

VOCATIONAL TRAINING IN HIGHER EDUCATION– MOBILITY – SELF-REGULATING LEARNING

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Theses of the Doctoral (PhD) dissertation

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1. Discussion

As a result of the affective revolution in psychology and pedagogy as well as the challenges of the 21st century, lifelong learning and self-regulating learning have become generally accepted ideas and intentions.

In my dissertation I study how much students in higher level vocational training progress in self-regulation, planning, time management and communication skills if they take part in a mobility program. Results are analyzed within the mobility pedagogy framework, considering young adults in higher education as a special sample.

2. Topic and Structure of the Dissertation

The eight chapters of the dissertation discuss the issues of higher level vocational education, mobility and self-regulating learning with an equally proportioned description of theoretical background and methodology.

A chapter devoted to the historical and theoretical approach to higher level vocational training provides an international comparison of the evolution, state and importance of higher level vocational education in Hungary with its legal regulations, institutional background, variety of forms and similarities worldwide as well as its effect on the society.

The chapter on the methodology of higher level vocational training introduces the pedagogical considerations of education specific to this kind of training and its educational theoretic aspects along with different educational strategies with an emphasis on self-regulating learning.

Sociology and psychology of young adult age and lifelong learning are discussed in individual chapters. A detailed introduction of mobility pedagogy as the answer to the challenges of the 21st century and labor force expectations follows.

3. Subject of the Study

The subject of the study was the competencies of students in higher level vocational education who took part in a foreign mobility program.

4. Research Questions

My research questions focused on the prospective complex results of the impact assessment. What competencies does a young adult need to be successful in the labor market and fulfill the ideals of lifelong learning as well? What do students in higher level vocational education learn in a study tour abroad? Who profit the most and learn the most? What sources can they mobilize? How do they evaluate the tour in the aspect of their competencies?

5. Research Methodology

Impact assessment as a research method presumes that the persons involved in the research undergo some measurable changes under specific circumstances. In my paper I focus on changes initiated by the mobility program.

The empirical part of the study involves the process and results of an empirical research conducted among students in higher level vocational education at Schola Europa Academy between 2006 and 2011. Students filled out a ‘Self-regulation, planning and time management’ and a ‘My communication skills’ questionnaire in the year before and after their study tour abroad, thus the input and output results can be compared. A control group of grade 13 and grade 14 students not involved in the mobility program filled out the same questionnaires.

As an extension to the questionnaires I used metaphor research as a qualitative method. With the help of rather concise verbal metaphors I tried to reveal students’ personal motifs and feelings in relation to the mobility program. Source metaphors were categorized to reflect the extent of students’ efforts and the emotional load of their experience.

A focus group discussion also helped the qualitative verification of the motivations of quantitative achievements. During the discussion students mostly named learning achievements related to the assessed areas and only to a lesser extent to topics regarding factual knowledge and specific information.

6. Hypotheses

The question in the focus of my research was: “What effect does participation in the Leonardo mobility program have on the self-regulation and communication skills of students?” I assumed that these skills have major importance both in being successful in the labor market and in lifelong learning.

- 1. Students participating in the mobility program showed progress in planning, time management and self-regulation.**
- 2. The progress of students in planning, time management and self-regulation was not a result of a spontaneous development but that of their participation in the mobility program.**

- 3. Before participating in the mobility program, students didn't have more developed skills in planning, time management and self-regulation than their peers in grade 13.**
- 4. Students participating in the mobility program show a development in communication skills.**
- 5. Study records of students participating in the mobility program are significantly higher in grade 14 than in grade 13.**

7. Findings

2.

1. The averages of the output results were higher than the input averages on almost every scale of the Self-regulation, planning and time management questionnaire.

3.

2. On several scales (Self-regulation strategies, Self effectiveness, Tracking, Effort, Acquirement motivation) students participating in the Leonardo program had notably higher averages after their study tour and this development seems to be a non-spontaneous one.

4.

3. Before the study tour, students participating in the Leonardo program didn't have better results in the assessed competencies than the grade 13 control group, thus their output results and the results of the control group in grade 14 are comparable. Participation in the program was on a voluntary basis and without a selection procedure.

5.

4. Factor analysis of the 36 items on the 'My communication skills' questionnaire was unsuccessful, but I compared the input and output results of the items as individual variables. There was a significant development in the case of 17 out of 36 items which means that participants in the program had a notable progress in this area.

6.

