GOOD PRACTICES IN THE 3ECONOMY+ PROJECT

Learning from the experience

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(Coord.)

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FOREWORD

It is a very great pleasure for me to draft this prologue to the publication which has been produced as one of the major outputs of the 3 Economy+ project, coordinated by a team led by Dr Miguel Ángel Montero, of the University of Granada's Department of Statistics and Operational Research.

Academic cooperation projects of this kind are an important part of the University of Granada's internationalization strategy. They offer an excellent opportunity to progress towards institutional objectives in innovative policies, offering enhanced quality of provision to our students, as well as an important framework for developing closer inter-institutional ties with other universities, for sharing best practice and for peer learning with our partners.

In this particular case, the project addresses a number of issues which are priorities in the Erasmus+ programme and hence of central importance for the universities of the future. It aims to enhance the employability of students in the disciplines of Economics, Tourism and Marketing, through a variety of actions, including international work placements, shared virtual course work, short intensive programmes, all of which in turn promote language skills amongst the students involved.

The project has thus been a test bed for the blended mobility initiatives which will form a part of the new 2021-27 Erasmus programme, by implementing a COIL approach: collaborative on-line international learning, through activities co-designed by academic staff from the three partner institutions, and then implemented with students from all three, on-campus locally, on-line, and then with a short physical mobility (through intensive programmes held at partner institutions). This kind of mobility is of course designed to promote international activity for students who are often unable to participate in traditional, longer mobility programmes for personal or financial reasons, and is thus highly inclusive in nature.

The project has further promoted intersectoral mobility of students in the form of international work placements or internships. It is a given that students benefit greatly during their undergraduate and postgraduate programmes from work-based learning, in an authentic environment, in industry, business or in the public and third sectors, provided of course the activity carried out is well designed with learning outcomes related to their study programmes, and with sufficient and appropriate tutorial support both from their universities and from their workplace. When these placements are international, students are able to add to the learning outcomes, those generic skills which are closely linked to international mobility in general: language, cultural and intercultural skills, personal initiative and autonomy, adaptability, amongst others. And in this case, the project has also piloted on-line work-based learning, during the health crisis, paving the way for the future, which will undoubtedly also favour virtual placements.

But perhaps the most outstanding and differentiating feature of this project, funded by the Spanish national agency (SEPIE) and coordinated by the University of Granada, is the attention it has paid to the socio-economic environments of the three partner institutions. As the project itself insists, one of the major aims has been to bring new opportunities to groups of students in socio-economically disadvantaged regions of the European Union: Malta, the Portuguese Alentejo, and the Autonomous City of Melilla, a Spanish enclave on the Northern coast of Africa.

For the University of Granada, it has been a source of considerable satisfaction to have our Melilla campus act as coordinator in a European project of this kind for the first time ever. The University is keenly aware of its importance as a driver of socio-economic development for the city, through the provision of higher education for the growth of the younger generations in a series of carefully selected programmes linked to sectors of strategic interest. This project has built on that approach, offering learning opportunities in the areas of Economics, Tourism and Marketing, all of which are key to the city's future development.

3Economy+ has thus been an innovative initiative for its three partners, their academic staff and their students. And this publication is yet another positive outcome. Over the years, the Erasmus programme in its successive incarnations has funded a large number of collaborative projects of this kind, producing excellent innovative and impactful resources, materials, training, conclusions and policy recommendations. All too often, however, projects have lacked strong dissemination policies, thus hindering their true final impact, something which this publication aims to remedy.

The international project team, led by Dr Miguel Ángel Montero, is to be congratulated for their hard work and for the excellent outcomes of the project, for their students, for academic colleagues at each of the three partner institutions, for their immediate socio-economic contexts, and for the broader higher education community participating in the multiplier events, and reading this publication.

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SECTION I

GOOD PRACTICES IN K203 EUROPEAN PROJECTS MANAGEMENT

CHAPTER 1

PREPARING AND SETTLING A CONSORTIUM

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I. Introduction

European Union defines Consortium as "two or more participating organisations teaming up to prepare, implement and follow up a project or an activity within a project. A consortium can be national (i.e. involving organisations established in the same country) or international (involving participating organisations from different countries)". In this sense, Erasmus+ subsidizes Transnational Strategic Partnerships aimed at developing initiatives in one or more areas of education, training and youth and promoting innovation, the exchange of experience and knowledge between different types of organizations involved in education, training and youth or in other relevant areas (Erasmus+, 2019).

The importance of a good consortium is a key point (DESCA, 2016), nor only because the institutions that form it are meant to be of recognized prestige, or of any other characteristic, as consortium can be formed between small institutions or institutions of less prestige that present innovative or quality projects able to compete with that institutions. In order to succeed and to reach great achievements, the most important subject (and that can be generalized for all) is that all partners know each others very well. The deepest the knowledge of each other is, better results can be achieved. We firmly believe that this is the key. When we talk about to know each other, we mean from an internal and external perception. We think that, within each consortium, members should know each others or have a certain degree of common understanding, as the development of tasks, performance, availability, companionship will be fundamental to pursuit a good development of the work within the group. The knowledge is not only a quality of the coordinator but of all the group as the more they know each other the better they will work together. Also, a good knowledge among clusters is important, specially in what concerns joint and coordinated activities.

The second main factor is the number of elements that form the consortium. (Consorcio de movilidades Erasmus+ de Formación Profesional de Castilla y León, 2017). This number must be adequate to or proportional to the work to be done as a very high number of partners may transmit an image of less commitment; on the other hand, a reduced number of partners can implicate an overwork and eventual disagreements among partners.

For that, we may that is fundamental that:

— Identification of partners: all partners should know perfectly the project, as this will facilitate the coordination of it and also the commitment to it.
— Planning: there should be done a schedule of activities, agreed with everyone, and adapted to the participation and commitment of each participant in the project.
— Limit and identification of the requirements of the project: all members should be represented in the coordination of the project where each one should be charged of each component.

Among the activities that must be done, the consortium should make a sustainability plan during the 1st phase of execution, that should be approved by members in order to assure sustainability of the project in long term. The corresponding sustainability agreements will be signed by the partners and external interested parts in order to assure constant cooperation among all the agents beyond the deadline of the project.

The key subjects in the foreseen sustainability plan should contain, al least, the following main aspects:

— Financial sustainability will be ensured by additional financial sources for future development and the update of the results produced beyond the duration of the project will be maintained through local, regional and international financing schemes. The research sectors of the higher education institutions involved will actively participate in the promotion of methodological innovations through cooperation agreements with inherent partners.
— Institutional sustainability must be ensured by the project partners, which guarantees a better academic recognition of the skills developed for students once the developed results are tested, implemented and evaluated successfully. The institutions will support the options tailored to the different courses that will be taught, that are an additional improvement of the teaching staff of the universities, providing lasting and high quality support to the training activities. The consortium will also ensure the visualization of the project, hosted in the website, updating the developed learning and teaching materials, as well as open access to Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) created as open educational resources for at least five years beyond the life of the project, involving all necessary human resources and offering the technical support to attend any technical and / or pedagogical consultation. Project partners, who have already established a solid base for academic cooperation, will continue to exchange good practices using the website, MOOCs, Toolkits, learning and teaching resources, social media and other specific ICT tools.
— Sustainability at policy level must be approached strategically, since the proposal is based on one of the key issues of socio-economic development of the EU countries involved, such as the effective employability of graduates. The consortium will also apply for the recognition of the project as a good practice.

II. Objectives

Every project must have defined his objectives, which must be measurable, achievable, realistic, limited in time and specific. The achievement of all of them should lead us to our superior common goal.

The main objective of a consortium must be to gather individual efforts in order to achieve a better educational, economic and social benefit, that is, greater competitiveness of the entities that form it.

As positive or quality strand to achieve the objectives that were set, we can assume the linguistic diversity within the consortium, where its members speak different languages, such as English, Spanish, Portuguese or Maltese; also, this is seen as an asset to promote the development of communicative competences of the learning community in different languages, thus contributing to one of the objectives of the EU. In addition, English for specific purposes will help improve the overall professional skills of the participants.

Cultural diversity is another important asset, as this allows learning how to work, to collaborate according to different aspects, both cultural, educational, organizational or performative. This enrichment will be an added bonus for the entire consortium that will allow a global improvement not only in the formation, but in all aspects of daily life.

On the other hand, the lack of clearness in the definition of objectives has several implications that can negatively affect the project, its participants and the coordination of it. Concretizing:

— Concerning the project: delays caused by misunderstandings can occur; it is possible that convergence of interests will occur, so it will be necessary to invest more time in negotiations.
— Concerning the participants: misunderstandings can occur, communication can be weaken, and situations of dissatisfaction or loss of motivation can result.
— Concerning the coordination: the image can decrease and possible lack of reliability can occur, or led to inadequate resource management or an unbalanced workload allocation.

When we are facing a project of a certain size, it is best to set intermediate objectives that can be achieved in the short or medium term. This helps to know if you are on the right track and usually give you extra motivation every time you achieve one of those intermediate objectives, since you will be a little closer to reaching the final objective of the project. If you do not achieve any intermediate objective, you must analyse the cause and take all the necessary corrective measures, changing even the intermediate objectives for others more adequate to the reality of that moment. The important thing is to reach the final objective of the project.

III. What to do. Keys to success

In order to achieve quality and success standards, it will not be possible without the help of instruments that allow visualization of the state, a proposal of guidelines to lead you to the goals and an establishment of the necessary means to share information (AAL, 2019).

The project management methodologies gather the most relevant data that must be known to direct the project and help to differentiate the essentials from the secondary and, at the same time, they can be used in themselves as a communication tool (Nextop, 2018). Some of the keys that can be considered are:

— As stated above, to define perfectly the objectives of the project.
— To have an effective communication between all members of the consortium. This is essential.
— Sense, balance and agility: sense in the approach, balance in the decisions and agility in management.
— To solve conflicts that may arise in the project effectively and on time.
— Trust, stability and control over the common project. The project coordination must transmit stability and control, at all times, to all those interested in the project.
— To perform a proper project planning. Plan and then execute and do not execute anything that has not been planned; this sequence helps to ensure the success of the project.
— To detect all risks that may impact on our project.
— To control the project during all its development.
— To get a commitment and involvement of all the participants.

The success of a project depends on endless factors: on the motivation of your team, on the communication between the members of the consortium, on a good organization, on the definition of objectives and goals, etc. Aligning all these variables is not an easy task, but with everyone's desire, experience and help, it will not be so complicated.

IV. Actions performed

At present there is much talk about work methodologies and different ways of organizing activities. In this section, some of the activities and learning strategy discussed and built jointly by the consortium will be discussed. In this sense, we believe that the essential thing is to contextualize our project well in order to properly select our methods.

To ensure effective communication within the consortium, to improve interuniversity teamwork and to balance responsibilities among partners, it will be established commissions with the following specific tasks. The organizational structure that has been created has been the one explained below. All committees will be formed by at least one person from each institution, so that they are all represented.

— Project Management Committee: will be established with clear roles and responsibilities allocated to ensure that all objectives are achieved within time, cost and resources constraints. All members of the consortium belong to this Committee, and there is a coordinator that is charged to conduct meetings.
— Internal Quality Committee: It is responsible for monitoring and controlling the project, ensuring the quality of the project. In addition, it will be in charge of appointing the external people who will evaluate the activities carried out by the project.
— External Quality Committee: They will carry out an evaluation of the entire project. They will be external to it.
— Sustainability and support unit: They will be responsible for proposing different activities to carry out the sustainability of the project.
— Academic issues, Assessment and Conflict Resolution Committee: This commission will be in charge of all the academic programme of the Project guaranteeing that objectives are achieved and providing fair and equal assessment criteria for all the participating students. Furthermore, they will cope with conflicts that may occur during the project implementation.
— Coordination and Quality Assessment Committee: This commission will be in charge of coordinating tasks (administration, budget management, coordinating meetings, students selection, students grant and other income, etc.) and the assessment of quality of the programme.
— Internships and IPs Organisation Committee: This commission will guarantee the successful implementation of internships and IPs during the project, being in charge of regular contact with the different stakeholders involved and disseminating the project locally and internationally through mass media and social networks.
— Social networks and Project online dissemination Committee: It will be responsible dissemination and incorporation of the results of the project.

The project consortium intends to have open access on the web to the publications produced in the project, as well as the training materials and the mixed learning course. It will also make available online presentations, reflections, work in progress and other useful tools and resources. All the publications and materials will be free on the web

The results will be published in professional publications and disseminated among European educational platform and other relevant stakeholders at local, national and European level, and the platform with the material produced / the contents of the project will be available against free registration after having been published.

The developed intellectual output and other project products will be launched as online operational resources through the project website, the project workspace and the specially designed MOOCs. This will contribute significantly to the effective dissemination of the objectives and results of the project outside the project consortium and, at the same time, it will promote the consolidation of the results obtained at the end of the project.

V. Conclusion

It is very difficult to summarize in a few lines all those aspects that have a decisive influence on the success of a project. With these premises, attempts have been made to guide, formulate the elements and implement the actions taken. We are committed to a consortium with a strong ethical, questioning and debate component developed through the collective action of the different institutions.

Finishing or delivering a project does not mean that it is successful. A project, as known, has many phases, all of them equally critical and complex. Starting a project from scratch is not an easy task. Starting to plan something will take dedication, time, organization and patience. Development will not be a "bed of roses" either. During work, problems will arise with colleagues and mistakes will be made. Give the final touch and deliver it on time and according to what has been agreed will lead to moments of stress. There are many more factors that can influence the management of a project formed by a consortium, but those presented here could be considered essential.

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CHAPTER 2

QUALITY AS A GOOD PRACTICE TOOL

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I. INTRODUCTION

In quality the first focus would be on the importance of monitoring and measuring the quality of projects that we know, in this case, are developed in difficult environments. The imposition of well-structured and demanding indicators is an advisable practice to guarantee its future continuity at 3Economy+ project.

The participating educational institutions recognize the fact of they are located in disadvantaged regions of the European Union (Melilla (Spanish city in North Africa), Alto Alentejo (Portugal) and Malta) implies an additional effort to overcome the fragility of this environment. Thus, there is a proposal for training university students in the areas of Economics, Tourism and Marketing (areas of participating schools). The offer of complementary international training may offer you new perspectives in approaching the market, not only due to the new skills acquired but also due to experience.

With these assumptions as a starting point, the project also established criteria for measuring the quality of the project.

II. OBJECTIVES

Apply theories like the *Deming cicle one* method disseminated by Total Quality. (The method was developed in the 1930s by Walter A Shewhart. It was created as a cycle of statistical control that can be repeated continuously over any process or problem), verify the importance of measurement and monitoring in quality management in these types of projects, our using one perspective of its processes, was one of the objectives of the quality perspective.

The issue of quality is often addressed, often from the perspective of its processes, whether they are: universally recognized; focused on the product; on the user; in manufacturing complying with standards and specifications; and value.

The quality of a product is easily controllable in a project of this type raises many more questions both in the definition of processes and in their monitoring.

Based on the identified problems, the following project objectives were defined:

1. Improve the training of students, not only in the project areas but also in personal skills in such a way that they can be recognized by employers.
   Develop language skills and intercultural relationships. An important issue is also the reduction of the competence gap between the real demands of the labor market and the preparation received by the student during his studies with regard to an increasingly global market.
2. To improve the language level of students using formal education, but also informal learning that the international relationship allows.
3. Improve the training curricula of the participating schools, allowing it to incorporate the resulting good practices. Introduce new pedagogical practices and new teaching materials produced within the scope of the project.
4. Involve students, not only the participants, but also their colleagues, thus extending the impact of the actions.
5. Minimize the skills gap between study programs and labor market requirements. The participation of companies in the project as internships and partners will also allow a closer relationship between academia and the business world.

III. Quality as an essential area

To monitor and measure the results obtained from the methodology used to achieve the proposed objectives of the project, it is intended to elaborate the project management through the following activities:

— Transnational meetings;
— Internal quality management group;
— Final report;
— Definition and monitoring of execution indicators;
— External audit committee;
— Project evaluation

1. Description of quality criteria

The project quality working group analyzed the project, defining “quality criteria” and established indicators that allow the development of validation actions, as well as proposing corrective actions that result from their analysis, in order to respond to this important tool. Work It has established the indicators that allow its evaluation at two levels:

1. indicators of project realization according to plan and levels of participation, satisfaction and achievement;
2. benchmarking indicators in terms of innovative practices and teaching methodologies.

2. Criteria, indicators and goals for the project

The following were defined as service acceptance criteria in the 3Economy + project:

1. N.º of students,
2. Sessions held,
3. Satisfaction of participants,
4. Number of learning modules.
5. New pedagogical practices,
6. Creation of new learning tools.
7. Quality of the materials produced;

As the most relevant indicators of the defined acceptance criteria, we established the following:

For criteria 1 we considered that "publication" would be a good way to ensure that you verify compliance. Arbitrage of publications is a way of gauging this condition.

As for criteria 2, the number of participants is a given objective and we considered that in order to measure "Degree of satisfaction of the participants", it will have to be obtained through questionnaires. These questionnaires have already been applied once in the first IP.

As a third criteria, we considered that in order to measure the levels of insertion of graduates in the market, we will have to obtain the support indicators: "Employability", "Degree of satisfaction of graduates" and "Degree of satisfaction of employers". are external to the institution and therefore will have to be obtained through questionnaires (to be applied at the end of the project).

With regard to the 4th criteria the internships, the participation of companies / institutions in the IP, either by providing visits or with other types of participation, are ways of gauging the same.

Regarding the 5th criteria the participation in seminars, congresses and other events with presentation of posters, presentations, publications and other ways to disseminate the project. Dissemination in the media and social networks will also be valued.

So far we have been able to gauge the satisfaction of the participants and the number of students involved, the latter being higher than the proposal, which is a good indicator. The disclosure has been made in both proposed forms.

The following targets were set for the defined indicators:

1. Quality of materials produced - 60% published.
2. Number of participants - + 18. Degree of satisfaction of the participants - 100% satisfied or very satisfied.
3. Employability - 100% after one year. Employers satisfaction level - 100% satisfied or very satisfied.
4. Interaction of schools with their surroundings - number above what counts in the proposal (internships).
5. Participation in seminars, congresses and other events - more than one per year in which the project takes place.

4. Indicator Results Analysis

Regarding the indicator "Quality of materials produced", the working group responsible for the quality process had set a target of 60%. From the analysis of the available data we verify that it is not possible to determine the execution.

However, we must point out that there are already some publications.

Regarding the indicator "Number of participants and their level of satisfaction, the Working Group responsible for this process has set a target of +18 (number in the application) and this number has been exceeded.

The percentage of "Employability - 100% after one year. Employers' satisfaction, "The project is not yet in a position to verify these criteria.

The "Interaction of schools with the surrounding environment", although it is still in the midle of project implementation, has a positive character.

Concerning "Participation in seminars, congresses and other events" we are below the target, but only in the first year. This it will be possible to conclude by fulfilling this objective.

IV. Conclusion

Despite being a terminal project, it is considered that it may have a major impact on the future of students from participating schools. It also allowed an analysis of disadvantaged regions in the EU, with a different cultural perspective.

The intervening of companies in the execution of the same was also important for its success, not only for a different internal approach but also for an approach to the academy, so many times postponed.

The production of scientific content for later widespread use is also noteworthy.

All the factors listed and especially its location in forgotten regions of the EU have intensified the need for better project implementation.

It is in this implementation that the control mechanisms, essential in this type of project, that the quality management mechanisms are essential.

They were monitored internally and externally according to what was presented here, but as always it is a dynamic mechanism.

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CHAPTER 3

INTERNSHIP AND MOBILILITY MANAGEMENT IN EU PROJECTS. PLACEMENTS MANAGEMENT AND MOBILITY

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Amongst the different goals established by the Erasmus+ Project KA2 3Economy+, there is one particularly relevant: the development and implementation of a work placements programme. One of the aims of this programme is to provide innovative practical experience related to the teaching and learning process of the contents developed by the project. These work placements should focus on reinforcing the students' formal learning in the areas covered by the project: economy, marketing, and tourism.

These work placements are not only focused on academic aspects but will also allow students to benefit from informal learning and so foster their professional competences and skills in order to face their successful incorporation to the labour market.

Those competences —which will be later mentioned— must go hand-in-hand with the reinforcement of multilingual skills. Students must know a second language from the ones in the project (English, Spanish and Portuguese) and must have a precious knowledge of the geopolitical realities of the cities where the Universities part of the project are based, that is, Melilla, Valetta and Portalegre.

Lots of benefits provided by the International Exchange Programmes have been remarked during the last decades,. Apart from the obvious outcomes of the intercultural experience, there are many other remarkable benefits that have been extensively studied and empirically supported such as:

- better professional competences and experience to fit the labour market needs;
- higher possibilities of working abroad and benefit from an international career;
- better employment opportunities for students coming from disadvantaged environments.

However, some authors such as Di Pietro (2019) mention some disadvantages as opposed to these benefits. Some of them are as follows:

- students who decide to spend some time abroad during their studies might be encouraged to do so in the quest for adventures and excitement instead of an interest to improve their academic and professional growth;

— differences amongst employability of those who have studied abroad and those who haven't may be related to personal qualities such as personality;
— most of the studies on the correlation amongst having an international experience while studying at university and employability are mainly numerical and anecdotal.

The results of a survey aimed at students who had studied abroad from 2000 to 2001 supported by the Erasmus Programme were published in 2007 (Teichler, U., and K. Janson, 2007),. They confirm that over half of the students surveyed consider that finding their first job was easier because of their international experience. Students who took part in the survey also affirmed that having studied abroad improved their academic achievement and placed them in a privileged position when entering the labour market. These conclusions can be also found in other surveys (Findlay, King, Smith, Geddes & Skeldon, R., 2012; Wells, 2014; Fernández, Carreño, Cea, Santander & Yáñez, 2016).

