regarding the topic is needed, e.g. from a **quality assurance perspective** (Voroshilova, 2015; Hauptman Komotar, 2018), taking into consideration **personality factors** (Dewey & Duff, 2009; Li & Tu, 2016) and the **pedagogical dimension** as well (Wihlborg, 2009).

III. Research framework

1. Preliminary research

The main aim of the first part of IO1 was to **gather a wide range of experience regarding teaching mobility**: popularity, barriers, possible benefits, motivation and expectations, dissemination, suggestions. **Extensive semi-structured interviews** were carried out by partners (34 interviews) and an **intensive focus group activity** (charting the user experience of typical teaching mobility personas) summed up our experiences. **Based on the results a large scale survey instrument has been prepared to uncover the latent interconnections of different factors regarding teaching mobility.** The result of this questionnaire will be used to **create a quality assurance tool.**

The interviews emphasized that teaching mobility is especially **popular among junior staff and departments of foreign languages.** Interviewees often addressed the issues of **lack of confidence in one's language skills** (ranging from a feeling of insecurity and fear to actual lack of knowledge) which can be connected to **academic teaching skills** as well. Others voiced that teaching mobility is seen as a **small scale issue**, not important regarding academic advancement, therefore underutilized.

During the interviews, we have gathered lots of **possible problems, barriers or challenges** regarding teaching mobility but often found that these aspects could be subject to change (what is a problem in a context is not a problem in another). Barriers came up regarding **personal issues** (laziness, fear, language barriers, leaving family), **resource issues** (time, finance), **organization and administration** (lack of communication, information, problems of finding hosts, hard to organize 8 hours etc.), **communication and information** (late answer, lack of openness etc.), **organizational support and strategy** (lack of internal strategy, not worth financially for the institution, lack of recognition in advancement etc.) **system or cultural issues** (different educational systems, different students, different disciplinary approaches etc.).

Regarding **possible benefits, results** of teaching mobility, interviewees also provided a wide range of possibilities. Results could be categorized regarding **learning and teaching** (e.g. joint practicum, development in pedagogical skills, better understanding of students, developing educational materials or courses), **research** (scientific cooperation, joint publication, conferences, feedback on topic, access to host infrastructure etc.), **third mission** (scientific knowledge dissemination for public audience), **professional development** (networking, CV, benefits in career development), **personal development** (development in stress management, flexibility, interpersonal competencies, language skills, cooperation skills, seeing and getting to know other culture and education systems, work-culture etc.), **organizational-strategic aspects** (new joint programmes, impact on student mobility, introduction of a new course/module, increased reputation, internationalization).

What **drives** interviewees to participate in teaching mobility can be described via **personal motivations** (love to travel, curiosity, get to know other cultures) and **professional development** (research, new partners, development of language skills, self-reflection regarding teaching, professional inquiry regarding host curriculum). Also, **expectations** are important factors of motivation and satisfaction: to be well organized, be a rich professional experience (not only lectures but visiting other lectures, professional discussion with colleagues), settle details in time, the host should promote the lecture and receive more feedback.

Regarding **dissemination**, it mostly happens in **informal** settings if it ever happens. Interviewees addressed the lack of dissemination regarding teaching mobility. Where it happens it is usually informal (informal chat between colleagues, lecturer mentions it during a faculty meeting).

There are some cases and good practices where some formal opportunities are organized for dissemination (deliberately planning time for the report during faculty meetings, organizing round table regarding the topic).

Interviewees had a lot of **ideas regarding possible ways to develop** teaching mobility. We have categorized these suggestions as **organizational/administrative aspects** (e.g. digital database of host institutions, ongoing submission, increased budget, bonus for the host teacher, job shadowing, transparent assessment criteria) and **institutional/strategic aspects** (better support from the department, organize an Erasmus lecturer course or week for possible incoming lecturers every semester, give more recognition, provide preparation training, organize knowledge sharing events). Participants directly addressed the need for a digital database that contains possible opportunities to participate in teaching mobility which is searchable by disciplinary field and also indicates what field or what knowledge the host requires. Also, it would be beneficial if the database could contain information regarding the curriculum, compatibility of HE system (e.g. organizing of teaching time etc.).

Other aspects emerged, like the perception of the sending country in the host country (which could impact the likelihood of cooperation). For teaching mobility to be successful interviewees voiced that the teachers have to get prepared in advance for their teaching (e.g. looking through the curriculum of the host institution) and they must have a **risk-taking personality**. It seems that teaching mobility needs **proactivity** because it is rare that a host institution directly invites somebody, so the teachers must search for opportunities for themselves. There were some negative experiences as well, when there were disagreements of professional content, where the teachers didn't recognize each others' competence or autonomy (too tight control regarding what to teach) which hindered the teaching mobility experience.

