Chapter 16
Developing Global Competences through Learning Mobility: A Discussion of the Host Institution’s Role in Erasmus+ Student Mobility

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ABSTRACT
This chapter looks at the development of global competences during a study abroad experience from the perspective of a host institution to inbound students. It examines the concept of global competence how mobile students themselves regard their study abroad experience, and how the international experiences gained through learning mobility are valued by employers. Having found that exchange programmes such as Erasmus+ places obligations of a rather practical nature on the host institution, this chapter seeks to argue that the host institution should play a bigger role in enhancing the development of global competences of their inbound exchange students. The chapter relies heavily upon the recent Erasmus Impact Study entitled “The Effects of mobility on the skills and employability of students and the internationalisation of higher education institutions”, published by the European Commission in September 2014 as well as other similar studies and the latest doctrine in the field.

INTRODUCTION
International co-operation in general is commonly regarded as improving the quality of education and mobility. In particular, it has been regarded as an effective means for helping students develop personally while also improving their employability. Internationalisation in general, is of growing importance for universities, and learning mobility continues to be a top priority both on policy level in Europe and at the institutional level. High levels of both outgoing and incoming student mobility is regarded as a sign of prestige and quality (Souto-Otero, Huisman, Beerkens, de Wit & Vujic, 2013, p. 70). In a survey conducted by EUA, European University Association in
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2013, 99% of the responding institutions replied that they have an internationalization strategy in place (56%), or intended to develop one (13%), or have considered internationalization in other strategies (30%). (EUA: Internationalisation in European Higher Education: European Policies, institutional strategies and EUA support 2013, p. 7.) When asked about the top priorities for internationalization, 70% held “Generally, attracting students from abroad at all levels”, “internationalization of learning and teaching” and “providing our students with more opportunities to have a learning experience abroad” as their first priority. (p.10). These results indicate that both outbound and inbound student mobility has a very strong standing at most institutions as it is an important component in the first two categories as well.

The mobility of students and youth is an objective laid down in several European strategy documents such as the Europe 2020 Strategy, the European Modernization and internationalization Agenda in Higher Education and the European Commission’s flagship program Youth on the Move. The Erasmus program has been Europe’s most important and best-known mobility program for decades. Since its launch in 1987 the Erasmus Program has provided more than 3 million students with opportunities to study or to do a work placement period abroad. (European Commission, 2013). The new Erasmus+ Program 2014-2020 Erasmus+ will provide opportunities for over 4 million Europeans to study, train, gain work experience and volunteer abroad. (European Commission, 2014). More than 4000 higher education institutions from more than 30 countries take part in the program, and currently about 200 000 students or just below 1% of all higher education students in Europe study abroad every year within the framework of the Erasmus Program.

Erasmus is not the only exchange program. Most institutions carry out student exchanges through bilateral, institutional agreements on student exchange with partner institutions around the world. During 2013 10 189 Finnish students in higher education studied abroad for a semester or two. Out of these 53.2% were Erasmus students, whereas 20.1% studied abroad through bilateral exchange agreements. At the same time 9739 foreign students spend an exchange period at Finnish higher education institutions.(Centre for International Mobility, 2013). Of all incoming students 71.2% were Erasmus students.(CIMO, 2013)

GLOBAL COMPETENCE: THE MAIN OBJECTIVE OF LEARNING MOBILITY

The learning outcomes of student mobility are usually described in terms of international skills and competences, or global competences. What are these global competences? And what characteristics define a globally competent graduate? According to the CIMO Report Hidden Competences Faktaa.Facts and figures 1/2014 global competences often include skills such as language skills, and intercultural competences, tolerance and broad-mindedness. (CIMO, 2014, p. 6). According to Boix- Mansilla & Jackson “Global competence is the capacity and disposition to understand and act on issues of global significance.”(Boix-Mansilla & Jackson, 2011, p.13). Moreover, these authors stat that: globally competent individuals: “aware, curious, and interested in learning about the world and how it works. They can use the big ideas, tools, methods, and languages that are central to any discipline (mathematics, literature, history, science, and the arts) to engage the pressing issues of our time. They deploy and develop this expertise as they investigate such issues, recognizing multiple perspectives, communicating their views effectively, and taking action to improve conditions.” (Boix Mansilla & Jackson, 2011, p.13). Ron Moffat, defines a Global-ready student as “a person with a grasp of global systems, global issues, the dynamics of how things are interrelated and interconnected in the world, and how society can best address global issues.” (Willard, 2006)
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