On a different setting, most of the mobility managers normally state that success in the job interviews is usually related to the experience abroad of the interviewee. Employers use to feel inclined to offer the job to those who have had an international experience (Fielden 2007; Petzold, 2017). A research based on a survey addressed to medium-sized enterprises (more than 50 employees) operating in more than 31 countries concludes that international experience in the South of Europe is mainly appreciated —Austria, Finland, Latvia, Luxembourg and Turkey— (Van Mol, 2017).

In opposition to those who highlight the benefits of studying abroad, some results show weaknesses related to the international experience. One of these weaknesses relies on the fact that knowledge and skills gained during the student's international experience may be not transferable to the national labour market. An example of this drawback is related to differences in legislation on accountancy amongst the receiving and the sending countries. In other cases, the employers fear the dichotomy that the candidates may suffer: joy and excitement in opposition to specific academic goals. It also exists the common disadvantage stated by the students with regard to facing their studies in a different language with the same academic requirements, and how it can affect their grades1. Another disadvantage pointed out is the difficulty to create and keep social relations in their own country and to be more limited to enter the labour market. However, this last drawback can not be considered so relevant in today's global environment boosted by ICT and social networks, as can not either another negative issue pointed out by some authors: that some students who go to study abroad delay their incorporation to the labour market in order to extend their studies. This is not, in our opinion, a disadvantage but rather an advantage, particularly for those students who intend to have an international career. It is obvious that those who have participated in mobility programmes are keener on accepting jobs that involve travelling to other countries to participate in business operations, negotiation or tasks requiring the use of languages, among other duties.

Regarding the strengths, one important aspect to highlight is the length of the mobility. Rodrigues (2013) shows that the probability for European students to find a job abroad within five years after graduation is higher for those who have studied twelve months abroad than for those who have studied abroad for only three months.

Even if there are more advantages than disadvantages, actions aimed particularly at students coming from disadvantaged environments must be put in place. In addition to economic restrictions, family attitudes towards the international experience may be negative and the opportunities to develop competences highly valued in the labour market (such as intercultural competence, global awareness and communicative skills in foreign languages) may not be considered. Some research has statistically shown that study abroad programmes improve the employability of graduates who are more disadvantaged (Di Petro, 2015). Students with limited economic, social and cultural resources are more likely to benefit from an international experience as far as their professional development is involved (Waibel, Petzold & H. Rüger, 2018).

We have up to now focused on the academic aspects of study abroad in the framework of mobility grants, from a general point of view. We will now focus on work placements as such, these being one of the main aims of the 3Economy+ Erasmus+ Project, as stated at the beginning of this chapter. The goal is to provide students the possibility to do a work placement for two months in a private enterprise or a public institution in a foreign country from the second year of development of the project. In order to make this possible, different resources were put into place: the budget specifically allocated for work placements in the project but also international meetings hosted by the members of the project —so allowing the participants to get to know the place and help them chose where to do their work placement— and the collaboration of companies willing to receive students from other countries and offer them the opportunity to temporally be part of their labour environment.

An outline of the work experiences in Portalegre and Melilla will be presented in a specific chapter of this publication devoted to the students' experiences. These work placements took place for two months during 2019 (July and August) in private and public companies that have collaborated with the project. Unfortunately, due to the unfavourable circumstances originated by the COVID-19 Pandemic, there is no certainty as to whether those students who have not yet completed their work placements will be able to do them during this summer.

With the aim of implementing the guidelines of the Bologna Plan, the Spanish Government has given more importance to work placements. They offer students the opportunity to put theory into practice on the professional sector they would like to join, to develop the skills required by companies and to facilitate their incorporation to the labour market. In that sense, the Spanish National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA), responsible for supervision and approval of curricula in Spain within the EHEA framework has stated that:

> The discourse for modernizing the structure of the Spanish universities and looking for new learning environments has permeated deeply and has originated the implementation of different measures within the aim of making university education excellent and to adapt it to the labour market's needs.

> […] to do so, the current needs of the labour market are being continuously researched. Universities will then need to adapt their curricula and teaching and learning methodologies to fit those competencies. (Alonso, Rodríguez & Nyssen, 2009, p. 32)

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), three basic skills are required for individuals, companies and the society to enter the labour market: a) innovation to face changes; b) adaptation to technological and market transformations; c) learning as a continuous and systemic process (Cariola & Quiroz, 1997).

Adecco, leading consultants in Human Resources, published in 2014 a list with the skills most demanded by companies:

- Specialized knowledge (new technologies, languages and general knowledge).
- Organizational skills (analytical skills; high tolerance to stress; leadership and team management; business vision).
- Social skills (teamwork; empathy and the ability to influence the others; networking).
- Motivational skills (planning and strategizing goals; time management; job ethics; learning orientation).
- Page Executive2, a company specialised in searching for high level management profiles, underlines the following skills as basic ones:
- Adequate and continuous learning and training (recycled knowledge).
- International experience.
- Teamwork.
- Clients and results oriented.
- Logical, rational and growing experience.
- Perseverance to face difficult situations and humility towards achievements.
- Fidelity to the company (commitment).
- Leadership.
- Added value (personal and professional contribution to the company in order to foster its growth).
- Flexibility (ability to perform different tasks within the company).

Higher Education Institutions should assess if students develop all those skills during their training. Even if we can not give a direct answer to that question, we could say that work placements are of utmost importance for the acquisition and development of a great deal of them, as real experience is far from theoretical learning. If work placements can be implemented in international settings, there are even more advantages, as stated at the beginning of the chapter. This is the reason why we highly value initiatives such as the ones developed by the 3Economy+ project, where the feedback offered by the companies have allowed the development of not few of those skills. This is particularly important if we take into account that most of the students who have benefitted from the work placements —no matter their social and economic origin— come from places with poor labour opportunities (the cities part of the project are underprivileged environments). May we recall once again one of the aims of the project: to offer an overall training opportunity in terms of economy, marketing and tourism to a variety of students from a theoretical and practical point of view, through a real immersion in the labour market and towards a linguistic and intercultural enrichment.

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CHAPTER 4

INTENSIVE STUDY PROGRAMME ORGANIZATION IN EUROPEAN PROJECTS: THE CASE OF 3ECONOMY+ PROJECT

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I. Introduction

One of the goals of European Union is "to respect its rich cultural and linguistic diversity" (EU, 2020). Europe is founded in multiculturalism and its motto, "united in diversity" translates this.[1]

Managing cultural diversity in a society can assume different approaches (Khin, 2019). Currently, multiculturalism and interculturalism are related in many ways (Joppke, 2018) although they represent different approaches. The idea of intercultural dialogue is "the heart of interculturalism". (Grillo, 2017).

The prefixes "multi-" and "inter-", etymologically, mean, respectively, "many" and "between or among" (OED, 1989). Cultural diversity is, so, related to many people and among people, etymologically. We may say that, with many people and among people, cultural diversity is the key of interculturalism or multiculturalism.

Erasmus+ program is one of the most succeeded European programmes. One of the specific objectives of Erasmus+ is "to improve the teaching and learning of languages and to promote the Union's broad linguistic diversity and intercultural awareness." (EU, 2013, pp. 58, Chap.II, article 5, e)

Interculturality, we may say, is inseparable from Europe.

II. Intensive programmes organization: challenges to interculturalism

One of the activities of a Strategic Partnership KA2 Erasmus+ programme is the development of Intensive Study Programmes (ISP) in each of the Universities partners in the Consortium.

[1] Vide https://europa.eu/european-union/sites/europaeu/files/eu_in_slides_en.pdf

"An Intensive Study Programme (ISP) is a short programme of study which brings together students and teaching staff from participating higher education institutions as well as other relevant invited experts/specialist/professionals in order to:

— encourage efficient and multinational teaching of specialist topics;

— enable students and teachers to work together in multinational and multidisciplinary groups and so benefit from special learning and teaching conditions not available in a single institution, and to gain new perspectives on the topic being studied;

— allow members of the teaching staff to exchange views on teaching content, new curricula approaches, to test innovative teaching methods that could eventually become part of a newly devised joint course or curriculum in an international classroom environment." (Comission, 2020, p. 298)

The organization and implementation of an Intensive Study Programme is full of challenges, in order to accomplish the purposes of this activity in an intercultural environment.

Among the many lines of action developed inside the Erasmus 3 Economy + Project, within the framework of KA2 Strategic Partnerships in the Higher Education sector, three international meetings have been held consecutively in both participating countries: Spain, 2018; Portugal, 2019; Malta, 2020.

The first was held in Melilla, the Spanish geographical location participating in this initiative, from 3rd to 8th July, the week in which an ambitious programme of academic and non-academic activities linked to one of the flagship themes project, namely the economy, was developed. It should be taken into account that the following sessions would deal with Marketing (Portalegre, Portugal) and Tourism (Malta).

In this first meeting the local and foreign members of the project participated, both from the student group (8 Spanish students, 8 Portuguese students, 7 Maltese students) and the teaching staff (6 teachers from the University of Granada linked to the campus of Melilla, 4 from Portugal, 2 from Malta). Likewise, external specialists linked to public and private institutional bodies in the Autonomous City of Melilla collaborated, giving some of the monographic talks and conferences.

The main objective of this international event was for all the members of the team to have a face-to-face meeting —with a few exceptions— to exchange all the progress made in the development of the project since it was launched and to get to know in situ the economic and cultural reality of one of the three scenarios on which the scope of the work proposals, Melilla, is based.

1. Activities carried out at the first international meeting

The two distinguished training programmes, the Intensive Study Programme and The Transnational meeting were held, where, in workshops on the objectives set in the project, there has been done a presentation of the economic aspects of each city; analysis of the most basic aspects of the leading companies in the three cities; External Quality Commission; inter-group work on economic aspects; Experiences in Spanish; Project Management Committee.

Also, the programme included sessions of Spanish language classes (only aimed at foreign students), through interactive seminars in which the development of the four language skills was promoted: speaking, listening, reading and writing. The programme preview conferences on different topics:

— Tourism in the Autonomous City of Melilla; Management and control of sign in the port of Melilla.
— Port activity (activity of a free port).
    • Information and Communication Systems in Melilla's port management (INTEGRA2 and DUEPORT).
— Relations between the entrepreneur and the Public Administration.
— The digital transformation in the city of Melilla; Taxation in Free Ports.
— Why the internationalization of our universities.

As 2018 was the European Year of Cultural Heritage, Cultural activities within the framework of the celebration of the European Year of Cultural Heritage were developed, in order to include this event in the Intensive Study Programme. For that, participants had the opportunity of see the projection of the video made previously, in collaboration with the Department of Culture and Festivities of the Autonomous City of Melilla, regarding the celebration of the European Year of Cultural Heritage: House tour. Also, some cultural activities were performed, showing Melilla as a very special place of Interculturality, from the past till the present, where different religions coexist and even incorporate cultural habits of the populations across times, as of the four most representative cultures of the city through its temples (Jewish synagogue, Muslim mosque, Hindu temple, Christian church). Melilla is also an architectonic living museum, with special attention to the modernist features that make it the second Spanish enclave in buildings of this artistic trend, after Barcelona. Melilla.

The Intensive Programme had also an institutional level, where academic and local authorities, from government, public institutions and private companies participate in this ISP.

As it can be seen, multiple and diverse activities were supported for the development of the first Intensive Program of the 3Economy+ Project, held in Melilla. Given the characteristics of the project, the aim was not only to bring together a series of strictly academic and training activities, but also to make known the social, economic and cultural peculiarities of a city like Melilla, where multiculturalism is one of the most outstanding facets of the Spanish city located in North Africa. In this respect, the intention to participate in the European Year of Cultural Heritage was also taken into account. Hence, the insistence on including the above-mentioned cultural activities in the programme.

Needless to add, that without the active collaboration of the government of the Autonomous City of Melilla, many of the planned tasks would not have been carried out. Therefore, once again, now in this publication, explicit thanks are made to the Presidency of the city and, above all, to the Ministry of the Presidency and Public Health, the Ministry of Culture and Festivities, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, the Ministry of Economy, Employment and Public Administration; the Vice-Ministry of Women and Youth, the Tourist Board; the Port Authority of Melilla; IMSERSO, PROMESA. Other local private entities that also collaborated were: Frithman Stylo, Africa Travel, CIAMSA Mercedes-Benz. In addition to the cooperation of all of them, we must add the work carried out by the media (radio, TV and press), which echoed the event, not only during its development but also with regard to the previous tasks of presentation and dissemination. The collaboration of the UGR was also welcomed, especially by the Vice-Rector's Office for Internationalisation and the University Canteen Service, which depends on the current Vice-Rector's Office for Environmental Quality, Welfare and Sport.

In order to gather information about the opinion that the participants could give in this respect and, most importantly, to analyse the detection of weaknesses and proposals to improve, the participants were given assessment questionnaires.

In spite of the accumulated wear and tear that the entire organization of the event entailed, due to the heterogeneity of the elements incorporated and the initial problems of limited financing, the members of the organizing team were satisfied with the result, given that, despite being aware of unexpected events and, of course, unavoidable deficiencies and setbacks were heroically overcome, they were handled.

2. The second Intensive Study Programme – Portalegre, Portugal

The second Intensive Study Programme was developed in Portalegre, Portugal, in Instituto Politécnico de Portalegre, partner of the Consortium. Portalegre is a small town distant 250 Km from Lisbon and nearby Spain, situated in the North part of Alentejo.

> "The vastness of the landscape is dotted with cork oaks and olive trees that withstand time". (Portugal, 2020)

It's an historic land, with walled towns, such as Marvão, and castles that are witness to the Arab influences. Elvas, second important town of the region, has important Roman marks and military architecture, and is listed as World Heritage by UNESCO. Also, Castelo de Vide is a small village where the former Jewish quarters are an important testimony of past times. This region is a land of intercultural heritage and organizing an Intensive Study Programme in this region was an opportunity to develop studies in an international environment in a land where the participants could recognize their ancestors.

This ISP had sessions from participants of the consortium and also invited experts in Marketing, all professionals with a national reputation.

Students and teachers could also work together in multinational and multidisciplinary groups, in working sessions or "hand-on" sessions, gaining not only new perspectives but also taking profit of a multicultural environment, where the results obtained from the work of the group as a whole are more fruitful than the work produced by sum of the parts.

Also, the students were able to have linguistic formation in Portuguese in linguistic immersion, in an international classroom environment.

The Master Classes of this ISP were open to other national students and academic staff, enlarging the work developed within the 3 economy+ project and allowing a more dissemination of the project in the host academic community, favouring transfer of competences to outside public.

One main challenge in the logistic planning of the Intensive Programme was the linguistic support of activities. All academic activities were developed in English, with linguistic support in Spanish for those who could need it. All the menus were translated into Spanish and English, even those from restaurants that didn't have the menus in foreign languages. The languages of communication were, mainly, English and Spanish, and Portuguese, in a more basic level.

The second main challenge was the application of food restrictions resulting from religious or cultural guidance. The participants in this Intensive Study Programme are members of several religions and all the religious indications to food restrictions were strictly observed. Also, vegetarian and vegan options were always available, in an absolute respect of multicultural ways of living.

Concerning the Study part of the Programme, the activities, working sessions, master classes and others were developed in English, with a linguistic support of translation, when needed.

The 3rd main challenge of the organization of the 2nd ISP in Portalegre was related to transportation. Portalegre is distant 250km from Lisbon and the nearest airport is in Spain, in Badajoz, distant 80kms, where there are only two flights per day from Madrid or Barcelona. The geographic localization of Portalegre was a big constraint in flight planning with low budget.

In spite of the constraints, the challenges were all supplanted and organizing the Intensive Study Programme in Portalegre was a very motivated opportunity.

The 3rd Intensive Study Programme will be held in University of Malta, in the Island of Malta, and it will be the last ISP of this project.

3. The third Intensive Study Programme – University of Malta, Malta

The third IP, accompanied by the Trans National Meeting for academics and other profesionals, also aimed at addressing the overall aims of nurturing intercultural dialogue through collaboration and the exchange of best practice. The main activities of the week-long event consisted of the following:

- Addresses and interactive lectures by the chairperson and key academics staff at the University of Malta Institute for Tourism, Travel & Culture.
- An address, a lecture and a guided visit by one of the leading hotel CEOs in Malta, himself a former and current student of the Institute.
- A day-long visit to the capital city Valletta, European Capital of Culture in 2018, including addresses by managers of regeneration projects like the Valletta Design Cluster and the Museum of Archaeology.

— A day-long visit to the cities of Rabat and Mdina, including Roman, Arabic, Medieval and Baroque settlements as well as a guided tour of Palazzo Falson, a heritage home and museum.
— A variety of communal meals ranging in style, cultural influence and preparation to reflect current cosmopolitanism and intercultural exchange in Malta and the Mediterranean.

The main dimension of this wrap-up IP consisted of the possibility of participants to reflect upon their journey and explore new ways of making practical what had been learnt in theory. A great deal of time was spent engaging in discussion and analysis with regard to case studies and practical problems ranging from the future of museums and activism on a global scale thanks to an inspiring lecture by Dr Sandro Debono, to a reflection on the economic changes experienced by small, multicultural centres such as Malta, including the problems raised by overtourism and overdevelopment.

III. Conclusion

Organizing an Intensive Study Programme is always a very challenging and committed task in order to accomplish all the activities in a short period of time with low budget, bringing together students, teachers, experts and invited people from elsewhere. These are very rich opportunities to have multinational and transcultural moments in order to develop a common work, based in a plural multidisciplinary approach. Organizing an Intensive Study Programme is also a privilege of allowing an intercultural academic and professional environment to the participants, fostering interaction of students, teachers and professionals from different countries, different cultures and different backgrounds.

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SECTION II

GOOD PRACTICES IN THE 3ECONOMY+ STUDENT'S PROFILE AND TRAINING

CHAPTER 5
CROSSCURRICULAR SKILLS IN ECONOMICS, MARKETING & TOURISM

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I. Introduction

One of the most important elements in one's education is gaining experience. Experience of a direct kind, through exposure to a work environment and learning by looking, and expecially doing, is a great asset to a young student charting their career paths in particular areas of interest to them. However, in many contemporary societies, and equivalent work spaces, a great deal of flexibility is encountered and called for by individuals, and groups, taking part in social structures, be they addressing paid work, student experiences such as internships, voluntary work or other forms of social collaboration.

II. Flexibility in making connections

The 'liquid' nature of our age, to borrow a term from the late Polish sociologist and philosopher Zygmunt Bauman, which he applied to our modernity to signify the changeable and changing nature of our social and technological contexts, spur us on to resist narrow foci on particular skills, and engage in what may be described as a diffused approach to education, training and work. Therefore, the development of crosscurricular skills, which are the subject of this chapter, are fundamental to engage with work environments we do not only inherit, but create through cooperation, collaboration and co-working.

A key contributing factor to this highly volatile environment, which is in constant flux, is the globalised and interconnected nature of our world. The island of Malta, which has been a member of the European Union (EU) since 2004, may be described as a microcosm of this larger reality. International economic and financial interests and investments have made society, and industry in general, highly diversified in cultural terms, complex and inter-disciplinary. High levels of mobility, economic and political migration, global transfers of money, transnational political agreements that enable and encourage cross-border collaboration and investment and global activities that range from business interests to activism (think of climate change for example) engage young people in multiple ways. The rapid rate of technological change only adds to the need to keep up and stay on one's toes. As noted, this is characteristic of our contemporary age. As argued by David Harvey about our postmodern era, roughly dated to the early 1970s, at least at the time mostly applicable to the Western world, tradition struggles to keep up with novelty and changing working methods. People are under pressure to remember, save and value anything from the past they may feel is worthwhile preserving and appying to the present, and the future.

The term 'crosscurricular' is itself a challenging term because it refers to a description of past ways of educating oneself, while hinting at current and future approaches. Curricula are rarely the structured, immobile and rigid learning paths that may have featured in education institutions' agendas and prospecti years ago. Today, in the light of higher education organisations' constant forays into competitive markets providing traditional, online and blended learning educational programmes, universities and other institutions are regularly adapting to dynamic work environments and market requirements by altering and improving their education programmes to respond, as quickly and efficiently as possible, to economic and financial demands.

III. 3Economy+ and adopting a wide angle approach

The areas of economics, marketing and tourism, addressed in a very timely fashion by the 3Economy+ project within the Erasmus+ programme, is symptomatic of current developments in crosscurricular programmes and higher education bodies responding to changes in the market. The joint programme crafted by the University of Granada with its campuses in Granada and Melilla, the Polytechnic Institute in Portalegre and the University of Malta are aware that young people in today's peripheral, Mediterranean zones stand to benefit from an investment in their crosscurricular skills and an approach which is wide-angled and encourages the understanding of complex, multicultural and dnyamic social and working contexts.

A great deal of effort, and many resources, are nowadays dedicated to professionalising the different stages young people go through in developing their educational path and gaining the necessary skills with which to adapt to changing work environments. Particular skills in areas of high sensitivity, be they in micro-economic aspects, macro-economic assessments, digital marketing for particular demands and needs by clients and the various areas of tourism at a time when sustainability, cultural sensitivity and personalised itineraries are paramount, are necessary. Crosscurricular approaches cannot cut corners and prefer low-level, generalised education that camouflages itself as diverse and wide. A balance still needs to be struck between highly specialised competence in particular areas of knowledge and practice, and a wide perspective on the changing, wide-ranging demands of today's markets.