The **identified narrative modules and concrete items were incorporated into the survey and guided our research questions**. In the following part we briefly introduce our research design.

2. Research design

Based on the results of the preliminary research, we have created **an online survey instrument to explore the landscape of teaching mobility**. The survey comprises of four blocks, one of which is for only those who have participated in teaching mobility before. Therefore, the research encompasses the experiences of those who have not participated in teaching mobility before in the hope of discovering the main barriers of abstaining as well.

The general structure of the questionnaire makes it possible to gather relevant organisational contextual data, data regarding **personal aspects** and **factors related to a concrete mobility experience**. A unique part of the survey is the third block, where we ask participants to think about a **concrete mobility experience** they had and the survey guides them to better focus on that memory with few introductory questions (e.g. when and where was the mobility). This would allow us to gather more specific data, tied to a real experience instead of a general approach.

In the survey, we implemented several **standardized scales** that have been used in previous research which would allow us international and intersectoral comparison. The following scales are used:

- **Dimensions of the Learning Organisation Questionnaire** (Marsick & Watkins, 2003): the 21 items measure workplace learning, organizational culture, structure and processes and organizational learning on the individual, group and institutional level. The research in using the DLOQ instrument in higher education is quite extensive (Abu-Tineh, 2011; Akhtar & Khan, 2011; Ali & Khamis Ali, 2012; Chawla & Lenka, 2015; Ghomshi et al., 2018; Holyoke, Sturko, Wood, & Wu, 2012; Kim, Egan, & Tolson, 2015; Kumar, 2005; Nazari & Pihie, 2012;

Ponnuswamy & Manohar, 2014; Rowe, 2010; Salleh & Huang, 2011; Song, Chermack, & Kim, 2013; Watkins & Dirani, 2013)

- **International orientation and strategy of the institution:** the items are taken from a dimension of the [HEInnovate](#) tool (an initiative of the European Commission's DG Education and Culture in partnership with the OECD Local Economic and Employment Development Programme (LEED)) which aims to provide a diagnostic assessment of higher education institutions regarding their innovative and entrepreneurial operation.
- **Personality factors:** inclusion of these scales were supported by the methodology of the Erasmus Impact Study (CHE Consult et al., 2014) which also uses personality factors as exploratory variables in assessing mobility experiences. Based on the interviews Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), ambiguity tolerance (Herman et al., 2010) and self-efficacy (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995).

The main areas of the survey are on teaching mobility. Several items deal with the **possible barriers and restraining factors** (questions for both target groups), another set of questions deal with **the source of information** regarding teaching mobility and the respondent's **satisfaction** with this. For those who have participated in teaching mobility, concrete questions are dealing with their **satisfaction with different elements of the programme**, their **intention to return or to go** on another mobility, **feedback** they have received, **main influencing factors in the decision** and **identified outcomes and impacts** based on the three missions of higher education and personal and professional development.

The general demographic and institutional context questions will allow us **to explore different types of institutions and individuals** based on their attitudes and opinions of teaching mobility. For example, the type of institution (public or private, more or less internationalized institutions), senior and junior faculty members, language barriers etc.

This survey will allow us to explore the following broad research questions and aims which will be examined via exploratory and multivariate statistical procedures:

- 1) What are the main differences between higher education systems, different types of institutions and different individuals regarding their attitudes and experiences towards teaching mobility?
- 2) What are the main outcomes and impacts of teaching mobility?
- 3) What are the main factors that could restrain individuals from engaging in teaching mobility?
- 4) What are the main factors that influence individuals' willingness to participate in and satisfaction with teaching mobility?
- 5) What are the main factors that influence the possible outcomes of teaching mobility?

Our data gathering aims to reach **all higher education institutions in all the involved countries** via national agencies. The main aim is to reach **at least 100 participants from every Erasmus+ Programme Country** in order to be able to generate meaningful groupings and comparisons during the data analysis. The **EUROSTAT** database and the **European Tertiary Education Register (ETER)** provides us with meaningful data regarding the population and this would allow us to create a representative sample based on several factors, but the data gathering is aimed at the whole population due to its exploratory nature.

The final report is expected by the end of October 2019, the remaining time is **scheduled** according to the following table.

Task	Schedule
Finalising the research instrument, accompanying documents and logistics of data gathering	14 th July
Submitting a request for the dissemination of our survey	Week of 15 th July
1 st round of data gathering	Week of 15 th July to 25 th August (with 2 reminder calls)
Data analysis	26 th August – 8 th September
1 st draft of “Quality & Impact Tool for Teaching Mobility Assessment”	29 th September
Final report of the research	31 st October

The research project is **approved by the Research Ethics Board of the Faculty of Education and Psychology of Eötvös Loránd University (ELTE)**. The research is planned and executed by concerning general standards for social sciences and humanities research (regarding human participation) and the GDPR.

IV. References

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V. Appendix - Survey

