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The Impact of Erasmus Programme on Meeting Personal and Academic Expectations

Impressions from Hacettepe University Students

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1.846.000 students have benefited from exchange and internship programs through the Erasmus student exchange program since 1987. According to the latest Erasmus statistics, the number of students who benefited only from exchange programs was more than 162.000 during the period 2007/08 and shows an increase of 2,1% compared to the previous year. The number of students who are prospective beneficiaries of the exchange in mid-2009 is expected to reach 2 millions. Each year more than 180.000 students participate in the program in which figure 4000 higher education institutions from 31 different counties. According to the European Commission, Erasmus Mundus helps promote European higher education around the globe as well as intercultural dialogue and the sustainable development of higher education in developing countries. In support of this opinion, there exist empirical studies that show the Erasmus program is an important cultural exchange instrument. There are many studies showing that Erasmus students valued Erasmus' contribution to personal development more highly than its contribution to academic development. Turkey, having joined the program in 2001, has a share of 2.79% in student mobility with 4438 students as of academic year 2006/2007 for which the latest statistics are available. In this study, the academic- and personal development expectations of 408 students who have benefited from Erasmus exchange program between academic years 2006/2007 and 2007/2008 have been compared with the level of satisfaction of these expectations after completing the Erasmus program. The Hacettepe University, where research has been carried out, ranks among the most important universities of Turkey with more than 26.000 students. In a survey conducted with students who have participated in the Erasmus program, a group of questions measures the academic expectations of students and the level of their satisfaction after the program. Similarly, the effects of the program on their personal development have been evaluated by a group of questions. In consequence of the evaluation, it has been seen that the personal development-oriented expectations of the students who have participated in the Erasmus program were

higher than their academic expectations. In this study figure the demographic distribution of Hacettepe University students who have participated in the Erasmus program along with measurements relating to their academic and personal development expectations as well as assessments regarding the degree of their satisfaction.

Presentation type

Paper

Purpose of this paper

The purpose of this study is to put forth that there are elements which enhance cultural interaction and personal development as much as academic elements in the expectations of the students who have participated in the EU higher education exchange program Erasmus Mundus prior to the program and in their achievements after the program. Specifically, the purpose is to show the impact of the Erasmus Mundus program on the improvement of students' interpersonal communication skills and their adaptation to different cultures supported by fact-based data.

Background

European Commission (2008). *Erasmus Statistics*. Retrieved, 20 August 2009 from http://ec.europa.eu/education/programmes/llp/erasmus/stat_en.html

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Teichler , U. (1996). Student Mobility in the Framework of Erasmus: Findings of an Evaluation Study *European Journal of Education*, 31(2), 153- 179.

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Voss, R., Gruber, T. and Szmigin, I. (2007). Service quality in higher education: The role of student expectations. *Journal of Business Research*, 60, 949–959.

Methods used for the study

The findings reached at the end of the research are based on the data collected from the surveys conducted with 408 students who have participated in the Erasmus program. For the interpretation of the data, statistical techniques such as Pearson correlation, two-way ANOVA for independent samples and chi-square were used. These techniques have been applied by using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software.

Findings

According to the results of the research, 88% of the 408 surveyed students are undergraduate students. It has also been observed that the female students are more interested in the program with a rate of 72%. Following the evaluation of the data, it has been observed that the length of students' exchange periods has an impact on their expectations and that as the duration of their stay increases, so does the rate of meeting their expectations. On the other hand, the relation between program types in which the students participate (BSc, MSc or PhD) and their academic expectations is observed to be meaningful. Many similar different findings will be treated in the presentation.

Importance and interest of the study

Among the limitations of this research is the fact that the survey data of 408 students over 502 who have benefited from the Erasmus program between academic years 2006/07 and 2007/08 is being treated. In terms of consistency of the research, it is thought to be beneficial to repeat it periodically each year. At the same time, it is thought that it would be important to carry out research to measure the personal and academic expectations of Erasmus exchange students who come to Hacettepe University to study in order to show how much of the program requirements are fulfilled by the University.

Value of paper

The study, in which the contribution of the Erasmus program to academic and personal development is presented with fact-based data, also aspires to encourage student exchange between LIS departments in Europe.

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Biographies:

Esin Sultan Oğuz received her BSc (2001) and MSc (2004) degrees from the Department of Information Management at Hacettepe University, located in Ankara, Turkey. She is currently a PhD student in the same department, and her areas of specialization include cultural policy and libraries, cultural heritage and digitization, Library Information Science education, and the internationalization of LIS higher education. During the Spring 2008 semester, Ms. Oğuz was an Erasmus student at the Royal School of Information Science, in Copenhagen, Denmark, where she studied knowledge organization. She served as the assistant editor of the national, peer-reviewed *Journal of Turkish Librarianship* (Türk Kütüphaneciliği Dergisi) between 2006 and 2009, and is currently on the Executive Board of the Turkish Librarians' Association (Türk Kütüphaneciler Derneği). She is also a member of the UNESCO Memory of the World Program, which is a sub-committee of the UNESCO Turkish National Education Committee.

Prof. Dr. Selda Önderoğlu, International Relations and European Union Education and Youth Programmes Institutional Coordinator, Professor of Anatomy, Bologna Expert, member of the National Qualifications Framework Working Group of the Turkish Higher Education Council, teaching staff at the department of Medical Education and Informatics. Since four years she works for the implementation of the Bologna Process in Turkey.

Bugay Turhan, MBA, PhD Candidate on Education, Expert at the European Research Center in HU working on LLP, skills and competencies. Participation in national and international research and development projects. Working on HEGESCO, Erasmus and several Youth in Action projects. Skills: project management, research and youth trainer.