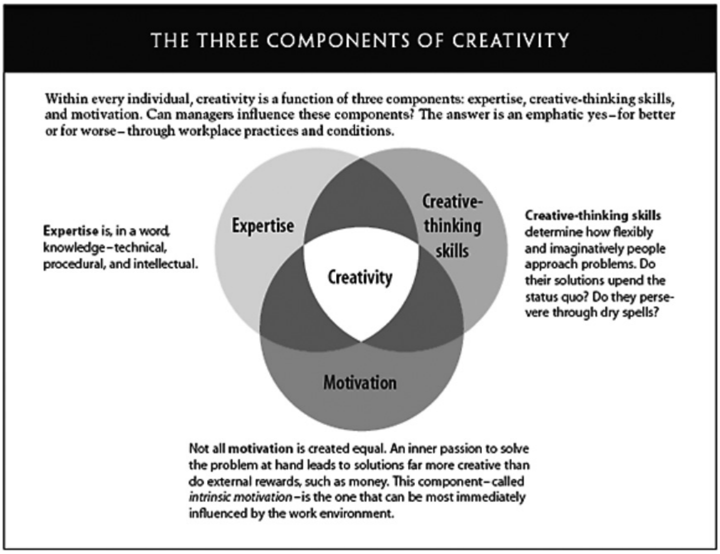
IV. Striking a balance between technical and deeper aspects

One other important challenge of crosscurricular developments relates to resisting the temptation to focus on technical issues that are disconnected from the human element. The 'what' still needs to be accompanied by the inquiring and investigative thrust into the value of why technical matters are to be tackled through particular solutions. It is easy, tempting and relatively common practice to focus crosscurricular education on generating a plethora of solutions to technical problems that however are disconnected from deep, long-term repercussions on human as well as environmental well-being.

The European Commission (2018) reflects on the great significance that a crosscurricular approach may bring to the formation of new European citizens within the changing landscape in and around Europe through one of the more dynamic areas of value, namely culture that is applied to societial relations. In 'A New European Agenda for Culture', we read that:

'Culture promotes active citizenship, common values, inclusion and intercultural dialogue within Europe and across the globe. It brings people together, including newly arrived refugees and other migrants, and helps us feel part of communities. Culture and creative industries also have the power to improve lives, transform communities, generate jobs and growth, and create spill over effects in other economic sectors.'

As illustrated in figure 1 adopted from the classic diagram by Amabile (1998) addressing the value of a creative approach to crosscurricular education in the European territories, an awareness of the multiple components that are necessary to engage with education and skill development through an educational path that encourages curiosity, application of practical examples and the movitational factor on personal and group bases is crucial. Following this tryptic approach, 3Economy+ shadows and foreshadows developments in the dynamic way a blended type of education may support young people, researchers and academics in going beyond standard practice and seeking innovative ways at improving skills and exploring new frontiers.



https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Three-components-of-creativity-adapted-from-Amabile-1998-p-78_fig1_324093058

However, a warning bell should also call one to caution. A regular check on methods applied is needed, particularly with regard to scientific approaches to the development of technical assessments of learning in the fields of economy, marketing and tourism, including those based on the assement of competence and the output of students and general learners. On this subject, the Spanish philosopher and essayist Marina Garcés (2017) warns how:

'Education, knowledge and science sink, today, in a loss of prestige. They can resurface only if they can show they can offer workable, technical and economic solutions. Solutionism is the alibi of a knowledge that has lost the attribution of making us better, as people and as a society. We no longer believe this is possible, and therefore only ask for solutions and more solutions. We do not believe we can improve ourselves, but only gain more or less privileges in a span of time that goes nowhere, because we have given up on aiming for a better future.'[1]

[1] 'La educación, el saber y la ciencia se hundan también, hoy, en un desprestigio del que solo pueden salvarse si se muestran capaces de ofrecer soluciones laborales, soluciones técnicas, soluciones económicas. El solucionismo es la coartada (alibi) de un saber que ha perdido la atribución de hacernos mejores, como personas y como sociedad. Ya no creemos en ello y por eso le pedimos soluciones y nada más que soluciones. No contamos ya con hacernos mejores a nosotros mismos sino solamente en obtener más o menos privilegios en un tiempo que no va a ninguna parte, porque ha renunciado a apuntar a un futuro mejor.'

V. Conclusion

Therefore, the temptation of solutionism is a sirens' call to a promised land of technical comfort, which however may hide pains and discomforts that may threaten long-term and engaging development of an educational kind that is meaningful and which has real impact on the fields of economy, marketing and tourism being studied. For example, the Maltese context, within the larger EU one, is not immune to regular changes to state-set curricula, to be implemented by the various private, church as well as public stakeholders. One recent debate relates to changes to the 16+ phase of educational pathways that has drawn support and criticism for changes that on the one hand prioritise STEM[2] and linguistic competences 'earmarking employability in current and foreseeable economic opportunities based on trending growth in the service industries of finance and tourism, including blockchain technology and global investment, while on the other a call for greater sensitivity to personal skills within multicultural environments and the careful preservation of critical thinking and approaches to education itself, in a way distinct and going beyond present circumstance, to allow for innovative and unforeseen skills development to be engaged in. [3]

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2 Science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

3 https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/the-arts-upstaged-by-communication-skills-raphael-vella.722095 (accessed 20 July 2019); https://www.maltatoday.com.mt/news/national/96372/academics_rubbish_postsecondary_reform_proposed_by_matsec#.XTK_rugzbIU (accessed 20 July 2019).

CHAPTER 6

CURRENT STATE OF HE PROGRAMMES, LABOUR MARKET AND DIGITIZATION

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I. Introduction

Nowadays, we live the called *Fourth Industrial Revolution* or *Industry 4.0* that is characterized by data changes, automatization and digitization of technologies, and the Internet of things (IoT) (Morrar, Arman and Mousa, 2017). This new era has affected not only to the global economy, but also society. Connectivity, access information and immediacy in communications, and the resizing of space and time have generated a revolution in social relations (Trillo Prárraga, 2016) that also affects to the labour market.

The focus of the economy transformation is the user: digital economy is centred on the user's experience, in a dynamic culture attentive to changes in the environment that relies in the use of ICT and data analysis (CRUE, 2017). So, business management relies more and more on digital platforms, in which information systems, data analytics platforms, IoT and platforms for customer experience are integrated (LeHong *et al.*, 2016).

In this context, new digital competences are needed to manage this transformation. This digital age is complex and would require a flexible education encouraging creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship in students, while training them with the necessary skills for the changing labour market and in which continuous learning is imposed (Orange Foundation, 2016). In this sense, education must be compatible with the level of technological development implemented in the economy and society (Muzyleva, Yazykova and Penkov, 2019) and Higher Education (HE) programmes must be uploaded considering this new trend.

In this milieu, the *3Economy+* project, funded by Erasmus+ KA2 Strategic Association Project for Higher Education from the European Union and coordinated by the University of Granada (Spain), with the participation of the Polytechnic Institute of Portalegre (Portugal) and the University of Malta, tries to develop an e-learning methodology helping the student to improve their professional profile and employability. So, this chapter tries to analyse a key aspect in HE student training for a more competitive, global and technological world, imposed by *Industry 4.0*.

II. Objectives

The main objectives of this chapter are the following ones:

— To contextualize the actual labour market.
— To analyse the digitization of the Higher Education.
— To evaluate the consecution of the 3economy+ objectives in the context of the digital HE.

III. Digitization and labour market

The disruption of technology into business has originated a new environment characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA) in which organizations must adapt (CRUE, 2017), specially the traditional hierarchical working model.

In this sense, the state level of digitization will set the adaptation of the economy and the labour to this new reality. To measure the level of digitization, the European Union created in 2015 the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI), which is a composite index summarising relevant indicators on digital performance for EU member states. It measures five dimensions: connectivity (broadband infrastructure and its quality), human capital (digital skills), use of internet services (online activities, such as the consumption of online content, video calls, online shopping or banking), integration of digital technology (digitisation of businesses and e-commerce) and digital public services (digitisation of public services).

Regarding data from DESI Report 2019, "all EU countries improved their digital performance" (European Commission, 2019a). As can be seen in Figure 1, which presents the DESI 2019 ranking, Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands, and Denmark are the global leaders in digitalisation, reaching the highest ratings scores. Considering the three partners of the *3Economy+* project, Malta and Spain reach the position 10th and 11th out of the 28 EU Member States in the Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI) 2019, respectively. However, Portugal is ranked the 19th. Regarding their evolution (Table 1), all of them have improved their scores but not their position. Comparing with DESI 2018 all partners maintain their position in the ranking but regarding DESI 2017, both Malta and Portugal worsened while Spain improved.

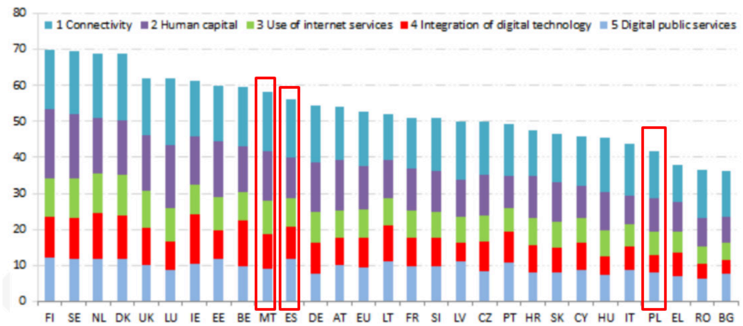

Figure 1. DESI 2019 ranking
Source: European Commission (2019a).

	Malta		Spain		Portugal		EU
	Rank	**Score**	**Rank**	**Score**	**Rank**	**Score**	**Rank**
DESI 2019	10	58.1	11	56.1	19	49.2	52.5
DESI 2018	10	56.6	11	53.2	19	46.8	49.8
DESI 2017	8	55.0	13	49.1	17	44.8	49.8

Table 1. DESI 2019 ranking: Malta, Spain and Portugal
Source: European Commission (2019b, 2019c, 2019d).

Analysing the dimensions of the composite index, Malta performs above the EU average in four of the five dimensions (connectivity, human capital, use of internet services and integration of digital technology), Spain in three (connectivity, integration of digital technology and digital public services), and Portugal in two (integration of digital technology and digital public services) (European Commission, 2019b, 2019c, 2019d).

Focusing on human capital, Malta is one of the highest ranked mainly because of the great number of ICT graduates (European Commission, 2019b). Spain is under the EU mean in this area because "around a fifth of its citizens are not yet connected and close to half of the population still lacks basic digital skills", in spite of the increase in demand in the labour market of ICT specialists (European Commission, 2019b: 3). The weakly performance of Portugal in the human capital (as well as in the use of internet services dimensions) is partly explicated by "the relatively large number of people who do not use the internet on a regular basis" (European Commission, 2019d: 3). So, digital skills indexes, that are intrinsically related to the adaptation of the labour to the *4.0 Industry,* are very different among countries.

In this context, technological transformation has led to the idea of a new division of labour: digital and human work, being dedicated the latter one to activities that require problem solving, intuition, creativity, persuasion, adaptability situational, improvisation in changing and complex environments, visual and natural language recognition, interpersonal communication, sensitivity, affection and empathy, skills that are difficult to replicate by machines (CES, 2017). Additionally, digitization has also originated an increase in the demand for highly skilled labour in the areas of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) and basic computer knowledge (CES, 2017, Randstad, 2020a). Specifically, the main labour profiles demanded in 2020 are professionals related to data and business analytics —related to Big Data and business management—, technology development and cybersecurity —platform developers and hacking-, machine learning trainer —related to robotization—, HR data analyst —responsible for building models to streamline cultural transformation in organizations— and FinOps -optimization of cloud resources related to management and finance— (Randstad, 2020b).

Nevertheless, new labour market trend is affected also by globalization (Randstad, 2020a), around 40% of business sector workers produces goods and services to meet a final demand originated in other countries (OECD, 2017, OECD, 2019) and, urbanization, since most qualified professionals are concentrating into most populated areas (Randstad, 2020a). At the same time, the contract flexibility (partial-time workers, independent workers, etc.) and aging population are as well key elements into the definition of new profiles (Randstad, 2020a).

Thus, the new challenges for the Higher Education system is not only related with a digitization of the process, but also to consider offering new graduate profiles according to the new labour market trend, taking into that not only digital competences are required, but also business management knowledge and skills are also needed. At the same time, HE must to prepare students with mobility-related skills (within and outside country borders) as well as adaptability to new market conditions.

IV. Digitization of Higher Education

According to data by Global Center for Digital Business Transformation, the education sector presents an intermediate level in terms of impact of digital disruption in 2020 (DBT, 2015). Although public education institutions are adapting its activities to the *Fourth Industrial Revolution*, the technology disruption in education is also mainly due to the educational technology companies (ed-tech) (Orange Foundation, 2016). The global e-learning market continues showing strong growth rates being expected that in 2020 it reaches $68.8 billion (OBS, 2020). In this context, different educational initiatives adapted to digitization has emerged such as MOOCS, virtual learning environments, etc. and HE institutions are implementing these tools in their teaching activities.

In the specific context of HE, digitization is having a great impact on the way in which universities carry out their training, research and management and it is profoundly changing the way in which relations between members of the university community and of these with the rest of society are produced (CRUE, 2017). Specifically, in the educational process, the main problem is bringing together the two subjects involved: teachers and students, who are separated by a huge generation gap (Muzyleva, Yazykova and Penkov, 2019).

And it is that the “Z Generation” is already in the university (CRUE, 2017). This generation is a naturally digital and connected group, with immediate access to information and used to using it for decision —making, and with a high degree of collaboration among colleagues using digital resources (Barnes and Noble College, 2017). With regard to the new profile of students, it must be considered that the digital literacy of young people cannot be seen as a mere mechanical process of acquiring instrumental skills, but rather corresponds to the construction of meanings through the new mediation devices (Domínguez, 2014).

Therefore, HE must to empower students to develop higher-level skills in a given field of knowledge (Domínguez and Álvarez, 2012) that in this new era must include cloud computing, virtual and augmented reality, big data, artificial intelligence, and the Internet of things (Muzyleva, Yazykova and Penkov, 2019, Abad-Segura *et al.*, 2020).

V. Discussion and Conclusions

In this chapter we have tried to contextualize the actual *Industry 4.0* into the labour market and Higher Education in order to discuss, in this section, how the *3Economy+* project contributes to the learning process within a digital context and which can be the challenges and opportunities of economics HE programmes in this digital era.

Considering the *Economy+* project, it is focused on three geographical zones: Melilla (Spain), Portalegre (Portugal) and Malta, and on three areas: Economy, Marketing and Tourism. Students from each University received online training about these issues along the duration of the project —3 years— as well as language training, mainly focused on English, but also Spanish and Portuguese. For this purpose, the project has relied on an online platform (Moodle) in which teachers and students interact in the different courses, each one has its own online material, training videos recorded by the teachers and a series of activities related with the different contents. Additionally, students made internships in diverse public organizations and firms along three countries involved into the project, favouring their external mobility.

Regarding the digitization of labour market and HE, the main contributions of this project are:

1. Online training: courses are completely online so students participating in this project are used to apply virtual learning environment favouring the acquisition of digital skills for their future. In this sense, HE institutions usually combine traditional teaching with online platforms, that are relegated as a support of the teaching. Indeed, with the actual crisis provoked by the COVID-19, European universities have been forced to offer full online teaching, causing serious adaptation problems both for teachers and for students. However, this kind of initiatives such as *3Economy+* project favours the adaptation to this situation.
2. Language training and mobility: globalization and digitization are linked and labour market demands professionals with language skills and available to move along the world. This project has favoured these two points, giving to students the opportunity of broaden their capabilities.
3. Cooperation and coworking: in the digitization era cooperative skills are also required, as flexibility and adaptation to changing environments demand professional profiles capable to work into interdisciplinary groups. In this sense, *3Economy+* project relies on the group work, interacting between people from different countries.

Finally, although HE institutions are adapting to the *Industry 4.0*, labour market demands specific professional profiles combining STEM skills as well as economic and business management knowledge. In this sense, more and more universities are focusing on ICT degrees and its combination with Economy degrees, increasing the offer of double-degrees. In this sense, a new debate is opened into the HE system considering the digitization into the economic HE programmes, as data mining is nowadays very important in the business management.

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CHAPTER 7
PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

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I. Introduction

In an increasingly global and competitive world, the training and availability of qualified human resources is becoming a strategic development factor. This development of human capital is increasingly recognized as necessary in the face of the challenges of globalization and the knowledge-based society.

Within this framework, the 3Economy+ Project, coordinated by the University of Granada, was selected by the European Union as an Erasmus+ KA2 Strategic Partnership Project for Higher Education. This project has a duration of 3 years (2017 - 2020). The Polytechnic Institute of Portalegre and the University of Malta participate as partners in the project. It is an innovative project with the aim of developing a student-centered methodology and competency-based learning to improve students' professional profile.

II. Objectives

Achieving one of the objectives considered relevant defined in this partnership is related to the need to develop a varied set of skills that allow participants to face the challenges of society in constant change that characterizes the current world. The complexification of the economy, the globalization of relations and information, the accelerated scientific and technological progress have been the main support of this new society.

In view of these challenges, the relevance of this project is linked to the urgency of providing individuals with skills not only of a scientific and technical nature, but also of a personal and relational nature, skills called transversal or soft skills. These have the potential to allow adaptation to a world of permanent requalification and learning by developing individuals in a holistic way, causing personal development. That is, people who, in addition to having high technical and scientific competence in areas of expertise, reveal capacities for social and cultural adaptation and a high capacity for initiative and risk assessment. The acquisition and development of transversal skills is, therefore, considered as a preparation for life.

III. Framework

In the context of today's specialized society, professional performance tends to be increasingly observed, measured and evaluated. The skills developed in training have strong repercussions on professional performance, implying that the need for an intimate combination of training activities and professional activities. Vocational training thus becomes an essential variable for the student's development, not only professional, but also personal and social. This means that, through training, the aim is to increase the student's skills globally, improve qualification levels and increase professional performance. As a result, the training and qualification of human resources plays a key role in economic growth, social cohesion, competitiveness and employment. This importance is recognized when the European Union, which aims to be guided by a dynamic knowledge-based economy, argues that training in general, and vocational training in particular, should be one of the priorities in all countries of the Union.

Starting from, perhaps, the most consensual of the multiple existing definitions of competence as this being knowledge in action (a knowledge in use), by Perrenoud, 1995, a study of meta-analysis of the existing literature is presented, as a theoretical basis for the development of the project.

Several studies have been carried out in the context of the problem of the development of transversal competencies, in which it can be concluded that:

— the development of transversal competences is not only related to formal, institutionalized training practices. Everything indicates that they develop in different contexts, from formal, non-formal and informal situations;
— the more varied and stimulating the situations experienced, the greater the likelihood that these skills will be acquired and developed in an integrated manner;
— transversal skills, taken as a whole, interact with each other making the use of knowledge more effective and appropriate;
— in the development of transversal skills, socialization processes are involved in concrete and real situations, so that experience and learning through experience, in this case, are particularly relevant;
— the fundamental characteristics of these competences are transversality, transferability and flexibility. That is, the ability to adapt to different contexts and organizations and the use of skills in similar contexts;
— training practices can be a starting point for the development of transversal skills;
— the attitudes and behaviors expressed are translators of transversal competences;
— the ability to take a critical exam and to understand everything that happens in a given context, the ability to learn, to self-control, concern for others, the perception and interperception in personal relationships, knowledge of the meaning of evolution and collective dynamisms in order to be able to modify attitudes of relationship, understanding, analysis and participation in the contextual problems, quick and better adaptation to new situations fit the transversal skills;

— communication, responsibility, autonomy, creativity, initiative, perseverance, organization, criticism, leadership, persuasion, self-confidence, flexibility, adaptability, motivation, satisfactory interpersonal relationships, socialization, teamwork and problem-solving skills, criteria for appreciation, looking for information to learn, asking questions, being open-minded to internal and external influences and new ideas, are essential factors for mobilizing transversal skills.

We start from the concept of professional training as any form of education that qualifies for a profession, trade or job. This concept stands out for the breadth of this concept of professional training, including all vocational training, including that promoted by higher education, which is considered as higher professional training. This is based on the assumption that it is necessary to overcome the dichotomous and false discourse that opposes higher education to professional training.

Professional training and higher education are directly involved in the evolution of society and the points of convergence are increasing. The modernization of the economic system imposes more and more imperative demands from the sectors that drive a continuous update, specifically the sectors linked to cultural, scientific and technological development.

Considering the strong incidence and interdependence between higher education, the training promoted and society, the complementarity and collaboration of the various agents involved, are factors that contribute to the mutual development of each part of the system. The existence of strong and positive bilateral institutional relations between the training and production systems is indispensable and constitutes an important demonstrative element of the quality of the training promoted. Collaborative planning of training between labor organizations and the training system, seeking consistency between the content of training and the necessary qualifications, joint training and assessment activities, training times, contracts, the functions of the teacher and tutor in the company, it is in the interest of all those involved, namely students, in their process of transition from higher education to integration into the world of work.

Higher education, due to its potential to build knowledge, must seek to respond to the challenges of the future within the scope of social responsibility inherent to it, with the aim of contributing to the evolution that society needs. One cannot ignore the demands and consequences of new societal challenges, but build a space for interconnection and interdependence, integrating academic excellence and responding to requests from the productive fabric. Therefore, we are facing institutions that are obliged to overcome any type of enlistment. In order to fulfill their basic functions, they need an openness and flexibility to assume responsibilities, in collaboration with economic and social agents, in the development of the initial training of professionals. This is becoming more and more demanding, asking to open this training to the outside world, to increase the quality and effectiveness of training systems, which allows us to face the challenges posed by globalization.

The internship in the company is a way of opening professional training to the outside world. It constitutes a fundamental part of the initial training of professionals, being an irreplaceable phase of induction in the profession and in this logic, its role must by all means be valued. In this sense, opening the company's doors so that students can get to know the world of work and develop their skills is an essential requirement for professional training and for the transition from higher education to the real world of work. This transition, through an internship, can be considered as a global process of complementarity of initial training, which leads the student still in his first steps to employment through integration into the work environment. In this integration, students obtain in-depth information about the characteristics of work and professional opportunities. They are confronted with the existing rules, even the implicit ones, the codes and the values of the work. At this stage of training, students begin to build their professional identity by accepting or rejecting what they have experienced and to outline goals for their future. These procedures are part of a complex context of individual and collective, social, economic, institutional and technical socialization.