5. Students participating in the mobility program had significantly better records in grade 14 than in grade 13. Study records at the end of grade 13 and final examination results together account for 57% of the grade 14 results. 43% variance is due to other factors, one of which might be a study supporting and competency developing mobility program.

8. Possible directions of further research

In a pedagogical experiment that covers a rather long time span, intended and non-intentional effects might contribute to the outcome. In order to reveal their influences it would be beneficial to study the education program, lesson structure and educational instruments of the host institutions. A research of mobility pedagogy and the educational methods and strategies applied in higher level vocational education in general might also contribute to a deeper understanding of the results of my research.

It would also be worth investigating the long-term effects of the mobility program. A longitudinal study supplemented with employer interviews, focus group discussions and questionnaires could reveal how students can manage in the labor market.

Results of the qualitative and quantitative assessments yield such a system of aspects that might be the basis of a selection method in order to maximize the beneficences of the mobility program.

My study may contribute to the development of the pedagogy and methodology of higher level vocational education and to a better utilization of knowledge gained in this form of education.

9. Publications

Book

Kazarján, Erzsébet (2013). *Felsőfokú szakképzés és mobilitás, avagy egy kutatás tanulságai* [the outcomes of a study]. Budapest: Eötvös József Kiadó.
(ISBN:9789639955431)

Papers in volumes and journals

Kazarján, Erzsébet (2013). *Felsőfokú szakképzés - Mobilitás - Önszabályozó tanulás* [– Mobility – Self-regulating learning]. In: Karlovitz, János Tibor (ed.) Conference material. Place and time of conference: Komárno, Szlovákia, January 7 – January 8, 2013.

Kazarján, Erzsébet (2013). Competency Development in Vocational Education. In: *KATEDRA - EGÉSZSÉGNEVELÉSI, MENTÁLHIGIÉNIAI ISKOLALAP 5* [KATEDRA – SCHOOL JOURNAL ON HEALTH EDUCATION AND MENTALHYGIENE], (1) pp. 28-30.

Kazarján, Erzsébet (2011). *Új utak a felsőfokú szakképzésben* [New ways in tertiary level vocational education]. In: MENTOR MAGAZIN 13:(11-12) pp. 18-20.

- Kazarján, Erzsébet (2011). *A szakképzés gyakorlati aspektusai* [Practical aspects of vocational education]. In: *MAGISZTER (CSÍKSZEREDA)* 9:(3) pp. 79-87.
- Kazarján, Erzsébet (2011). *A felsőfokú szakképzés rendeltetése* [Purpose of tertiary level vocational education]. In: *MENTOR MAGAZIN* 13:(1) pp. 16-18.
- Kazarján, Erzsébet (2010). *Üzleti kommunikáció* [Business communication]. In: *MESTER ÉS TANÍTVÁNY [MASTER AND PUPIL]* 28:(4) p. 159. 1 p.
- Kazarján, Erzsébet (2010). *Neue Möglichkeiten in der (Fach)Bildung junger Erwachsener* [New opportunities in the vocational education of young adults]. In: *SCIENTIA PANNONICA* 8: p. 383.
- Kazarján, Erzsébet (2010). *A felsőfokú szakképzés pedagógiája oktatáspolitikai és munkaerő-piaci aspektusból* [Tertiary level education from the aspects of pedagogy, educational policy and labour force market]. In: *VIII. Pedagógiai Értékelési Konferencia* [8th Conference on Educational Assessment].
Place and time of conference: Szeged, Hungary, May 27 – May 29, 2010. p. 70.
- Kazarján, Erzsébet (2007). *Meg kell tanulni használni a tudást* [The use of knowledge has to be learned]. In: *MENTOR MAGAZIN* 9:(4) pp. 14-15.

Talks

- Kazarján, Erzsébet (2013). *Felsőfokú szakképzés – Mobilitás – Önszabályozó tanulás* [Tertiary level vocational education – Mobility – Self-regulating learning].
Conference on pedagogy and methodology, Komarno, Slovakia, January 7 – 8, 2013.
- Kazarján, Erzsébet (2010). *Die Pädagogik der Berufsbildung höheren Grades - aus unterrichtspolitischen Aspekt und aus dem Aspekt des Arbeitsmarktes* [Vocational education in higher grades – from the aspects of educational policy and labour force market].
Place and time of conference: Békéscsaba, Hungary, May 27, 2010.
- Kazarján, Erzsébet (2007). *A fiatal felnőttek képzésének új útjai* [New ways in the education of young adults]: Training and Practice – International conference on education, Kaposvár, April 27, 2007.