Training individuals as competent professionals requires incorporating professional experience into the training process itself, without which skills are not acquired. The focus on competence-based vocational training has meant a step forward towards placing more emphasis on the overall training of the individual and the reconstruction of training content in a more productive, less academic and more oriented towards solving socio-professional problems, without decrease academic knowledge, but complement it. If higher education intends to undertake professional training, do not abandon the language of knowledge, but integrate it into the more general language of competences. The mobilization of knowledge in complex real-world situations involves other cognitive resources that are part of professional knowledge or experiential knowledge, in addition to academic knowledge.

Professional training started to be based on competences as a methodology for exploring productive knowledge. The teaching-learning process is redefined in the light of the new theory of training for the skills and practical applications of this pedagogical approach are at the center of the new challenges of a democratic society.

In the orientation of training towards skills, the teacher remains a key element in the mediation between knowledge and learning. This is developed in a concrete context of demanding new organizational modalities, integrated in means that allow interaction with students as protagonists and builders of their own learning. There is recognition and the need for a new perspective of the teacher's role in the learning dynamics. The formative possibilities of ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies) allow the teacher to be freed from repetitive, strictly informative tasks, not reducing them, but reconverting them within the teaching-learning process. Tutoring, guidance, motivation, programming, and evaluation appear with new prominence. The relational dynamics stands out in the teacher's performance and not so much in the transmission of knowledge. The role of training strategy changes, but it does not disappear. Consequently, new roles for the teacher emerge: instructor, tutor, technological expert, administrator, documentalist, evaluator, designer, document editor.

With the new role as a professional, the teacher also needs new skills to develop properly in such complex contexts, where reflexivity and questioning must be the fundamental attitudes in his professional routine. The teacher's task, characterized by supporting professional training on a broader basis of knowledge and the development of transversal skills, is based on the teacher's ability to adapt to the combination of the training system and the production system, certifying with transparency the qualifications really acquired. , as well as recognizing the transferability of these qualifications. His daily life implies the mastery of several skills such as: technological skills (knowing how to make or use the tools of new educational technologies, mastering information and communication technologies); social and communication skills (feedback, group dynamics processes, teamwork, negotiation, interpersonal relationships, emotional, social and behavioral intelligence); theoretical skills (new knowledge and new theories of learning in professional situations); psycho pedagogical skills (teaching methods with the help of computerized multimedia tools, self-training tutoring and monitoring methods, professional guidance, professional development techniques, methods of individualized learning, etc.).

IV. Conclusion

In summary, higher education and the vocational training system complement each other with the social partners to respond to individual and social training needs. They are integrated according to fundamental criteria: openness to the outside, flexibility, collaboration, versatility, responding to the demands not only of the current ones, but also of those coming from a future characterized by continuous change in which nothing is definitive and the emergence of new training needs constitutes a feature.

In order for an individual to be considered competent, he will have to mobilize a diverse set of skills taking into account the contexts, resources and the type of activity to be developed. That is, competent people are those who, in addition to high technical and scientific competence in areas of specialty, reveal skills of social and cultural adaptation and high skills of initiative, of knowing how to take risks and to control those risks. Thus, to be competent it is essential to master the scientific and technical dimension of your work, but what makes the difference is to be responsible, autonomous, creative and with relational capacity, to solve tasks and problems, to have the capacity and willingness to participate in an acting in context. Being competent implies the mobilization of attitudes, as an essential factor for the development of this dimension, such as: flexibility, reflection and self-criticism, openness to innovation and research, learning to learn, dialogue and respect for difference.

In this project, transnational mobility provides contact with a very wide range of specific situations and concrete problems in different countries, so that students and teachers can become aware of the diversity and the need for quick and effective decision-making. Making this type of decision, in the specific context of transnational mobility, implies the mobilization of personal and social skills and promotes the acquisition and development of this type of skills. Transnational mobility thus emerges as a modality of mobility that is potentially formative and generates transversal skills.

Training and professional experience are an important source of acquisition and development of skills, namely transversal skills, essential in organizational work contexts. To this end, the way of leading to learning changes, implying new ways of acting by the teacher and the student.

Higher vocational training promoted by higher education must be opened up to the outside world, not only to the immediate environment, but also to internationalization, favoring mobility and international exchanges, building partnerships to which the 3Economy+ project presented here is an example.

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CHAPTER 8

TOURISM HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMMES: CHALLENGES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

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I. Introduction: The Evolution of Tourism Education

There has been rapid growth in undergraduate tourism business and management education over the last three decades due to its important role in contributing to national competitiveness through the development of graduate employability (Wilton, 2008)[1]. In particular, undergraduate tourism and business education has been promoted as one means by which to address long-held concerns about managerial global skills shortages and employers' criticism over the work-readiness of graduates.

Although there are a few examples of tourism studies as early as the 1920s (Medlik, 1965)[2] it was not really until the 1970s that tourism began to be identified as a distinct area for scholarship, research and teaching (Airey 2005)[3]. Since then, notwithstanding some formidable changes in the world, tourism itself, and more so tourism as a field of academic study has, until recently, shown almost continuous growth and development. In part this has been spurred on by a number of factors including the i) sheer growth of higher education, ii) by a growing interest in the subject area over the last two decades, iii) the exponential growth within the travel industry and iv) the need to professionalise and up-skill the existing and future work force in tourism related economies.

As such, tourism education has been established on a formal academic and professional footing over the last forty years but largely on a more recognised and formal academic basis from the start of the 1980s. Tourism education can now be found in the higher education programmes of countries globally. Airey (2005) suggests that

[1] Wilton, N (2008) *Business Graduates and Management Jobs: An Employability Match Made in Heaven? Journal of Education and Work*, v21 n2 p143-158 Apr 2008

[2] Medlik, S. (1965), *Higher Education and Research in Tourism in Western Europe*, London, University of Surrey.

[3] Airey, D. Tribe, J. (2005) *An International Handbook of Tourism Education, A volume in Advances in Tourism Research*, Elsevier, Oxford.

indications of such growth and progress can be seen in the development of a popular range of tourism and tourism related courses that can now attract large numbers of both undergraduate and post graduate students. In addition, tourism studies now contribute widely to distinctive academic research for a range of tourism related topics and contribute to research outputs in established and highly rated academic journals.

According to the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO 2019)[4] international tourism arrivals have grown exponentially over the last two decades. Growing at over 4% per anum visitor arrivals now account for 1,323 million trips up from 940 million in 2010. Over a similar period, in the UK alone, student enrolments on tourism related programmes in higher education increased at similar exponential rates. As Airey *et al.* (2015)[5] suggests these changes provided a context within which many universities, especially the vocationally orientated ones, identified tourism as an area for academic programme growth. In this context tourism was seen by many universities as an attractive addition to existing social science programmes linked to business and management, geography, social and anthropological studies as well as planning and environment. As Airey also suggested (2005) this by and large was because such programmes were associated with what was identified as growth sectors in many national economies, and because it met with many universities desire to orientate programmes toward providing vocational education linked to graduate employment (Ayikouru, Tribe & Airey 2009)[6]. In addition, such courses were seen, at the time, as a useful vehicle to attract and boost student recruitment. The result was a massive expansion in tourism course enrolments in most of the developed world. For example, in the UK, enrolments into degree level programmes grew from about 20 in 1972 (Airey 2005)[7] to 9,000 in 2011 (Walmsley, 2012)[8].

Today tourism education is defined within the broad category of events, hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism (EHLST) subject grouping which has substantial roots and historical associations with both business and management programmes and geography based programmes. According the the UK QAA (2019)[9] such programmes now usually encompass courses of study aligned closely to the service sector and 'experience' economy.

[4] UNWTO (2019) *International Tourism Highlights 2019,* Madrid. https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284421152. Accessed 17.02.2020

[5] Airey, D. Tribe, J., Benckendorff, P., & Xiao, H. (2015). *The Managerial Gaze: The Long Tail of Tourism Education and Research.* Journal of Travel Research, 54(2), 139–151.

[6] Ayikoru, M. & Tribe, J.& Airey, D. (2009). *Reading Tourism Education: Neoliberalism Unveiled. Annals of Tourism Research.* 36. 191-221.

[7] Airey, D. Tribe J. (2005) *An International Handbook of Tourism Education, A volume in Advances in Tourism Research,* Elsevier, Oxford.

[8] Walmsley, A. (2012). *Pathways into tourism higher education. Journal of Hospitality,* Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education. 11. 131–139.

[9] UKSCQA (2018) *UK quality code for higher education,* UKSCQA. London

In this respect Sheldon, (2008)[10] proposes that, '*now, more than ever, vocationally focused universities have a crucial role to play in helping UK organisations survive the economic downturn and stimulate a recovery. They also produce the high quality graduates essential for business and public services*'.

As such the tourism sector (in its broadest definition) has been one of the largest and fastest growing sectors of the global economy, representing a significant proportion of gross domestic product in most western and increasingly developing nations.

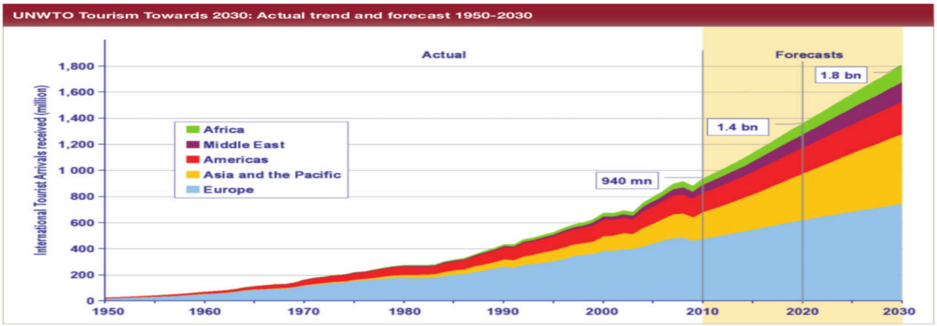

Figure 1. UNWTO Tourism Growth Forecast 1950- 2030
Source: UNWTO (2019)[11]

Alongside this growth in economic impact, the sector has seen increasing professionalisation of those employed within it. This is reflected in the number of programmes in these broad areas by higher education providers, both universities and further education colleges. Programmes now cover all academic levels of study which range from diploma awards (Level 4 and 5), to a number of varied associate and undergraduate degrees (Level 5 and 6), to higher level programmes at post graduate diploma level to MBA, MSc, MA, MPhil, and DPhil PhD and post Doc research degree studies (Level 7 and 8).

As a sector tourism is also closely tied to the service industries particularly those associated with leisure, entertainment and travel. However, there remains also considerable scope for diversity of provision and innovation in programme development and considerable potential to enhance the portfolio of higher education provision in such subject areas. In addition to the range of levels tourism courses reflect a wide range of modes of study, including traditional class room based learning to work-based and online learning.

[10] Sheldon, M. (2008). Future fit Preparing graduates for the world of work ,Universities UK, www. www. cbi. org. uk.

[11] UNWTO (2019) International Tourism Highlights 2019, Madrid. https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284421152. Accessed 17.02.2020

As already stated by Airy (2005)[12] and more recently by the UKSCQA (2018)[13] the academic profile of the tourism courses has become firmly established and matured as a legitimate and relevant area of academic study which has established its own teaching and research discipline. In-turn this has been reflected in the establishment of dedicated academic journals and the award of globally recognised research funding. Moreover, the multidisciplinary nature of the subject area means that research based within tourism also contributes to building the body of knowledge in other subject areas, such as business and management, geography, environmental management, planning, heritage and culture, and anthropology to name but a few.

According to the UK QAA (Quality Assurance Agency) courses broadly concerned with tourism refer 'to the activities and behaviours arising from the international and domestic movement of people away from their normal home environments for a variety of purposes'. In this context the study of tourism and the visitor economy draws on a wide range of multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks, which generally include, but are not limited to: production, consumption, management, economics, marketing, development, mobility, migration, sustainability and ethics. The study of tourism in this context is now an internationally recognised subject area that contributes to wider interdisciplinary understanding of the development and management of tourism and its broader contribution to understanding society as a whole.

The QAA UK Quality Assurance Agency (2019)[14] states that while many courses with tourism in the title have their origins in providing a vocational understanding relevant for potential employment in some or all of the components of what is loosely referred to as the tourism industry, this has shifted significantly in recent years. Courses continue to offer applied critique of key activities in the private sector, including areas such as tour operators, airlines and hotel companies, as well as public bodies, such as local authorities, and not-for-profit bodies, such as tourist boards, destination management organisations and other agencies. However, the QAA suggests that most courses have broadened from their vocational origins to embrace wider social science issues relating to the nature, impacts and meanings of tourism. Courses therefore now often offer academic critique coupled with an applied understanding of critical issues within industry. In this respect the study of tourism increasingly overlaps with subject domains from both within and outside the tourism subject areas. To some extent, this is reflected in the trend for some tourism courses to incorporate ideas and concepts drawn from, for example, social anthropology, sociology, environmental and cultural studies. Students may also study tourism alongside a language or other social science subjects.

[12] Airey, D. Tribe, J. (2005) An International Handbook of Tourism Education, A volume in Advances in Tourism Research, Elsevier, Oxford.

[13] UKSCQA (2018) UK quality code for higher education, UKSCQA. London

[14] QAA (2019) Subject benchmark statements, events hospitality leisure,sport tourism, Gloucester.

As a consequence universities now offer a full range of course titles. These range from traditional studies such as 'tourism management' which have also been increasingly linked to other study disciplines such as, 'business and tourism management' international tourism management', international hospitality and tourism management' and for example, 'international tourism and events management'. Some Universities have also specialised further, providing more in-depth studies on specific aspects of tourism which now include for example 'tourism and sustainability', 'tourism and aviation', 'tourism planning', 'eco-tourism' and cultural/heritage tourism management' (UCAS, 2020)[15].

A range of current award titles offered by a range of international universities is quite diverse and might now include for example: •adventure tourism management •destination management •ecotourism •entrepreneurship in travel and tourism •European tourism •European tourism management •European travel management •international travel •international tourism •international tourism management •responsible tourism •rural tourism management •rural/countryside tourism •sports tourism •sustainable tourism •tourism business management •tourism development •tourism management •tourism marketing •tourism operations management •tourism planning •tourism planning and management •tourism studies •travel agency management •travel and tourism management •travel management •visitor attractions management •visitor economy. That said most tourism focussed courses will follow a broad curriculum which shares common elements of business and tourism management principles and practice. Such common elements still fundamentally provide the key underpinning for studies in tourism as a whole.

II. The Nature of Tourism Studies: The broad curriculum

The UK Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) has defined the nature of tourism education through its 'Benchmark Quality Standards' (2019)[16]. The subjects highlighted within these standards suggest that the EHLST (events, hospitality, leisure, sport, tourism) grouping of subjects share many common principles, approaches, values and priorities, as well as having distinctive characteristics as separate subjects. Tourism courses therefore share concern for the contribution which it makes to the economy, through the sectors of industry with which it engages, and the value of the cultural contribution its research and education makes to society.

As such, tourism programmes, by their nature tend to be primarily multidisciplinary in their structure, encompassing a range of theory and practice from both the social and physical sciences, and in particular from, for example, business and management, geography, environmental planning and anthropology. This tends to give tourism programmes a multitude and wide range of topics, learning opportunities and experiences as part of

[15] UCAS (2019) Course search, https://digital.ucas.com/search. Accessed 17.02.2020

[16] QAA (2019) Subject benchmark statements, events hospitality leisure,sport tourism, Gloucester.

developing a broad range academic curriculum. Broad themes of study might usually include the study of the theory of operational and strategic management of resources, the use of scientific methods of enquiry and critical analysis of culture and society.

Tourism as a subject is also often the application of studies to a professional, practice-based context. As a subject area, there is a long association with vocational study and expertise in working with industry and providing opportunities for work-based and work-related learning. Over the years of curriculum development interaction between employers and higher education providers has become an important part of student experience. The nature of teaching engagement can therefore have a broad remit for curriculum design which might include guest lectures, work placements and live projects, through which students may learn and develop the particular applied professional and vocational skills and behaviours necessary for employment. In engaging with such opportunities, the focus is on the effective fusion of academic integrity and rigour with cutting edge occupational knowledge, and developing the professional identity of students in order for them to go on and lead within the tourism industry. It is recognised that to achieve this, students need a critical, innovative, creative and entrepreneurial mind-set, which enables them to be responsive to change (Baum, 2016)[17].

III. Curriculum development

Whilst tourism course will greatly vary in academic level, length of study and focus most tourism studies will often involve the study of the following type of subjects to a lesser or greater degree:

— the concepts and characteristics of tourism as an area of academic and applied study in relation to business, management and wider social science, and at local, national and global levels.
— destination management, development, policy, governance and strategy.
— tourism economics, economic impacts and contributions to society (global to local).
— sustainability, ethics and well-being in tourism.
— security, safety, risk, resilience and crisis management on regional, national and international scales.
— the nature and characteristics of tourists and associated behaviour characteristics.
— tourism in the cultures, communities and environments that it affects.
— the role of technology, media and data in tourism production and consumption.
— the products, structure, operations and interactions within the tourism industry.
— professionalising the tourism industry as both processes and structures, and professional identity and business acumen in professional development.
— career development and learning opportunities in the tourism sector.

[17] Baum, T. (Ed.). (2016). Human resource issues in international tourism. Elsevier.

While most courses include some consideration of all the above areas of study, many courses will have a different emphases. Curriculum content may additionally include for example, sustainable tourism, strategic planning and development of tourism, geography of tourism, impacts of tourism, ethics, tourism and globalisation, operation of the tourism industry, passenger transportation, cultural management, research methods, technology in travel and tourism, tourism and the natural environment, tourism economics, tourism marketing, tourism policy, entrepreneurship in tourism, events and visitor management.

IV. Curriculum delivery

Tourism as already stated encompasses a rich variety of disciplinary cultures. It also includes a range of patterns of study, including full-time, sandwich, part-time a combination of blended learning and the growth of distance/online learning, involving technology. As already stated a particular feature of many courses has also been the inclusion of industry placements, work-related or work-based learning, as well as other forms of delivery which involve collaboration between the higher education provider and relevant practitioners and employers. This to some extent reflects the needs of the tourism industry in developing practical experience, work skills and practical knowledge.

Teaching, learning and assessment in the tourism subjects draw upon pedagogic and subject-based research within and beyond the subject areas. Courses involve a range of different types of learning opportunities and different approaches for the assessment of learning with a mixture of theoretical and applied approaches. Usually the learning and teaching methods used in tourism courses generally include combinations of some of the following teaching methods: lectures, workshops and seminars, group and individual tutorials, laboratory practicals, real-time practical activities, events, case-studies, field studies, placements, internships, consultancy, working in small groups, independent study and research, and technology-enhanced and blended learning. As a result students completing courses in tourism have a range of skills and demonstrate a range of behaviours appropriate to their professional context.

V. Challenges and Future Directions for Course Development

However, despite significant progress and recognition of tourism related courses, progress in the past few years, especially since the 2008 economic crisis, has been less certain. Airey suggests that the context of higher education has changed and this has brought some problems for tourism. Increasingly academic tourism courses need to justify their position in higher education per se. This is especially the case in terms of student recruitment, student quality, research outputs and income, and societal impacts. For many higher education centres of tourism studies this represents a challenge and in-turn is now creating uncertainty for the future direction of tourism courses generally (Airey, 2013)[18].

[18] Airey, D. (2013) Poznań University Of Economics Review,Volume 13, Number 4. 11-19

In this context tourism subjects are particularly sensitive and responsive to changes in the world environment and global economy. This, for example, is reflected in the increasing need for students to study the issues of internationalisation, environmental sustainability, ethical positioning, social responsibility and social justice, global security and risk, crisis management and other contemporary issues. These now often compete for academic study and choice. The role of technology, and the increasingly digital and mobile nature of society,is also significant and tourism courses will need to increasingly respond to societal changes and the needs of both industry and academic participants in how course are delivered and taught. The recent COVID 19 pandemic and its impact on tourism operations globally is a case in point

Arguably the changing trends in tourism are now also focusing more towards the development of specialised markets, specialised niche tourism markets, subject integration (especially with marketing and business), innovation and creativity, the technological revolution, the internationalisation and globalisation of the industry (Hsu (2017)[19]. This is now placing demands for curriculum innovation and change that increasingly focus on the need to prepare students fit for a future 'knowledge based economy' which is now often set against more liberal forms of social and anthropological study. Increasingly academic tourism providers will therefore need to focus attention on the need to make existing tourism courses and new proposals not only academically and vocationally relevant but also 'attractive' 'innovative', 'creative' and 'relevant' to the demands from new cohorts of students representing *'the millennium generation, generation Y and generation Z'.*

Such demands are now placing strains on the provision of separate or discrete tourism courses. As academic, providers and students look for cost efficiencies, collaboration, and academic synergy there are growing pressures to merge existing tourism programmes into more generic courses linked, particularly to business and management areas of study. Such direction can offer real cost savings to providers and in-turn enhance the 'diet' and 'variety' of academic subjects offered to students. Luka (2012)[20] intimates this is a challenge for tourism education which is now creating increasing conformity of tourism curriculum to meet business needs. In this context questions are now increasingly being raised as to the future of tourism courses and their future survival as a separate area of study (Airey,2016)[21]. On a more positive note the growing demand for more vocationally relevant education over the last ten years and improvements to enhance the curriculum to reflect more relevance to employer requirements and better 'student employability' has helped consolidate and sustain tourism courses that offer such

[19] Hsu, C. H., Xiao, H., & Chen, N. (2017). Hospitality and tourism education research from 2005 to 2014. International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management.

[20] Donina, A., & Luka, I.. (2012). Challenges of Tourism Education: Conformity of tourism curriculum to business needs. Academica Turistica. Tourism @ Innovation Journal. 5. 85-112.

[21] Airey, D. (2016). Tourism education: Past, present and future. Turisticko poslovanje. 2016. 9-12.

a diet of study. Such direction has also helped put tourism courses on a more sustained footing that combines both subject relevance and professional aptitude. See Figure 1.

Figure 1: Tourism and Higher Education: Current Challenges

VI. Future Directions for Tourism in Higher Education

The British Council (2017)[22] released a report illuminating trends in global higher education that impact the future of higher education markets. While the report is written from a broad academic perspective, the findings can also be applied to tourism related courses. The report highlights a number of indicators as to the evolving nature of international higher education and challenges for today's educators. The report focuses on shifting demographics, national strategies for higher education and labour market demands as just a few of the issues impacting the internationalisation of higher education today. These include for example:

1. Demographics: Shifting global demographics provides some salutary thoughts as life expectancy rises, the fertility rate decreases particularly in 'western' orientated economies. The implications for sustained recruitment for specific and discrete areas of study, in the future, may not be so sustainable in-turn leading to implications for collaboration, partnership and joint provision to meet economies of scale. Tourism courses globally are already seeing the consequences of such demographics.

[22] British Council (2017) *The Shape Of Global Higher Education: National Policies Framework For International Engagement: Emerging themes*. British Council 2016 / F310. London.

2. Access: Access to education also provides some future indicators. In this context education around the world continues to develop and expand access. Whilst growing demand continues there are still issues with completion rates, gender and class disparity. In this respect The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals adopted in (2015)[23] strongly advocates for widening access to education by 2030, as articulated in #4 of the 17 global goals.
3. Internationalisation: The Internationalisation and globalisation of business operations linked to trade and economic growth as well as the recruitment of skilled professional labour will increase demand for both the professionalisation and internationalisation of tourism curriculum. As such strategies to accommodate such trends will take various forms according to the national context. One common aspect, perhaps however, will be the need for 'attractiveness' and 'relevance' of tourism courses to sustain future student recruitment and in turn, enhance employer recognition of tourism qualifications.
4. Work based /vocational learning: As employers' experience challenges in hiring higher education graduates with workforce-ready skills, there is a demand for more cooperation between industry and higher education through initiatives and partnerships and creative collaborations. These types of cooperation are also taking shape in the field of international higher education, for example in local and international internships. Increasingly such approaches to learning are becoming desirable and essential in tourism courses as enhancing job related skills become more important to employers seeking skilled and a professionally educated work force.
5. Technology: As technology continues to integrate and change the world it is recognised that higher education must also change and adapt with the times and integrate educational technology that facilitates international higher education learning. This, can be delivered in a number of ways through online and multimedia platforms which can offer alternative and flexible teaching methods that appeal and are responsive to a new generation of students studying tourism courses.
6. Transferable Skills: With the future of automation, it's expected that the workplace will undergo a dramatic transformation bringing with it the need for specific workplace-ready skills. Higher education institutions will need to stay in front of these changes to ensure that graduates attain appropriate workplace-ready and transferable skills. This will be particularly pertinent to tourism courses which are largely based upon generic service, business and management operations.
7. Quality: When seeking an institution for study, students are increasingly considering more aspects than just the brand, ranking and reputation of an

[23] United Nations Sustainable Development (2015) Sustainable Development Goals, UN, NY.

institution. Quality and value (including costs, career prospects, and student experience) of an institution have increasingly become important in the student choice. As such tourism courses are not immune to such trends. Successful tourism courses will therefore need to deliver on the one hand innovative, creative and attractive course content but also on the other hand offer job relevant and professionally recognised qualifications and in-turn good career prospects.

Figure 2: Tourism in Higher Education: Future Directions

In summary students increasingly seek out high quality student experiences, everything from feeling welcome on campus to accessible and valuable career services to student accommodations. In this respect higher education institutions will need to continue to focus on creating and nurturing quality student experiences with the aim of attracting and retaining students. Tourism courses are very much part of this trend but must also compete with a growing list of alternative studies.

However, keeping track of global higher education trends will allow higher education institutions to keep one step ahead of key challenges to the sector and in-turn sustain the provision of high quality relevant and innovative tourism studies.

In this respect future predictions for higher education and tourism courses remain fairly constant and stable. Nevertheless, there is no room for complacency in a fast changing higher education global environment. To be sustainable as discrete areas of academic study tourism education will need to be responsive to change. Global higher education indicators suggest that the maintenance of the status quo for tourism courses or indeed their growth, will, therefore, be largely dependent on considering the following factors: these include:

- The Use of technology for blended & online learning
- Innovative and contemporary relevant curriculum development
- joint course development in collaboration with other academic disciplines
- Quality & professional skills recognition
- Innovation in work based learning
- Flexible learning platforms
- Meeting career aspirations and opportunities
- Global-Local Internationalisation

On an end note as McGladdery *et al.* (2017) has stated in a recent publication, educational tourism has the potential for 'hybridisation' with other segments of tourism and non-tourism sectors. Quality and innovation in teaching and learning to sustain momentum has been increasingly promoted in this respect. In addition to this, both collaboration and partnership and promoting joint or blended approaches to learning would seem important factors that are now also being proposed as pointers for the future of tourism education in order sustain growth and momentum. It would perhaps be pertinent for higher education providers to take heed of such notions.

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CHAPTER 9

PLURILINGUAL TRAINING IN HE PROGRAMMES: THE CASE OF 3ECONOMY+ PROJECT

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I. Introduction

Today, multilingualism is accepted as an intrinsic feature of European society (European Commission, 2012; Hoyos-Pérez, 2011 and Missaglia, 2010). Since Schengen Agreement in 1985, human migrations have largely contributed to this situation and, as might be expected, the university scenario has echoed and adapted to this situation. The elimination of border controls among European Union Member States in the 90s facilitated the free mobility of teachers and students and, as a result, policies with an international vocation were promoted. At the same time, the European Community Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students, better known as the ERASMUS Programme, was taking shape. Its main objective was to promote mobility, as well as the European dimension of Higher Education, with the recurring term "European Higher Education Area"(EHEA). With these and other measures, in the 1990s internationalisation became a priority in European university policy, reinforcing the value of its linguistic diversity (Barrow, Didou-Aupetit & Mallea, 2003; Cenoz, 2009, Europe, 2007; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000) until today in which the UE issues varied funding opportunities to collaborate, share, and disseminate innovative teaching-learning experiences at different education stages and modes, as the KA2 programmes.

Within this context the development of a plurilingual profile among HE students is more than an objective, a social demand. Consequently, the European Union emphasized this term in the well-known 'Common European Framework for References' (2001), which was updated in a Companion Volume in 2018, and defines this plurilingual competence that should be devolved by EU students as:

> … the plurilingual approach emphasises the fact that as an individual person's experience of language in its cultural contexts expands, from the language of the home to that of society at large and then to the languages of other peoples (whether learnt at school or college, or by direct experience), he or she does not keep these languages and cultures in strictly separated mental compartments, but rather builds up a communicative competence to which all knowledge and experience of language contributes and in which languages interrelate and interact'. (Europe, 2001, p. 4)

The concept of plurilingualism, as stated by (Piccardo, 2019), extends the limits of linguistic diversity to inclusively describe the complex processes underlying the interaction of different linguistic codes to successfully overcome linguistic experiences. The term can thus be considered inclusive and flexible as

[it] describes a process of dynamic, creative "languaging" across the boundaries of language varieties. It also refers to the theory underlying this process, as well as the relevant language policy aims and related methodological approaches. (Piccardo, 2019, p. 185)

II. Plurilingual situation among the Consortium

According to the Erasmus+ Programme Guide, *consortium* can be defined as:

> "two or more participating organisations teaming up to prepare, implement and follow up a project or an activity within a project. A consortium can be national (i.e. involving organisations established in the same country) or international (involving participating organisations from different countries)". (Comission, 2020, p. 319).

The three universities that formed the Erasmus+ KA2 project "3 Economy+[1]" Consortium are located in countries that have different plurilingual realities. According to Eurostat, concerning the "Foreign language learning in the EU", in the subject "pupils at lower secondary level, in 2017", we can see that in Malta, 95% of the students learn two or more languages. In Portugal, 90% of them learn two or more languages and in Spain the share is 46% (EUROSTAT, 2019).

For European students, the foreign languages most commonly studied are: at the top position, English is studied by 97,9% of students, and Spanish, in 4th place of preferences, studied by 16,9% of students (EUROSTAT, 2019). The Portuguese language, although with a world presence in countries where Portuguese is the official language and in the Portuguese diaspora, it is not a choice of preference among the European students. Maltese language is not known as an offer for foreign language study yet. In these three countries, we may perceive an inverse proportion relation between the average of students who study foreign languages and the most foreign languages studied by European students: in Malta and in Portugal, a high average of students study two or more foreign languages but their national languages are not the most preferred as foreign languages in the European scenario. By opposite, Spain has a lower average of students who study two or more foreign languages, however, Spanish as foreign language is the 4th most studied in Europe.

The students that integrate the "3 Economy+ project" have different background regarding their mother tongue: Spanish, Portuguese, Maltese, Arabic, Italian and Tamazigh (Berber language). These six languages belong to three major linguistic groups: Latin languages (Portuguese, Spanish-Castilian, and Italian), Semitic languages

[1] Project number: 2017-1-ES01-KA203-038141

(Maltese and Arabic), and Aphroasiatic language (Tamazigh), what constitutes a very plural group of speakers.

In what concerns foreign language skills, all speakers have domain of English as foreign language, ranging from basic to proficiency levels. Spanish as foreign language is spoken only by the Portuguese students with elementary competence, although they have a high level of comprehension in Spanish. The consortium students, with the exception of a Spanish student who speaks Portuguese as she lived some time in a Portuguese official speaking country, speak neither Portuguese nor Maltese as foreign languages.

Regarding the language of communication among the members of the project, plurilingualism was a must: they communicate preferably in English although translanguaging in English-Spanish-Portuguese was a common practice.

The university degrees of the 3 Economy+ students have different linguistic training. Only the Marketing degree, in Instituto Politécnico de Portalegre (IPP) in Portugal, offers formation in English as foreign language in the curricula. The Administration Degree, in Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Granada (Melilla Campus) nor the Tourism Degree in University of Malta offer any linguistic formation to their students in the curricula.

III. An innovative proposal to increase students' plurilingual profile

Within this plurilingual scenario, we proposed an innovative proposal framed for the 3Economy+ project. One of the main objectives of the Consortium was to develop plurilingualism as a way of empowering students with the necessary skills to face the linguistic challenges that they will be presented in their professional and personal future. For that reason, we included a cross-module within the blended programme to foster communicative competence in the languages of the consortium, thus recognising and valuing our linguistic richness. The following actions were undertaken to this purpose:

- Action A) English Communicative Skills for Specific Purpose at a B2 level. To this aim, students benefited from supporting online materials on English for Business (year 1), Marketing (Year 2), and Tourism (Year 3), as well as online tutorials with English teachers through the platform. Activities were designed on the idea of task, following Task-Based Language Learning methodology (Willis, 1996) (2 ECTs per year= 6 ECTS). The purpose of this module was not only to develop English communicative competence, but also to reflect on their command of the language through authentic texts and real and motivating projects.
- Action B) Furthermore, and coordinated with the different IPs, students were introduced to Spanish and Portuguese (1 ECTs per year= 3 ECTs)
- Action C) A plurilingual specific terminology glossary was compiled with the most 100 frequent expressions on each three fields in the languages of the consortium, so as to provide 3Economy+ learners in particular, and all the academic community in general, a powerful tool for finding out the equivalents in the languages of the consortium and thus, giving value to its linguistic richness.

— Action D) Real linguistic exchange opportunities were granted during the intensive courses. Personal skills were developed among students and academics in the three languages, bridging gaps among languages.

IV. Conclusion

To conclude, in this chapter we have addressed the multilingual component of the consortium. First of all, we have intended to stress the importance of linguistic richness as a mechanism of individual and social growth, which is supported by the different measures that have been undertaken at a European level.

Subsequently, we have described the multilingual component of the 3Economy+ Consortium in order to contextualise the actions that we have carried out and that have concluded with an enrichment of all the participants in this project.

Although as a transversal issue, we have no doubt that plurilingual competence is a fundamental tool to face the challenges that the 21st century society demands. We believe that with the transversal approach that has been adopted in this project we have managed to substantially enhance this aspect, not only in the improvement of communicative competence in several languages, but also in the interrelationship between them, resulting in an increase of participants' intercultural competence, as well as deepening personal and social growth.

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SECTION III

GOOD PRACTICES IN BLENDED TRAINING

CHAPTER 10
GOOD PRACTICES IN ONLINE TRAINING

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I. Introduction

With the emergence of household access to the Internet, the possibility of taking education beyond the physical classroom was greatly increased. Therefore, new concepts associated with this type of teaching modality appeared, such as virtual teaching, online teaching, E-learning and different derivations such as Blended-Learning, which mixes distance with face-to-face teaching. There are also more recent concepts such as MOOCs (Massive Online Open Courses) or SPOCs (Small Private Online Course), etc.

This fact gives rise to a need to reflect upon the extend where teaching through the Internet is going to evolve, as in the twenty-first century there is a certain tendency towards the globalization of distance education. There exists a break of borders with an intense cultural communication as it is possible to learn almost anything, if not everything, through open and free courses, video tutorials or articles posted on the Internet.

This leads to the conclusion that a person with a device that has access to the Internet can learn whatever he or she wants. In a matter of about 30 years we have moved from a traditional education system in which the axis of the education system was centred on the teacher to an open and free education system in which the centre is the student, since it is the student who decides what to learn, how to do it and when to do it.

Therefore, establishing good practices on online teaching, analysing briefly what its main characteristics are, is very important. These good practices are framed within the 3Economy+ Project in which three universities from three different countries (Spain, Portugal and Malta) are participating, giving greater emphasis on the multiculturalism and internationalisation of the project in question.

Having introduced the approach, we will talk about how the online learning began and how it has evolved. We will analyse the main characteristics of this type of teaching modality and then focus on the MOOC modality, since one of the objectives of the 3Economy+ Project is the creation of an inter-university MOOC where students from the three universities participating in the project can exchange experiences and knowledge. We will end by trying to draw some conclusions about all these concepts.

II. How did e-learning start?

It can be assumed that face-to-face education has had a constant but slow development, contrary to what happens with e-learning as it has had a breathtaking development.

As we have already advanced in the introduction, distance learning existed before the appearance of the Internet (through television, via correspondence, distance universities, etc.); however, with the introduction of the computer and Internet in the late 20th century, the term *e-learning teaching* was expanded. Universities, private companies, schools, academies… all are in one way or another involved in e-learning projects with a greater or lesser involvement in this type of teaching.

It is difficult to have a univocal and universally accepted concept for online training, mainly because there are always divergences and various interests as it is a new matter. E-learning is an Anglo-Saxon term and the rest of the definitions and translations are derived from it. Tele-training (Avilés López-Sepúlveda, 2006), virtual training, training via the Internet, virtual teaching, network learning, e-learning, tele-education (Azcorra *et al.*, 2001). They all mean the same thing and if we observe the definitions well, they are a mixture of a few basic terms such as Internet, training and virtual.

According to Bernárdez (2007), the concept of e-learning, refers to all those methodologies, strategies, or learning systems that use digital technology and/or computer-mediated communication to produce, transmit, distribute and organize knowledge among individuals, communities, and organizations. A bold definition, since this leads us to the conclusion that any type of knowledge acquired through the computer could be called e-learning.

Another definition that is quite complete and refers to the support that the teacher should give is the following: e-learning is understood as a training modality in which didactic means are used to learn a specific content within the framework of an institution and that this training is carried out by electronic means since there is a physical separation between the teacher and the student" (Barbera; 2008).

Once the concept has been analysed, we are going to describe when it appeared and how it has evolved. A few years after the emergence of the Internet, in the 90s the first Web Based Training (WBT) courses began to appear, the concept of e-learning was still in its infancy. This new typology, which appeared at the beginning of the decade, was the inheritance of the distance courses (courses by postal correspondence, tutoring by telephone) and a little later the electronic courses in CD-ROM format and the so-called CALC (Computer Assisted Learning Center).

After a short but intense development, in the 90's, with the important technological development of the Internet, the first tele-training platforms began to appear, allowing students and teachers to converge in a virtual training space. Nowadays, the e-learning mode of teaching has made significant achievements.

III. Characteristics of E-learning

The Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are making possible a new way of teaching and learning that cannot be alien to the world of the University. The University Education Policy together with the Information and Knowledge Society should stimulate the relationship between teachers and students in order to improve the quality and efficiency of teaching.

The constant evolution of new technologies and the new needs brought about by the emergence of new models whose most defining feature is that the face-to-face and the virtual converge at a distance, and where spaces (traditional and virtual classes), times (presential and non-presential), resources (analogical and digital) are combined. Moreover, the protagonists modify their roles in the teaching-learning processes. With the imminent arrival of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), there is a boom in the increase of teaching offered through the Internet due to the great adaptability that it offers in accordance with some of the criteria of the new space. As such, the need to evaluate this type of teaching modality also arises.

This implies a change of paradigm and a conception of study that adapts to the new EHEA. In other words, we are facing a new challenge and a change in the way of teaching and learning, moving from face-to-face to virtual teaching in which the teacher is no longer the centre of the learning process but the student. This process involves the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to be able to monitor all the activities through e-learning platforms.

Having said that, the main characteristic is the change that takes place in the learning process, the main focus is now the student.

In the website of the National Institute of Educational Technology and Teacher Training, an agency under the Ministry of Education and Vocational Training of the government of Spain, it can be observed some of the most important features of this type of training:

— Space-time independence. Both students and tutors can participate from anywhere in the world and at any time. Synchronous and asynchronous forms of communication must be given priority, mainly through tools such as e-mail, chat, discussion forums, videoconferences or social networks.

— Methodological diversity. Depending on the pedagogical design model adopted, e-Learning can allow both self-instruction and collaborative learning groups in which these group can be geographically separated.

— A larger number of recipients. As e-Learning is developed on technological platforms, this allows us to target a very wide audience, so we have to be prepared to adapt our training and the way of interacting to the demands we encounter. The number of students must be in proportion to the number of tutors or teachers in a training action. Different ratios have been considered. For example, for the organizers of the e-learning course of the project, the most appropriate ratio is around one tutor for every 35-40 students.

— Multimedia. In the e-learning training actions, a wide variety of digital resources can be used, either from own elaboration or being taken from the different repositories of texts, videos, audios, images, animations that exist in the Internet. They are usually of free access.
— Learning control by the student. Internet-based training usually allows students to control their own progress throughout the course. Learners can choose to deepen their knowledge of the content they are interested in from the wide variety of resources offered.

IV. Teaching characteristics in MOOCs (Type of instruction material in 3Economy+)

MOOCs are an online teaching modality. They are courses through the Internet, in open and directed to a great number of people. In this section, we propose the reader an approach to MOOCs and the introduction of its main characteristics as it is the teaching modality used in the 3economy+ project.

A first feature of the MOOC is that it is offered openly to the whole community. Anyone can get registered, so its potential reach is massive. It is true that before the arrival of the MOOCs there were already open courses, the OCWs (Open Course Ware). However, there is an important difference between the two. MOOCs provide the possibility of interaction between teachers and enrolled peers, while OCWs do not provide such interaction. In OCWs the materials are networked, and the student must overtake the learning process autonomously. In short, the main asset of MOOCs versus OCWs is the interaction in the learning process between students and teachers through the various communication tools available within and outside the course. In this sense, we must recognize that social networks are being a decisive factor in the success of this type of course.

One of the characteristics at the origin of the MOOCs is that there is no economic benefit, either for the entity or for the teachers who support this type of pedagogical initiative. However, a change of trend is already being observed. Thus, it is possible to find MOOCs that are totally free and MOOCs that have to be paid for. Normally, paid courses are offered by prestigious institutions. It is precisely the prestige of the institution that supports the course that explains why there are people willing to pay and why free and paid courses can coexist at the same time. The main exponent of MOOC's global offer of paid courses is Coursera (https://www.coursera.org/), which is a platform in which more than thirty prestigious universities participate, including Princeton, Stanford and Columbia, among others. Payment is made when the student requests a credential to have taken the course. The application for the credential is an option for the student, who can also be trained free of charge if no certificate is requested, and the cost is very low, between 20 and 80 euros. Although the fee paid is very low, the profitability of the course is assured if there is a massive follow-up of the course and a high number of credential requests.

Finally, it should be noted that the platform used in the MOOCs is an ancillary issue in this course offering. The offer of MOOCs is not subject to the technological factor.

However, it is possible to speak of the existence of platform adaptations that facilitate the offer of this type of course. If the flagship platforms in the development of e-learning have been Moodle and Blackboard (formerly WebCT), in the hosting of MOOCs, Canvas (https://www.canvas.net/) or the aforementioned Coursera (https://www.coursera.org/) are playing a special role. In Spain, the main references are the Aprendo platform (https://bit.ly/39uyt2H), a UNED project, and UNIMOOC-aemprende (http://iei.ua.es/mooc-emprendimiento/), a platform developed by the University of Alicante.

V. Conclusions

As it was specified from the beginning, the objective of this document is the establishment of some good practices in e-learning in order to try to know better, from the teaching perspective, the reality in which the teachers are immersed when they accept to be incorporated as e-learning tutors in the teaching of the course in online modality.

To this end, we have introduced the foundations of E-learning, from a generic point of view, since the educational content of the E-learning project will be exclusively virtual, that is to say, it will be stored in a tele-training platform for its delivery and the mode of delivery will be through a MOOC.

By analysing the main characteristics of online teaching, we learn the basic fundamentals of this type of teaching to help teachers better understand how to deal with this teaching modality. Examining more specifically the characteristics of teaching in MOOCs, it can be stated that with massive and open online courses a new paradigm is revealed in which teaching is democratized and exposed to the criteria of globalization. This does not imply that this way of teaching is either better or worse, it is simply an evolution.

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CHAPTER 11

GOOD PRACTICES IN ONLINE TUTORING AND FEEDBACK

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I. Introduction

Establishing a series of good practices from the perspective of online teaching in the 3Economy+ project is quite interesting, as this will lead to an improvement in the quality of the subjects offered within the framework of the project. The concept itself brings together all the procedures to be adopted in order to contribute to the improvement of the training system within the project. These procedures must be guided by real and achievable principles and objectives through a series of established parameters.

In this case, it is important to differentiate between the means and the end, that is, the technological part (the means) that will lead us to achieve the desired collaborative and educational results (the end). It should be noted that 3Economy+ is an innovative educational project that is being developed in higher education and in which students and universities from three different countries are participating: Spain, Portugal and Malta. This highlights the need for online collaborative tools for obvious reasons.

The main objective of the project involves developing a series of student-centred methodologies to improve skills in the area of economics, tourism and marketing as well as multilingualism. The development of quality educational content and the appropriate use of collaborative tools are the basis for the development of good practices in online training.

From a technological perspective, it should be noted that the choice of this type of online teaching modality responds to the international nature of the Project. Therefore, the experiences to be shared come from three different universities in three different countries, Spain, Portugal and Malta.

Besides, from the point of view of content, these good practices will be useful for both content creators and teachers, focusing on some of the most critical variables (Cabero, 2006) that help to the success of a training offered in the online mode: the content, the role of the teacher and the student, the assessment models used, the communication tools and the teaching strategies.

This chapter is divided into the following sections. Firstly, the project 3Economy+ project is presented and contextualised. The definition of the participants of the project are also introduced. Thirdly, an overview of the practices carried out in the development of the e-learning process are provided compared with previous studies in the area. In order to do this, five aspects such as the role of the teacher and the student or the evaluation models are deeply discussed. Then, the benefits and the challenges or limitations encountered in this project are reviewed. Finally, in the light of this information, some conclusions are drawn.

II. Contextualising the 3Economy+ project

The 3Economy+ project is a project funded by the European Union selected as an Erasmus+ KA2 Strategic Partnership Project for Higher Education under the 2017 call for proposals. As it has been mentioned above, this is an innovative educational project, which main aim is to develop and implement innovative teaching and learning practices with a view to improving the academic training of students in the areas of Economics, Tourism and Marketing, complemented with languages. It also offers complementary international training designed to improve employment prospects and foster the acquisition of core competencies for effective professional development.

Three partners are taking part of the project: the university of Granada, the University of Malta and the Polytechnic Institute of Portalegre. Therefore, due to geographical reasons, it is necessary to adopt a virtual space where both teachers and students can share these experiences. In this case, we talk about the adoption of a Learning Management System (LMS) as a space for collaboration and online teaching. Moodle is the LMS that has been chosen because of its versatility, accessibility, usability and large international community of users that make it an ideal tool for this type of projects.

Through this LMS, it has been promoted an open access to materials, documents and media for improving learning, teaching and work opportunities within the fields of business, marketing and tourism and within multilingual environments. It has been done by fostering multilingualism and interculturality among the participants, through the use of English, Spanish and Portuguese.

From a more technical point of view, the LMS, that is, Moodle, allows the integration of the different ICT tools in an educational environment which enables the management of content, tasks, exams, grades, assessments. Besides, it allows the ID access for teachers, students, evaluators, content creators, technicians, among others. Each one of them plays a specific role creating an effective educational community.

In the following image, it can be observed the layout of the different modules allocated on the platform:

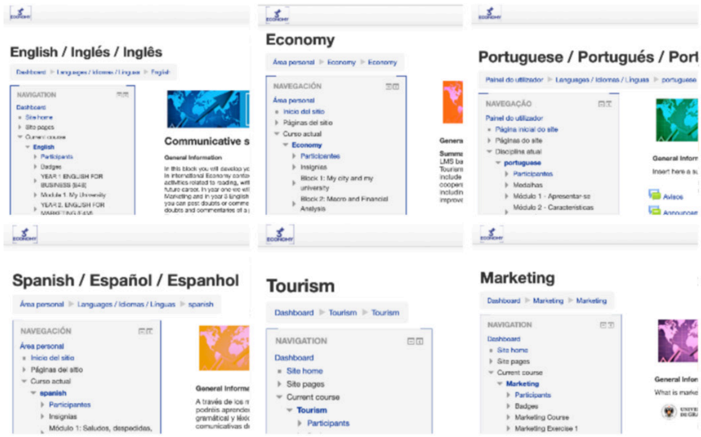

Figure 1: Layout of the different modules of the 3Economy+ Project.
Source: own elaboration

III. Participants

As stated before, three are the partners participating in the project: the University of Granada (Spain), the University of Malta and the Polytechnic Institute of Portalegre (Portugal). Therefore, the project is focused on three disadvantaged regions: Melilla, Portalegre and Malta for diverse reasons.

Teachers and students from these three institutions are the active actors in this project. The number of teachers according to the different countries are the following:

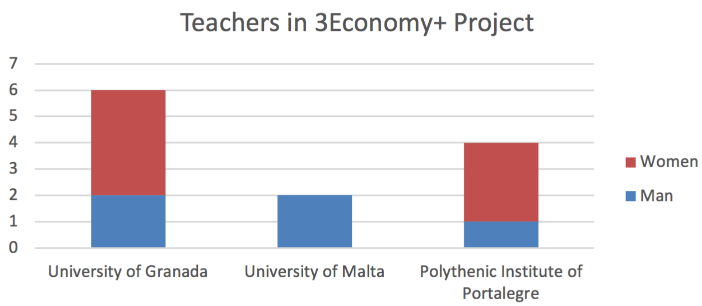

Figure 2: Number of teachers according to the three institutions of the project.
Source: own elaboration

Regarding the students, at the beginning of the project, the selection criteria was established based on the following aspects:

1. The mark obtained for the university entrance
2. Interest and motivation for the project
3. Communicative competence in the languages of the consortium
4. ICT skills

The limited number of students to be selected for the project were six per institution; nevertheless, this criterion was changed due to the high demand of the students. Therefore, the profile of the students of the different institutions is presented in the following table:

Profile of the students	University of Granada	University of Malta	Polytechnic of Portalegre
Number of students	5 Women 3 Men	5 Women 1 Man	5 Women 2 Men
Years old	20-28 years old	19-24 years old	19-22 years old
Degree	Business and AdministrationDegree Business, Administration and Law Degree	Tourism Degree	Marketing and Advertising Management Degree
Languages	Spanish Tamazight Arabic English Portuguese French	Maltese English Portuguese Spanish French	English Portuguese Spanish German French

Table 1. Profile of the students of the three institutions of the 3Economy+ Project.
Source: own elaboration

IV. Good Practices in tutoring and feedback

Once it has been contextualised our e-learning experience within the 3Economy+ Project, it is important to shed some light on the characteristics of it by providing an overview of the practices carried out compared with previous studies. This allows us to have a wide sense of the topic's perspective. In order to do this, five aspects are going to discussed:

1. Didactic strategies

Didactic strategies are of vital importance, the adoption of a good educational methodology is going to be the key issue for a successful e-learning experience. In terms of practical realization of communication between students and teachers, it has been proved that the methods and types of providing communication are of crucial importance for students' satisfaction in a distance course (Allen *et al.*, 2002, 2004).

This communication can be done in two different ways, that is, *synchronous* and *asynchronous* communication. The first type of communication it is time dependent happening in real time, meanwhile, the second one it is an interaction that can happen in shorter or longer periods of time (Bates & Pole, 2003). In the case of our project, at the beginning a combination of both was established as it has been recommended in the studies conducted by Zhao *et al.* (2005). Since it is proved that this combination seems to be more effective than using one or the other type.

Nonetheless, in our own experience the type of communication that was useful for the teachers and the students was the asynchronous one. This type of communication provided our students with more time to digest the content and reduced pressure when they had to communicate with their peers (Bergmann& Sams, 2012). It should be remembered that there are three groups with different native language and ways of learning.

2. Contents

The contents are very important in terms of the way they are shown. Four of the most important characteristics that should be taken into account when developing the contents are the following: aspect, the structure, the accessibility and the instructive design of them. They should have a visually attractive aspect and an easily identifiable structure. It should adopt a homogeneous form when structuring the contents with tables of contents, graphs, clearly differentiated sections, etc., so that the student at a glance may have an idea of how the contents are structured.

These contents have to be also accessible and available in various formats, an example is for people who may have some kind of sensory disability. Furthermore, the contents should be adapted to the medium in which they are going to be published, this is what is called as instructional design. Berger and Kan (1996) define it as the creation of detailed specifications for the development, implementation, evaluation, and maintenance of situations that facilitate the learning.

In the project, according to our experience meeting these standards has facilitated the use for our students. As they did not need the presence and support of the teacher for every moment they were going to work on the different modules.

3. Tools and resources

The tools and resources to be used are multiple and they could be differentiated in two big groups, the tools for the generation of contents outside Moodle and those integrated within the platform.

In this project, the eXeLearning tool has been used for the generation of contents outside the platform, which is an easy to use and copyright free tool for the creation of standardised educational contents. In addition, a template with colours and corporate logos has been provided so that all the materials created have a homogeneous appearance.

Concerning the tools integrated within the Moodle platform, there are many that could be listed; however, just the most important ones will be mentioned because of its frequency of use. Among them are the communication tools, especially the forums. Tools for uploading content, HTML pages, PDFs, etc…, and multi-task tools for sending and receiving activities, questionnaires or exams and grades.

4. The role of the teacher and the student

Once the contents have been created and uploaded to the platform, that is, once the course has been designed, the tutoring actions come into play. Within this aspect, the most important thing is the communication that takes place between the teacher and the student, providing solutions to all kinds of queries, doubts, tasks, etc. that may arise during the training action, trying to minimise the response time from the moment the question or task is sent.

At the same time, the students have to acquire an active role by focusing on their own learning process in a constructive and participative manner based on respect and education, encouraging teamwork and collaboration. In this way, they will be able to motivate themselves to achieve the appropriate results. In short, the student has to be the leader of his/her own learning.

5. Evaluation models

Choosing a good evaluation model will have an impact on the quality of the training action offered. There are studies (Martin *et al.*, 2019) that show that the choice of one evaluation method or another can influence the general satisfaction of the student. They also mention that students prefer continuous evaluation methods to a summative evaluation. Therefore, in this project, the use of a continuous evaluation has been implemented.

V. Benefits

It has been proved that the implementation of these good practices has contributed not only to the improvement of the quality of the training offered within the 3Economy+ project, but also to facilitate both educators and students to obtain the objectives of the project in a quick, simple and effective way. The result is that times are reduced, leading to an improvement and overall satisfaction on the part of all the actors involved in the project. By having the guidelines on what should and should not be done, teachers maximize the achievement of good results in the shortest time possible and student satisfaction is increased at a higher level.

Working in an online collaborative space makes the sharing of experiences very positive as it adapts methodologies carried out by other teachers successfully and this exchange of ideas is fully updated. Besides, the participants are capable of identifying and analysing possible threats that may be incurred with the aim of correcting them. Therefore, by carrying out a good planning and the implementation of a good strategy it is not complicate to obtain good results that are satisfactory for all.

Some of the main benefits of this experience of e-learning are:

1. Providing the students, the opportunity to work at their own rhythm (Bergmann & Sams, 2012).
2. It is definitely a student-centered learning where the main duty of the teacher is focused on guiding the students to solve the problems and engaging with their peers, instead of being a mere source of information (Reigeluth, 2012).

3. Social interaction and peer feedback benefit the students to achieve knowledge in a more natural way rather than using mechanical memorization. These aspects under the connectivism and constructivism principles (Siemens, 2005; Vygotsky, 1980; Edwards & Bone, 2012).
4. Developing teamwork and social interactions it is a good method to enhance students' interest and motivation (Green *et al.* 2017).

VI. Limitations and challenges overcome

The implementation of such a complex and extensive project has not always been an easy process. Despite all the above-mentioned benefits of this e-learning experience, we have to acknowledge some of the challenges encountered in the process:

1. Communication issues are easily magnified by distance (Rosen *et al.*, 2007). In the development process of the different contents, some misunderstandings have occurred due to linguistic or cultural barriers among the students. These problems were overcome due to the use of different channels of communication such as the forum, private messages, videocalls, WhatsApp groups, etc. The continuous communication not only among them as peers, but the guidance of the teachers through the before-mentioned channels of communication have helped in a great way to solve most of the linguistic and cultural misunderstandings.
2. This type of learning process requires a sufficient level of computer literacy and use of technology (Bergiel *et al.*, 2008). It has to be mentioned that the use of technology for all the participants in our project was not a serious problem as everyone could manage fairly well. Nonetheless, using for the first time the platform in which all the contents were allocated caused certainly some complications for them, above all when the project began. As it is said 'practice makes perfect', it was a question of time for them to get used to this virtual space. The aid of the teachers facilitated also the accomplishment of this task.
3. Providing the students, the opportunity to work at their own pace it is not always a good thing as they can be more relaxed than it is needed (Bergmann & Sams, 2012). Managing the time by themselves has been a difficult task for some of them. This is a common disadvantage of virtual learning as the guidance and control of the teachers is decreased unlike conventional learning. This time, the hurdle was more difficult to overcome as they have got various everyday commitments that could not be postponed.

In the light of the above information, monitoring students from three different countries has been a tough task for all the teachers participating in the project due to the reasons exposed above. The coordination among teachers has also been complicated to a certain extend. Nonetheless, as it has been mentioned before these limitations have been overcome and the target has been well exceeded.

VII. Conclusions

The proposed good practices in e-learning within the European project, 3Economy+, expect to contribute to filling the gap in research on the role of virtual teaching for the improvement of the academic training of students in the areas of Economics, Tourism and Marketing, complemented with communication skills, critical thinking and intercultural communication. In addition, the proposed practices will provide the possibility of its application in the field of other non-linguistic subjects where effective communication and collaboration play a vital role.

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CHAPTER 12

FROM TRADITIONAL ONLINE COURSE TO MOOC. A STEP FORWARD

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I. Introduction

At this point, we will try to make sense of the new concept rooted by the emergence of ICTs, for this, we will perform a sweep from the origins of traditional education, until we reach the topic that is currently addressing us and that is growing and It is in a continuous boom, due to the demand, by the current society, to immediately and online access to information and knowledge, provided by online media, anywhere, in a flexible and updated way.

II. From the origins to change of teaching

Teaching in general is subject to continuous transformation, seeking to keep up to date with the changes that are happening today. We have seen how the philosophy of face-to-face and traditional courses, based on a unidirectional teaching, in which the only communication resource, between the transmitted knowledge and the students, was the same teacher or teacher, expert in the subject, in which He based his classes on a teaching methodology, based on a discourse and on paper. The classes were focused on direct attention to the teacher and / or teacher and the low participation by students.

For a few years, the way of acquiring and processing information, which is taught in teaching at a generic level, is constantly changing, due to the introduction of ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) in our daily lives. For all these reasons, the concept of the teacher, understood as such, has changed to a different one, in an increasingly audiovisual trend, which has caused an immediate need to modify the instructional design of the classes, focused and supported by an audiovisual culture.

This leads to an adaptation of the entire methodology, study materials, activities, to new learning styles, thus improving a Teaching-Learning system (Jiménez. 2009). For what has happened to talk about the Information Society, as defined by Professor Manuel Castell (2000): Network society.

Thus, over the years, we have seen that the demands, as far as training is concerned, have had to change and reformulate, basically, for the needs detected, in people who could not attend these classes, for reasons , in the vast majority of cases, labor and who wanted to continue recycling or training throughout life.

For all this, a small revolution of the ICTs is triggered and with it, a presentation of courses, in digital format, through a platform, assisted in most cases, by a person who was tutoring his career, during the development of the same, until the course is finished.

III. Origin of open learning resources

All this, was nothing more than a mere precursor, of the Open Educational Resources, acronym in English OER, we refer to learning resources in open and accessible through the Internet. They are basically E / A materials (teaching-learning), emerged in order to support educational transformation, free of charge and can be used more than once. We refer to curricular maps, course materials, study books, streaming videos, podcasts … So we can say that we are referring to any medium designed for Teaching and Learning.

We can also affirm that the educational resources in open (REA-OER), are not synonymous with e-learning or online, thus emerging, Licenses to recognize and regulate these contents in some way.

One of the main proposals for REA promotion worldwide are open course materials (OCW), where what prevails is the exchange of freely available, autonomous materials for online teaching courses.

Thus, we can dig a little deeper, stating that the OCW (OpenCourseWare) model is established as a fundamental tool in higher education. They usually include elements such as:

1. Class notes
2. Reading lists
3. Tasks
4. Study programs
5. Tests
6. Samples and simulations …

Much of this effort has been carried out by the OCW Consortium, formed by the collaboration of around 200 higher education institutions and partner organizations from around the world to create open educational content using a shared model.

The OCW has been the precursor for the MOOCs (acronym in English) and COMA in Spanish to appear, since the massive and open nature also implies access

Open to the contents and educational resources offered in the course.

IV. Open social learning´s contextualization

The phenomenon of Web 2.0 has corroborated that the user of the network is the main protagonist and that the network is used primarily as a means of interactive communication, motivated by the need to meet their own specific learning needs.

Therefore, users have populated the network of tutorials and interactive manuals on how to solve any problem or learn any technique, from how to write a story to how to solve complex equations, through cooking, accounting, math or physics courses, to name A few examples of the wide variety available.

The Open Social Learning, has evidenced the existence of a massive number of users, willing to receive, what they offer and that covers their learning needs, not importing accreditation but access to quality and systematized information.

Thus, we can affirm that higher education institutions were not prepared to take advantage of this phenomenon, until they have disposed of the open contents mentioned in the previous point and the appropriate technology to attend to this massive amount of informal students, without incurring for this, in large investments that are not clear about a direct economic return.

V. Origins of the MOOCs

This has led to the emergence of the first MOOC during the 2000s, the "Connectivism and Connective Knowledge" Course organized by George Siemens and Stephen Downes at the University of Manitoba (Canada) in August 2008. This course lasted 12 weeks, 2 Months and a half, in which approximately 2,300 students from different parts of the world enrolled. This course was the trigger, after which the era of MOOCs began, until today. In this course, the term was coined by Dave Cormier and Bryan Alexander.

This pioneering course triggered a wave of MOOCs, in which the main objective was to share teaching in an open, massive and accessible way to everyone, without barriers.

Highlight the work of George Siemens, Stephen Downes and Dave Cormier, who organized other courses with similar characteristics to the initial one, obtaining a success that was well reflected in 2011, to carry out, the course proposed by Sebastian Thrun professor at Stanford University, and Peter Norvig, Google research director, "Introduction to Artificial Intelligence". This course obtained a massive and record participation, 160,000 people around the world signed up for this course on artificial intelligence. Due to this success, Sebastian Thrun left his position as a professor at Stanford University and founded the Udacity platform.

The next successful course was "Circuits & Electronics" in spring 2012, organized by Professor Anant Agarwal of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) on his MITx platform, with more than 120,000 students enrolled from around the world.

The unexpected success of these two courses was the trigger for the current attention these courses receive. Shortly after, professors Andrew Ng and Daphne Koller, also from Stanford University, founded the Coursera platform and began offering courses as of April 2012.

Subsequently, on May 2, 2012, MIT and Harvard University, in principle "great enemies" on the battlefield of the best universities in the United States, announced their joint edX project, which aims to develop a common MOOC platform nonprofit.

VI. MOOC´s contextualization

The acronym in English MOOCs (massive online courses) are open, massive courses that encourage participation and lifelong learning (McAuley, Stewart, Siemens & Cormier, 2010). They stand out for having these characteristics:

— Access is free and massive, there is no limit of participants
— It has a methodology based on collaboration and participation by the student, with little intervention by the teacher, but tutors and dynamizers, in many MOOC initiatives.
— It has an audiovisual-based instructional design plus written content, more participation in forums, complementary activities, self-evaluation …

If we focus on the characteristics that Kinash (2013) identified, specifying the identity sign of MOOCs, in comparison with distance education we will say that:

1. There are MOOCs that are linked to higher education, but the vast majority do not, so it allows the registration of any person, regardless of the educational level they have.
2. It has a component such as social networks like Facebook, since they create spheres in which people who participate in these training actions, interact, exchange comments, get rich …
3. Normally the MOOCs have a duration, but the important thing of all this is that they allow great flexibility, at the time of being able to do it at any time of the day, according to the rhythm and needs of each person.
4. It has a clear instructional design, so the visibility of content is sequential and usually weekly, in order not to overload the participants with much information that may cause them to abandon it, due to an excess of information.
5. The language that is intended to be used in these cases, when exposing the contents, is as adapted as possible to the level of the student, also causing adaptive learning on their part.
6. In many cases of MOOCs, online evaluation is used, specifically in pairs, so that participants in the training action are part of the development process and are fully involved, thereby adopting the role of evaluator.
7. They are based on a lot of multimedia content, games, badges, for gamification and learning feedback.
8. The contents are usually structured in modules and segmented into shorter units.

In most cases, they are backed by an academic team, which is the one that makes the proposal before a technical team that normally analyzes the feasibility of it. The initial objectives are studied in detail, the population to which it is addressed, if it has interest and impact at the generic level, if it is attractive and has cultural wealth and if it is transversal, in order not to discriminate against part of the people who They may be interested in training in the proposal.

It must have an open format, on a platform that all people can access, fulfilling, both in access to it and the exposed material, minimum criteria of accessibility and universality.

Each MOOC, in general, is backed by a series of roles played by the members of the academic team, thus originating the correct functioning from the beginning to the end. Thus, we will say that they are formed by:

— Academic Coordinator: It is the referent of the MOOC proposal, in charge of forming your team to carry out the initially proposed project. He is the maximum responsible, in this type of courses.
— Module Coordinator: Responsible for its team of creators within its module.
— Content creator: Person who, under authorship, must create content on the subject to be addressed, a short video of no more than 5 minutes, more bibliography, activities, questionnaires …
— Tutor: Person who will ensure the proper functioning of the MOOC, from the beginning to the end, encouraging the participation of the participants at all times, through the creation of attractive, practical lines of discussion, always related to the module to be addressed. His profile is that of an expert teacher in the subject, qualified and technical.
— Dynamizer: Figure that together with the joint work between tutor and him, will keep the participation of the participants active, feedback each of the participations made in the forums.
— Evaluator: Person who will later evaluate if everything has worked correctly, at the technical level, of the team of tutors, dynamizers …

Mention, as an example of this MOOCs initiative and supporting those mentioned above, to the commitment that the University of Granada made in 2014, through its open platform.ugr.es based on moodle, in a first pilot proposal with the MOOC Alhambra: History, Art and Heritage, in which it obtained a registration of more than 11,000 people, of which more than 65% successfully completed the MOOC.

Thus, we conclude, carrying out a sweep from the origins of education, to the present day, in which we can see that there is a continuous increase in the use of NNTT for the realization of online training, in a flexible and comfortable way, with Access 24 hours a day, from anywhere, in short, is one of the best ways to continue increasing knowledge throughout life.

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VII. Resources

— edx (https://www.edX.org/)
— Coursera (https://www.coursera.org/)://slidewiki.org)
— MiriadaX (https://www.miriadax.net)
— AbiertaUGR (https://abierta.ugr.es/)

CHAPTER 13
PROPOSAL FOR THE EVALUATION OF THE QUALITY OF THE MOOCS

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I. Introduction

Distance education is a relatively new phenomenon and it is constantly evolving. Its progressive introduction in the Spanish university has taken place under the influence of the latest trends coming from the North American higher education. A few years ago, the attention was focused on the methodology of the platforms or the Open Course Ware (OCW), now the focus is on concepts such as Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) and on the Small Private Online Course (SPOC). The SPOCs imply a revision and adaptation of the MOOCs. They are adjusted to the specific needs of an educational entity. One the one hand, MOOCs help to provide general knowledge to large groups. On the other hand, SPOCs allow students to take advantage of the potential of this type of course, aimed at a particular community. They also allow to develop the specific profile that an educational project aims to achieve (Fox *et al.* 2014). SPOCs were designed to succeed where MOOCs failed. This fact can be observed in the high dropout rate.

The MOOCs are bringing about a revolution in the world of distance learning. Few universities are resisting this avant-garde trend which, on a theoretical level, is extraordinarily suggestive. A priori, there are just advantages and a few deficiencies associated with this new concept of online courses. Of recent origin, the term was first coined in 2008 by Dave Cormier (2008) with the help of George Siemens, the designer of the first course entitled "Connectivism and Connective Knowledge" CCK08 (Fini; 2010); and, the researcher Stephen Downes. Only a few years have passed since the first Mass Open Online Course appeared, but a good amount of experience can already be seen among American universities. An example of it, can be shown by the wide range of MOOCs offered at American universities. In Spain, this is still a very incipient initiative. However, although there are no more than a hundred courses on offer at Spanish universities, there is a growing interest in this new type of course.

This new methodological concept of e-learning is presented itself as the panacea to mass training, at very low cost and quality. But is this really possible or is it a chimera? Is it really an online training method aimed at a large number of students, with a reduced budget and quality? A priori, there seems to be little doubt that it is a low-cost mass training technique. The doubts are centred on the last question. It does not seem so obvious that courses of this kind offer quality training and that, consequently, a high degree of satisfaction can be expected from the student. Undoubtedly, student satisfaction will be the key for this type of course to be maintained over time or, simply, to be a passing fad.

The emphasis is then placed on the need to establish specific quality assessment criteria for this type of course. The novelty of the initiative means that there are still no standards and parameters to measure the satisfaction of the actors involved and to establish evaluation criteria. Nonetheless, there is already some literature on this subject that highlight the benefits of these courses (Mackness *et al.*, 2010; McAuley *et al.*, 2010; Pappano, 2012; Cook, 2012; Daniel, 2012), but just a few rigorous analyses focused on the quality of these courses. The Afortic Guide is proposed as a basic instrument for the evaluation of MOOCs.

This chapter is divided into the following sections. Firstly, the main characteristics that identify a MOOC are highlighted. Next, some reflections are made about the limitations of this type of course based on the experience of some users. The third section shows the Afortic Guide as a reference methodology for the evaluation of the quality of MOOCs. Finally, the fourth section presents the adaptations that should be made in the Afortic Guide for its implementation as a technique of the evaluation of MOOCs.

II. Identifying characteristics of MOOCs

The MOOC's pedagogical philosophy entails changes in the traditional teaching model. It is the participants who collaborate with each other, generating knowledge and sharing learning through the development of a participatory and collaborative methodology. The creation of a network between students and teachers, the creation of content and the contribution in forums and debates make up the teaching-learning process.

The most representative characteristics of the MOOCs:

— Autonomy: its structure is designed to promote the autonomous learning of students, with numerous resources in the form of videos, links, documents, activities and spaces for debate and communication.
— Massive: as there are no limited number of places, it got a global scope and they are aimed at a heterogeneous student body, with different interests and aspirations.
— Online: these courses are characterised by the fact that they are entirely networked; all you need is a computer, an Internet connection and a web browser. It can be done comfortably from home, in a flexible way and at the rhythm of each student.
— Open and free: the materials used in each course are available on the Internet and completely free of charge; students only need to register in advance to access the course.

Therefore, MOOCs are developed in a connectivism conception, where the creation of knowledge is based on the establishment of connections: the greater the number of connections, the more learning possibilities will be achieved in each course.

The shift from closed educational platforms to open learning environments has made it possible for thousands of people around the world to follow and participate in different educational initiatives.

III. A reflection on the quality of MOOCs based on the experience of some users

One objective of the teaching-learning processes is the achievement of quality (Casanova, Moreira and Costa, 2001; Koulamas, 1992). There is abundant literature on this subject in the field of traditional education (Blumenfeld, 1992; Covington, 2000), and in recent years there has been a notable development of literature in the more specific field of e-learning (Paechter *et al.*, 2010; Ehlers, 2004). However, because the supply of MOOCs is very recent in time, there is very little scientific production focused on quality assessment for this type of course. In addition, publications on the quality assessment of MOOCs deal with the subject in a generic way, at an introductory level.

At present, many of the subjects that are taught on a paying basis are also offered in the MOOC mode and, therefore, it is questionable whether a student can obtain a certificate without paying attesting that he or she has the same knowledge as a student in the classroom mode, when the tests to obtain this certification in the classroom mode are more demanding than in the virtual mode. On the other hand, Stanford University boasts that it has more than 100,000 students enrolled in massive online courses, but what is not public is the high dropout rate of these courses. This indicator could be considered as a proxy for student satisfaction, but this data is only known by the university who offers the courses.

Gee (2012) provides information about MOOC students who successfully completed a course at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Specifically, 154,763 students signed up for the *6,002x Circuits and Electronics* course and only 7,157 managed to complete the course and obtain a certificate. The rate of students taking the course and applying for a certificate is around 5%. Within the 95% rate of enrolled students who did not get accredited, it is possible to assume that there is a high percentage of dropouts.

It is also possible to find causes of dropouts that are not related to a negative perception of this course offering. For example, this would be the case of Cuban (2012) who gives an account of his experience on why he dropped out of a MOOC on artificial intelligence at Stanford University in which there were enrolled more than 160,000 students. Cuban found the course fascinating and the classes very interesting, but there was a moment when he could not keep up and had to drop out. In his experience, it was due to various reasons, 76% of the students who enrolled did not finish the course. In the case of Cuban, the dropout is not due to low satisfaction, but to the impossibility of following the proposed pace of work. It should be taken into account that, compared to the modality of face-to-face courses, in this type of course there is a higher percentage of students who work or carry out other types of activities that prevent them from following the course normally.

Chamberlin and Parish (2001) question the quality of MOOCs, stating that many of these courses can be obtuse - alluding to the title of their article “Massive and Often Obtuse Courses”. The authors’ criticism of some elements of the mass courses is interesting. One aspect that has been questioned is the possibility of interaction between students. It is questionable whether a student who shares a virtual environment with more than two thousand colleagues can really read all the messages that the rest of the users have posted on the forums and, in addition, get adequate feedback from the course instructors. As for the organization of the course, the authors comment on the chaos that can occur when evaluating a student, trying to locate its materials and following up on the discussions that are held on social networks —Facebook, Twitter, Google groups, etc…—. In addition, they question the fact that the student has to be registered in all the social networks used by the users of the course. This last aspect denotes that there is an evident absence of basic information architecture that would allow the course to be followed normally.

The authors also question the free nature of the courses. In this sense, they state that this option provokes different opinions. Thus, there is a group of students concerned with passing the subject or who obtain credits at their universities, and there is other group of students who seek the sole benefit of learning. This seatback is also transcended by a different degree of motivation and commitment on the part of the students who follow the course. In this sense, the reflection made by the authors is interesting, since they mention that the courses will be effective for those independent students who are characterized by a great capacity and attitudes for self-learning, but not for those students who lack these values. An additional explanation for the high dropout rate in MOOCs could be found in the abundance of this second type of student.

In any case, it would be advisable to carry out quality and user satisfaction evaluations for this type of course. This is the way to obtain information that can be used to introduce improvements in the MOOCs. Although Eaton (2012) conducted a study on accreditation and quality of MOOCs, it is a document that raises too many questions that have not yet been clearly answered. On the other hand, it is true that currently there are agencies and institutions that, based on a series of indicators, allow for the evaluation of the quality of an online course and provide an accreditation that determines the degree of quality of the course, but there is not yet an agreed criterion to be able to apply these evaluation processes with the MOOCs.

To give an example to the case of MOOCs evaluation, it is worth asking what support should be given to the student in this type of course and, consequently, how the teacher’s monitoring of the student’s work should be evaluated. Eaton (2012) questions whether this support should be the same when a tuition is paid as when the course is free. The author considers that the follow-up should not be the same and, consequently, concludes that in the evaluation of the quality of the course this fact should have a different treatment. He comments that if MOOCs continue in this upward direction, institutions should put in place means to be able to accredit the quality and asks what tools are necessary for institutions to be able to accredit courses. In short, if the existing ones are not valid, the institutions will have to provide new evaluation and accreditation tools for the MOOCs.

IV. The Afortic Guide

The beginning of the evaluation of the quality of online teaching in Andalusian universities is Afortic, a guide for the evaluation of training actions based on information and communication technologies. This guide is a document developed by eight of the ten Andalusian universities promoted by the former Unit for the Quality of Andalusian Universities (UCUA). A reference manual was created to evaluate all types of training actions that use new information and communication technologies. There was freedom to decide which indicators were to be chosen for the evaluation according to the type of action: totally virtual, semi-presential, face-to-face with some support in new technologies, etc.

The guide is characterized by:

— The objective of making the teaching-learning process more flexible, adapting to the needs and possibilities of the students, thus eliminating any kind of space-time barrier.
— The use of technological means that revolve around information and communication based on an instructional strategy.
— It also aims to increase the possibilities of communication in teaching between teachers and students and among students themselves.
— It seeks to cover a wide range of possibilities for measuring quality, from face-to-face teaching (with the support of new technologies) to fully virtual teaching, and all possible intermediate combinations.

Based on the general approach of quality evaluation, a series of criteria and sub-criteria are established as the main indicators of the Afortic Guide (Blanco, Cordón, Infante; 2005). These indicators are grouped into five dimensions, as shown below:

— Planning of the training action. Indicators identifying the training action are established. All the information that the user needs to know if the training action is of interest to him/her will appear.
— Training action programme. Aspects related to the structure and development of the course are dealt with, such as time, objectives and contents.
— Resources of the training action. It refers to both human and technical resources available for the development of the course.
— Development of the training action. Aspects such as the methodology used and the evaluation system applied are developed.
— Quality of the results. It includes the final analysis once the training action has been carried out. It allows to evaluate the quality of the training action taking into account the results obtained.

These dimensions are the backbone for the elaboration of any procedure needed to develop the evaluation training actions based on ICT. These can be taken as a reference for the evaluation of any type of training that makes use of ICT. It is adapted to ICT tools to support teaching and to comprehensive training actions based entirely on the use of new technologies. In other words, the Afortic guide is a reference tool for developing evaluation procedures for training actions that make use of ICT, regardless of the use made of them.

The procedure consists of three stages. The first stage, prior to the training action, in which a peer evaluation and an external to the entity offering the course are implemented. A second stage called process, which is carried out during the course. In this case, the evaluation is internal and carried out by technicians from the university that teaches the course. And, finally, a third phase called product, which is carried out at the end of the course. By means of surveys, the aim is to measure the satisfaction of the users.

The evaluation carried out at each stage concludes with a brief report including the result of the evaluation (positive/negative), the strengths and weaknesses detected and proposals for improvement.

IV. Proposal for the adaptation of the Afortic Guide for the quality assessment of MOOCs

The Afortic guide can be a matrix document for the development of a procedure for the quality assessment and accreditation of MOOCs. However, a proposal with some modifications of the guide, regarding the procedure and the indicators of the procedure, is described below:

1. Adaptations proposed in the guide

In the document called 'guide', a series of criteria and sub-criteria are proposed for evaluation. On this set of criteria and sub-criteria, modifications can be made in the following fields:

- Regarding planning: name of the course, teachers, dates, how the contents are organized, etc.
- In relation to the programme: How it is structured, objectives to be fulfilled once the course is finished, nature of the materials used —videos, documents, etc.—, the activities that are proposed, social networks to be used, evaluation and/or certification.
- Regarding the resources: the human resources, if there are forecasts of student enrolment. It is necessary to incorporate a high number of tutors.
- In relation to the development of the process: action of the tutors and evaluation procedure used.
- With regard to the quality of the results: the satisfaction of the actors involved, both pupils and teachers.

In short, the modifications are related to the specific evaluation and monitoring criteria in the field of social networks, certifications, organization of content, human resources and registrations.

2. Proposed adaptations to the procedure

Taking advantage of the already existing procedure for the evaluation of virtual actions in Andalusian universities, it is proposed to continue evaluating the three key moments, that is, the materials prepared before their delivery, the development of the MOOCs at the time when the teaching action is being delivered, and, finally, the passing of a questionnaire to students and teachers to try to know their degree of satisfaction once the course is over. By evaluating these three phases of a MOOC, it is possible to have a sufficiently solid base to be able to evaluate a course qualitatively and quantitatively and thus be able to accredit it, in case it is the objective pursued. In this sense, significant changes in the procedure would occur in the indicators to be evaluated in each of the proposed phases.

3. Proposed adaptations to the indicators

In the first phase of the procedure, all the aspects that have to do with the training action are evaluated before it is given. In the first section, in which the evaluation criteria are related to the identification of the training action, some aspects related to the nature of the MOOCs should be introduced. From the point of view of the structure, it is necessary to highlight the location and access to the materials, due to the peculiarity of this type of training action and the diversity of formats in which the materials can be found. Regarding the objectives, indicators related to certification and badges should be introduced, in case the MOOC includes them.

From the point of view of content, the materials must be emphasized. For example, if the course is made up of videos, indicators on the speed of streaming, the quality of the image or the accessibility for disabled people can be incorporated. In case the materials are documents, HTML pages or PDF files, other evaluation criteria should be taken into account.

As regards the sections on activities and evaluation, usability and accessibility, resources and bibliography, no changes should be made. The indicators evaluated in the BAC procedure are perfectly valid for evaluating MOOCs. However, the part in which the communication tools are evaluated could be replaced by a block of evaluation criteria related to the interaction tools and social networks used by students and teachers.

In the second phase of the procedure, dimensions related to access control, participation and planning are evaluated. Taking into account that the contents of the MOOCs are offered in an open way, and the teacher has the task of trying to answer and solve all the doubts and activities that arise during the action, access control does not seem relevant. At this stage, the most important thing is to make sure that the students are correctly assisted by the teachers. The teachers should be able to answer all the doubts, so that if a student drops out, it is not due to a lack of attention. It should not be forgotten that a handicap of these courses is the enormous number of dropouts that occur and the lack of attention to the student can be a cause.

The satisfaction questionnaire passed on to students and teachers is the third and final phase of the evaluation procedure of the virtual courses. Once the MOOC has been completed, it is of great importance to know the opinion of teachers and students, that is, whether or not they were satisfied at the end of the course. In the questionnaire, a series of questions are posed to MOOC participants, distributed in different sections: planning, course contents, participation and interaction, activities and resources, usability and general assessment. A priori, everything indicates that the same structure of the questionnaire could be used. However, it would be advisable to reduce the number of questions, since in some cases a certain overlap in the questions asked seems to be observed (Martín-Rodríguez, 2012). In any case, it is proposed to ask about aspects related to the interaction with other students in social networks, whether the teacher has responded in time and form, and whether he or she has felt lost at any time during the course. In the usability section, we ask about the multimedia elements used, videos and download speed. And in the section dedicated to the accessibility, if the tools proposed to follow the course are easily accessible.

The certification of MOOCs is an issue that is still much debated, as it is an aspect that has not been taken into account in the guide or in the established procedure. However, in the absence of generally accepted criteria, it is noted that certification centres are beginning to appear for MOOCs similar to those that already exist for certifying English language proficiency, some free of charge and others for payment. On the other hand, a question for reflection and analysis is whether MOOCs that offer certification are of higher quality than those that do not offer certification.

In short, in view of the growth of this new online course offering, it is necessary to reconsider some issues that have already been dealt and solved in evaluation processes for other types of virtual courses. The Afortic guide can serve as a base document for the evaluation of the quality of the MOOCs. However, it would be necessary to work from this tool in order to incorporate modifications that allow adapting the evaluation procedure to the specificities of the MOOCs. Undoubtedly, an important key to the success and sustainability of MOOCs is the correct accreditation of the quality of the courses and the acceptance of the quality evaluation procedures by the educational community, as well as, in a broader sense, by the users of the courses.

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CHAPTER 14

ENRICHING THE PROFILE OF 3ECONOMY+ STUDENTS THROUGH MOBILITIES AND INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCES. THE STUDENTS' VOICES

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I. INTRODUCTION

The 3Economy+ project offers the opportunity to optimize the academic training of university students from three peripheral and disadvantaged territories such as Melilla, Portalegre and Malta to develop their skills and increase their employment prospects. In this academic training, the three areas that are being dealt are economics, marketing and tourism, as well as languages such as English, Spanish and Portuguese in a transversal way. To this end, they carry out a virtual academic training and participate in annual intensive stay programmes in each region. Likewise, they carry out international internships in companies of the countries above-mentioned. In this chapter, we are going to focus on the last two actions, since the main aim of this chapter is to make the students' voices being heard after having participated in these blended mobilities.

They have been asked about their experiences and opinions regarding the following aspects: the development of the internships, the role of their supervisors, the companies or institutions in which they have carried out their internships, the acquisition of competencies, and their global satisfaction with these international mobilities.

This chapter is divided into the following sections. Firstly, a description of the mobilities within the project is presented. Secondly, the methodology used in the study is introduced. Third, the results collected in the student's discourse are highlighted. Finally, the conclusions are drawn from the discourse of the students.

II. TYPES OF MOBILITIES IN 3ECONOMY+ PROJECT

As it has been indicated the 3Economy+ project goes beyond the virtual classes for the university students who participate in the project developed along the school year. This academic training is completed by two types of international mobilities: intensive sessions within the intensive programmes (IP) and the international internships.

1. A brief insight to the three Intensive Programmes

Regarding the intensive programmes, we shall not elaborate on them as in chapter 4, the three IPs carried out will be described in detail. Nonetheless, we are going to provide a brief insight to each one in order to contextualise the opinions of the students.

The IPs have been developed annually during the three years of the project in each country of the three partners. The first intensive programme took place in Melilla (Spain). Throughout these days, the students had the opportunity to attend language training courses in Spanish mainly for the Maltese and Portuguese students, conferences in Economics such as the relationship between the entrepreneur and the Public Administration, the digital transformation in the city of Melilla and taxation in the free ports among others conferences. Moreover, training visits were held in areas of political, economic and social importance such as the border crossing between the Spanish city of Melilla and the Moroccan city of Beni Ensar. Among the extra-activities, the participation in the European Year of Cultural Heritage stands out. The title of the activity is 'Melilla, multicultural city: feed your eyes, ears and palate' where the traditional cuisine of Melilla resulting from a mixing of cultures was accompanied with the best musical performances and traditional dances.

The second intensive programme was held in Portalegre, a city located in the region of Alentejo (Portugal). The following lines of action of an academic nature stand out: language training courses in Portuguese; presentations of activities carried out by interdisciplinary groups formed by one student from each university centre, conferences on heterogeneous contents oriented towards the area of marketing; the predominant area in this second year; lectures on digital transformation and marketing; training visits to strategic places from the point of view of local economic management (business incubator, Delta Cafés…), etc. Among the actions of extra-academic nature, the cultural ones stand out, among them, the visit to Elvas or Marvão.

The third and final intensive programme was held in Malta, the third partner of the project. This international mobility was the last of their multi-year formative experience. Among the academic activities the following ones can be highlighted: a large number of conferences on tourism —the predominant area of the third year of the project—, training visits to a number of cultural tourism sites and organisations including hotels, the National Archaeological Museum managed by Heritage Malta, among others. Regarding the cultural visits, it can be pointed out the visit to the Palazzo Falzon managed by Fondazzjoni Patrimonju Malti in Mdina.

2. International internships: companies or institutions

As it has been underlined in previous chapters, the main objective of the project involves developing a series of competencies and skills in the area of economics, tourism and marketing as well as multilingualism, in order to improve employment prospects and foster the acquisition of core competencies for effective professional development. In order to achieve this aim, a multi-year formative experience has taken place between 2017 and 2020.

In these three years, they have had the possibility to get an e-learning experience having an open access to materials, documents and media for improving learning, teaching and work opportunities within the fields of business, marketing and tourism and within multilingual environments. It has been done by fostering multilingualism and interculturality among the participants, through the use of the three languages of the consortium: English, Spanish and Portuguese.

In addition to this e-learning experience, they have also been offered complementary international training by providing them the possibility of accomplishing a three-months internship in one of the other two countries of their origin. Moreover, due to the current global health crisis of COVID-19 and for the safety of the students, this year the international internships are being carried out virtually.

They could develop these internships in companies and institutions related to the area of study of each student, that is, companies or institutions related to economy, marketing and tourism. In that way, they had the possibility to put the theory into practice they have learned and acquired through these years into practice. The companies and institutions were searched by the different professors of the three countries having in consideration a great number of criteria in order to attain the objective of this project and to fit to the academic, professional and personal needs of the different students.

In the three-year period of the project, it was decided that the internships of the students were going to be developed in two turns, due to the availability of the students, specifically, in summer of 2019 and summer of 2020 as during the academic year they are attending classes at the university. With this in mind, the 21 students participating in the project were keen to carried out these internships.

In the first turn, four students from the University of Granada, another four students from the Institute of Polytechnic in Portalegre and one student from the University of Malta have actually benefited from these internships.

In regard to this first turn, the information of the students and the companies or institutions where they carried out the internships is presented in the following table:

	Number of students	Destination	Companies or institutions	Area(s)
University of Granada-Melilla Campus	4	Portalegre (Portugal)	— BioBIP Incubator — Cubic Screen — S2R/Honda Motorcycles — Regional Tourism Entity, Delegation of Portalegre	Tourism Economy Marketing
University of Malta	1	Melilla (Spain)	— The Tourist Board of the Autonomous City of Melilla	Tourism
Polytechnic of Portalegre	4	Melilla (Spain)	— Port Authority of the Autonomous City of Melilla — África Travel — CIAMSA	Tourism Marketing Economy

Table 1. Information about the students who carried out the Internships in the first turn
Source: own elaboration

As mentioned before, in March 2020, the coronavirus outbreak was confirmed as pandemic by World Health Organization (WHO), a fact that forced at first the cancellation of the second turn of the placements. However, some companies have accepted to carry out the internships virtually giving the possibility to four more students of the University of Granada. The companies in which they are currently carrying out the internships are: Finao Biotech, Sr2 Motos, Entogenex all based in Portalegre (Portugal) and Palazzo Falson based in Malta. Therefore, the total number of students that have taken the advantage of carrying out the international internships are thirteen students.

III. Methodology

1. General Objective

Therefore, based on the experiences of the students, as it has been stated before, the main objective of this chapter is to make the students' voices being heard after having participated in these mobilities, both the international internships in companies of the countries above-mentioned and the annual intensive programmes held in each region.

2. Specific Objectives

In order to accomplish the general objective presented above, the students have been asked about their experiences and opinions regarding the following aspects which constitute the specific objectives of this chapter: the development of the internships, the role of their supervisors, the companies or institutions in which they have carried out their internships, the acquisition of competencies, and their global satisfaction with both types of international mobilities.

3. Instrument and design

In order to collect this information, the methodology used has been of a qualitative nature. A questionnaire based mainly on a series of open-ended and some close-ended questions is used as a data collection instrument and content analysis has been the information analysis technique employed (Bardin, 1991). This technique has been selected to analyse the opinion of the students due to its flexibility.

As observed in the introduction, the aspects dealt in the questionnaire are the following: sociodemographic data of the students, opinion about the development of the internships, about the role of the supervisors of the institutions of origin and destination and about the companies or institutions. Also, the questions allow us to track of the acquisition of competencies related to the different areas worked during the project in 3Economy+ students and their global satisfaction with the international mobilities. Students had to reflectively describe their experiences according to the different aspects just mentioned. This exercise of reflection allowed the students to value the results obtained after having accomplished the mobilities.

4. Participants

The participants who have answered the questionnaires were all the students who take part of the project in relation to the annual intensive programmes, and regarding the international internships, the number of participants and the supervisors in the institution of origin and destination are presented below:

	Number of students	Destination	Supervisors in the institution of origin	Supervisors in the institution of the destination
University of Granada-Melilla Campus	4	Portalegre (Portugal)	3	2
University of Malta	1	Melilla (Spain)	1	1
Polytechnic of Portalegre	4	Melilla (Spain)	1	1

Table 2. Number of the students and supervisors who were involucrated in the Internships in the first turn.
Source: own elaboration

5. Data analysis process

Given the nature of the study, the techniques used to analyse the information have been qualitative. Specifically, the analysis of the data carried out has been through a content analysis technique (Bardin, 1991; Cabrera, 2009). This technique allows us to understand, through their narratives, their opinion about the different mobilities (Trigueros-Cervantes, Rivera-García, and Rivera-Trigueros, 2018).

IV. Results: Experiences and perceptions of the students

In order to present the data obtained from the questionnaires, we are going to divide this section in five parts related to following aspects:

1. Development of the internships

In relation to the development of the internships, we can draw the following conclusions from their answers:

1. For all the students, it was the first time doing an international placement.
2. Almost all the students considered to have the skills to enable them to function professionally in an international context. Just one of them felt insecure:
   - 3SM [at the beginning I felt I had not all the skills to be able to complete my work successfully, so my company supervisor was a key factor to get adapted to the situation.]
3. They all assure to have applied the theory acquired in the learning process occurred in the development of the project. The following quotation is representative:
   - 7PW [I found the placement a bit challenging due to the technical words and processes I had to develop, however, two of conferences we attended in the intensive programme helped me to translate that theory into practise].
4. In general, they feel satisfied with the contents worked in the internship; however, some of the students highlighted the idea that they believe they needed more time to fully acquire the contents presented in the placement and expressed their desire to extend the period of time.

2. Supervisors of the institution of origin and destination

Regarding the role of the supervisors or tutors of origin and destination, the students from the three countries agreed that not only the supervisors of the institution of origin who explained and guided them before the placements but also the supervisors of the institution of the destination had a key role to carry out their internships in the best way possible. The following quotation is representative:

— 9SM [He invested so much energy and effort trying to explain us the functioning and organisation of each of our companies].

3. Companies or institutions

In relation to their perceptions of the companies or institutions in which they developed their placements, the conclusions drawn from the questions posed are the following:

1. All the staff of the companies welcomed them in a very positive way. They gave them all the necessary resources to accomplish their tasks. However, some limitations can be observed in their narratives:
   - 2SW [The hurdle I encountered was the limitation with the language. I could not feel totally comfortable because of my low level of Portuguese].
2. Regarding the adaptation of the mandated tasks in the workplace to the area studied in their degree, there are differences of opinion, as some students claim the similarity of the contents, but others discovered totally new concepts and processes.
   - 1SW [I carried out a market research and this is something I studied in my degree: Business Administration. I think it was a good opportunity to consolidate my knowledge in this area]
3. As it can be observed from their reflections, all participating students were generally satisfied with their companies. Just one of them would have changed her company if they had the possibility to do the placement again.

IV. The acquisition of competencies in 3Economy+ students

This study has also attempted to track the acquisition of the competencies related to the main areas worked in the project. For each area, a list of competencies was presented to the students and they had to comment if they had improved the skills of this area thanks to the international mobilities and mark those they thought as important ones for their professional future. In this chapter, we are going to present a brief insight to the competencies acquired by the university students who participating in the project.

Regarding the area of *economy,* it has been observed in the narratives that all the students claimed that they had improved the skills of the area of economy in the period of the project. Moreover, the competency that was highlighted by the majority of the students is 'knowing how to manage and administer a company, interpreting and/or understanding the information of its competitive location and identifying its strengths and weaknesses'. Thus, this means that they give to this ability a greater importance than to the other competencies presented in this area. On the contrary, 'Knowing new control instruments, such as the ERP software (Enterprise Resource Planning), they thought it was not very relevant for their near future.

For the area of *marketing,* all the students but one claimed to have improved their knowledge and understanding of the area. However, they all assure to have developed these two competencies: 'design, implement and follow up on marketing business plans' and 'design strategic plans for a company'. On the other hand, they have also pointed out three of the listed competencies as not important such as 'promote external and internal relations', 'manage marketing and promotions' and 'develop products, services and brands'.

Regarding the third main area, *tourism,* it could be observed in the narratives that the students had experienced an innovative way of learning this area and pointed out 'the ability to adopt a customer orientation and establish satisfactory relationships based on communication techniques and languages' as a very important competency in this area. Instead, none of them marked this one as an important competency 'to understand the heritage management, which allows the tourist to use the natural and cultural resources, and of other nature, according to the principles of economic, social and environmental sustainability.' This is somehow quite curious due to the current need to deal with the environmental needs.

Moving on to the area of *languages*, the students show, through their answers, how importance the acquisition of the languages are in these three professional areas. They are aware of that and they all state to have improved the following competency 'understand natural and comprehensive oral discourse, even when not clearly structured, on topics related to the economy, marketing and tourism' thanks to the project. In the same way, they declare that they find more difficult to 'produce a coherent and cohesive formal oral discourse on these areas that is appropriate to the context'.

Now, in relation to the *transversal competencies* it has to be said that two of the capacities have been marked as important by all the students, which are 'flexibility' and 'self-motivation'. This first one it is related to get adapted to changes by joining actions outside the former scope and change the organization if necessary, and the second one, self-motivation is linked to the feeling that drives you to keep on going and to show commitment. These competencies are key elements in the training of future professionals of the three areas. As it is quite possible to encounter unexpected events and problems that they will need to react to them and give a solution. In addition, almost all the students state they have improved these abilities in the period of the project.

Regarding, the *digital competences*, even though all the students have shown during these three years a great capacity to use the digital resources, it has to be highlighted that the area in which they feel more insecure is in relation to digital security. However, they did not consider this competence as important for their near professional future.

The last area we asked the students about was *personal and social growth.* This experience has offered the students the possibility to improve the understanding of values related to respect, tolerance to diversity, patience, caring for others, among other values. This learning has been understood by the students as a powerful mechanism to reduce inequality and increase the idea of diversity especially in multicultural contexts. They assure that, thanks to the project, they are more tolerant with other people and more interested in what is happening in the world every day.

In the light of the above, it can be stated that these international mobilities and therefore, experience new and real situations have made possible the acquisition of a great number of competencies that can be considered as tools which are useful for improving university students' future professional skills. In this way, the development of these competencies has become one of the

V. Global satisfaction with the international mobilities

The main results show that the students consider the intensive stays and the placements developed as a double opportunity for the development of academic-professional and personal competences, as well as an enriching and unique experience. According to the students, these experiences have been very positive and they have not only learned and understood how to work in a company in a country other than their own, but they have also known and enjoyed the environment, people from different cultural backgrounds and many more aspects. Some of them define this experience as an unforgettable one. There have also been downsides such as the difficulties to get adapted to the different culture of the other participants; however, all of them would repeat these experiences once again.

VI. Conclusions

In conclusion, it can be said that the international mobilities within the 3Economy+ project have had a transforming role with regard to the development of the above-mentioned competencies in university students. It is crucial to underline the importance of taking into account the voices of students so that participation in international mobilities is both a value, and a principle of procedure, in innovative pedagogical practices. This chapter can be an evidence that new training processes, as the participation in a European project such as 3Economy+, are capable of increasing pedagogical quality while contributing to the improvement of cultural diversity. In the light of the results, these mobilities should be taken as a backbone and as an enriching element in the curriculum. This issue must be taken into account at university level, especially in the training of future professionals of Economy, Marketing and Tourism.

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AFTERWORD

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If I had to summarize a three-year project in a few lines, I think I could not do it in a proper way as, in my opinion, it is a somewhat complicated exercise, given the amount of information, materials, activities and experiences carried out. The very first idea for the project initially came from the professor, G. Picton and I, to which B. Cortina joined. Later on, other colleagues and institutions were incorporated into the preparation of the application of the project. However, at that point we would have never imagined all the events that were going to happen from the day of its concession up to now.

During this period, a multitude of events have taken place, such as the attacks in Paris or Barcelona, various climatic disasters such as hurricanes, earthquakes or important fires like the one that affected the Brazilian Amazon, or the massive fire at Notre-Dame Cathedral, the persistent humanitarian and refugee crisis, the world political instability, wars in half the world, important elections, referendums and demonstrations such as the *Yellow vests movement* in Paris, etc. Nonetheless, one event that truly marked our beginnings was *Brexit*. The initial idea for a strategic higher education partnership started with a British university, to which we incorporated our Portuguese friends to form the 3Economy+ consortium. By 2014 it was the first time that we heard this concept and therefore, we were recommended not to join a British partner for the project as Great Britain was going to cease to belong to the European Community[1].

Even though the project was almost entirely designed, at least one more partner with the adjusted profile was required to apply for future calls. After some consultations, we contacted the University of Malta, a university that met the requirements

[1] The Brexit referendum took place on 23 June 2016 in the United Kingdom, against all predictions, it was approved with the 51,9% of the votes in favour of the British exit from the European Union.

of the project, and curiously it fitted in the exact profile we designed for the project. This fact allowed us to carry on with the idea of the project that was to implement an innovative program of virtual and regular training with the main aim of achieving educational excellence, as well as institutional modernization, from an international perspective, in the areas of economy, tourism and marketing.

Moreover, our intention was also to provide advanced skills and knowledge applied to new trends in business administration and management, marketing and international trade relations, tourism, ICTs and languages, as well as the acquisition of intercultural skills. All these aspects were thought in order to guarantee the access to the professional market at a local, national and international level. Therefore, it could be said that this project could perfectly add an international perspective to the training the students receive in their degrees.

The strategic partnership is based on modernising and improving the quality of the training of these students, highlighting existing economic development programmes within the different areas of specialisation in the partner countries, as well as promoting multilingualism and interculturalism among the participants, which are essential for the acquisition of language skills in English, Spanish and Portuguese. This helps us to cover important international geographic areas, many of them with a clear example of being global emerging economies.

It was in the 2017 Erasmus call within the Action KA203 - Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education when the consortium (formed by the University of Malta, the Polytechnic Institute of Portalegre and the University of Granada, specifically, in its campus located in the Autonomous City of Melilla) presented the project for the third time. This time the proposal included the action of cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices, with a clear identification of the three participating university campuses, whose locations are in three areas of reduced economic development. This fact is corroborated by EU statistics on territorial distribution (NUTS), but it can be also highlighted that these three areas have an important local and social role in promoting the economy of their region, and consequently of their country. And as the proverbial says, *third time lucky*, the project was approved.

The start point of the project was in September of 2017, we felt somewhat lost; however, we were longing to develop all the ideas that we prepared for the period of two years. We had an important challenge marked by the Erasmus+ programme as the main aim of the project was to provide a specific training for university students that would enable them to combat the growing levels of unemployment, and in particular youth unemployment. A task that has become one of the most urgent for European governments, within the strategy known as Europe 2020.

This project would provide great opportunities to university students who come from remote, rural environments or who live on small islands such as the island of Malta or in peripheral regions, such as the North African European city of Melilla or Alto Alentejo region in Portugal. For this reason, our intention was to be a key factor and a driving force for attempting to help to overcome the socio-economic crisis that was affecting, and is still affecting, European countries, by boosting the employment and promoting social equity and inclusion.

To accomplish this, the project was divided into three interrelated blocks. These blocks are the following:

— *Development of professional skills, with a collaborative work program based on the resolution of integrated tasks, which have been carried out through a blended learning approach. To this end, students were grouped in heterogeneous, interdisciplinary and international teams and worked through a Learning* Management System (LMS) for the resolution of tasks in the different areas, being the English language, the language of communication among the three partners. In the LMS, the specialised teachers of each main area: economy, marketing and tourism, and the three languages of the consortium uploaded materials such as documents, tasks, tutorials to be worked with them in online sessions.
— *Promotion of multilingualism.* Although the language of communication of the consortium has been English, students have been encouraged to carry out tasks introducing the use of the other two languages of the consortium. Therefore, in the different intensive programmes, students have been introduced each year to the use of the local language of each partner (Spanish, during the first year; Portuguese, during the second year, and English during the last one). In addition, the institutions of the consortium have promoted the student exchange under the Erasmus programme. At the end, the aim was to provide students with the necessary language skills to broaden their professional horizons.
— Every year each partner organized an *Intensive Program* (IP) with the specialised area and language of their country. Here, the groups of students could present the work developed during the year. They worked collaboratively through the use of LMS, online chats, forums or by using apps such as WhatsApp. Moreover, in these IPs they received lectures and conferences from the best professionals of the local area.
— *International placements.* The students had the opportunity to participate in a work experience under the Erasmus internship programme. The collaborating companies or institutions were placed in the countries of the three partners. The main goal was to give the students the opportunity to put the theory into practice, and thus improving their skills.

Up to now, we have identified the most relevant actions carried out in these three years; however, *not all was plain sailing.* Nonetheless, we think that by mentioning some of these challenges we can help other applicants with our own experience.

The first challenge to be considered is the cultural barrier. Even though the three partners are Mediterranean countries, there are certain things that differentiate us. Some of these things are the mealtimes, tastes, allergies, intolerances, but also religious differences. However, we can say that these differences have drawn us together. For instance, half of the students in Melilla are Muslims, and we could celebrate Ramadan[2] together, we tasted their food, customs, and we have witnessed the adaptation of all the students.

Another gap to be mentioned, especially at the beginning of the Project, was the language. There are three official languages from the three partners: Spanish, Portuguese and English; and as it has been mentioned before, the English language was the medium of communication. However, not all the participants, students and teachers, had the same level of language proficiency. Therefore, there were certain difficulties that were successfully overcome with the use of other languages of the consortium. In addition, other languages or dialects came into play when we were all together such as Tamazight, Arabic and Maltese. This situation has enriched us all, improving our understanding of the other languages. To this end, this multinational, multilingual, multicultural and multi-generational team has worked to ensure that this was not a problem.

Another issue to be highlighted is the different ways of functioning of each university institution. The way of working was not homogenous, regarding the administrative bureaucracy and also academically speaking. This fact leads to a work dynamic with different rhythms creating an imbalance, such as delays in the deadline of the tasks, the way of dealing with the contents, the organisation of the events, etc. Therefore, it is of high priority to get to know the institutions and colleagues who take part of the consortium at the beginning of the project as the more you know the way of working in the institutions and the professors, the faster you may achieve the desired objectives. To all this, it is necessary to add the limitations of the number of participants in the project, including not only students but also teachers and other people who take part of the project. Let us not forget that the three university campuses are small, with not a large number of teachers and students where only some degrees are taught.

We cannot forget, as we mentioned at the beginning, that during the period of the project we have had many events that have marked our project, such as the UN Climate Summit, the Ebola outbreak or the consummation of Brexit, but nothing it is comparable to what we are suffering this year at a global level, the COVID-19 health crisis. This global pandemic is hitting us at the moment and obviously, it has affected the project. As an example, the multiplier event which was going to take place in March this year had to be cancelled due to this crisis. Furthermore, it has marked our behaviour and it will mark our way of working in the coming years. Blended and distance learning models such as the one we have implemented in this project will be the benchmark. We must be prepared for what may happen in the near future. It is on

[2] Referring to the meaning that entails the fasting of Muslin students, the adaption to their schedules, etc. During the three years, we have celebrated many festivities, all of them in mutual respect among all the participants of this Project.

us, as teachers, to be able to adapt our mechanisms and to find new ways to preserve the talent of the students regardless their backgrounds, regions or countries of origin.

As the coordinator of the project, I have no doubt that all the participants of the project have tried their best working with the clear purpose of providing the best training for future professionals from disadvantaged regions of Europe, but also designing a blended learning study plan that completes their current learning process. These chapters have been designed to provide an insight of our contribution in the educational improvement of these university students. It would be a source of special reward for us if the experience of the 3Economy+ project could help and inspire others. All current and future outcomes will keep being shared online and through direct and personal contact established among the higher education institutes participating. The website of the project keeps user up to date by making available digital learning materials like MOOCs and videos together with other text-based research and study materials. To conclude, we would like to encourage other colleagues to share our experience and to contact us requesting more information about this project.

The members of the 3Economy+ Project would like to present a publication of best practices already in place at the project partners in terms of international business, marketing and tourism, in the international procedures related to each of the contexts in which this project is focused. We think it will serve as a useful instrument to increase economic cooperation among the three regions involved and collection of best practices in the field of business, marketing and tourism, being this our objective. The publication consists of 14 chapters structured in 3 sections, where we address how to improve in the management of European projects, from our point of view, how to enhance the profile and training of the 3Economy+ project students and how to improve the blended learning, since with all the material that has been generated in this project we intend to create a MOOC so that it is available for free and open to anyone interested in content in the areas we have worked on. All of it, is the result of our experience during years of work, but also, basically, because of the participation in this project, in which we only intend through a quick reading to show our ideas of how to face each of the topics that are exposed. Maybe not every reader agrees with the content, but these are the sensations that each author has reflected. This project was selected in the 2017 call for proposals within the KA2 Action - Cooperation for innovation and exchange of good practices, more specifically, in Action KA203 - Strategic partnerships for higher education.

Erasmus+

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