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**A Bourdieusian analysis of the participation of Polish students in the ERASMUS
Programme: Cultural and Social capital perspectives**

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A Bourdieusian analysis of the participation of Polish students in the ERASMUS Programme: Cultural and Social capital perspectives

Abstract

In this paper we examine the perceptions of ERASMUS agents of Polish students' participation in the EP. We provide a Bourdieusian analyse of the cultural and social capital acquisition of students based on the qualitative data, collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with ERASMUS agents, of a European research project. We argue that: Polish students' participation in the EP has a positive impact on their academic achievement, cultural, social and linguistic capital, but, at the same time, it has a negative impact on degree completion of students as they get highly paid jobs, which prevent them from fully developing their cultural capital; ERASMUS Tourism has its value and place in the EP, because it provides students with the opportunity to develop their cultural, social and linguistic capital; and a Bourdieusian analysis of the experiences of ERASMUS students provides a better understanding of the impact student participation in the EP on their development.

Introduction

The ERASMUS Programme (EP) was launched in 1987 to promote and support student mobility and cooperation in higher education (Lanzendorf and Teichler, 2002). The current objectives – 25 years later – are to support the realisation of a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and to reinforce the contribution of higher education and advanced vocational education to the process of innovation. At the operational level, the aims are to improve the quality and quantity of student and staff mobility, as well as multilateral cooperation between higher education institutions and between higher education institutions and enterprises throughout Europe. The ultimate aim of the EHEA is to increase the degree of transparency and compatibility of higher education systems to enhance the competitive position of European higher education (see European Commission, 2007).

Despite the broadening of the programme and its embeddedness in the European Commission's SOCRATES programme, the hallmark in 2012 is still the support of mobility of students and staff across Europe. The EP provides students with financial support, i.e. grants, aiming to cover the additional costs for study abroad, for temporary student mobility within Europe (Lanzendorf and Teichler, 2002). That said, Vossensteyn et al. (2010) found that financial constraints are the most important factor that restricts ERASMUS participation, because the grant provided is not sufficient to cover incurred costs. Our Polish participants stressed that the 'EP does not adapt to the individual needs of their institutions and their regions, as there is no scope for a special treatment in the EP, it is not flexible' (Vossensteyn et al., 2010: 104). There is no specific treatment for individual countries or encouragement through offering better grants.

Many studies have been carried out on the EP, including the vast amount of evaluative studies carried out by the University of Kassel (see e.g. Teichler, 2002). These studies yield important insights in the achievements of the programme as well as its problems. In terms of theoretical approaches, most of the studies take a

pragmatic stance, are data-driven, and are particularly looking for answers to policy and practice related questions. There is a lack of theoretically substantiated studies (see also Kehm and Teichler's (2007) general assessment of the state of the art in internationalisation research). Studies have addressed the surplus value of the EP in terms of advantages on the labour market and career advancement (e.g. Wielemans, 1991; Teichler and Jahr, 2001; Maiworm, 2001; González et al., 2011), but also these studies have not been cast in theoretical-conceptual notions.

Our contribution is rooted in sociological theory, and builds particularly upon the concepts of social and cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1997). There are many other studies using these concepts, such as: Murphy-Lejeune (2002, 2003, 2008), Wiers-Jenssen and Try (2005), Wiers-Jenssen (2006, 2008a, 2008b), Saarikallio-Torp and Wiers-Jenssen (2010a, 2010b), Endrizzi (2010), Cicchelli (2010) and Bourdieu and Boltanski (1975). But our study is original because, not only for its theoretical approach, but also because it focuses on an under-researched country: Poland. As our study is of a qualitative nature, we do provide insight into how policy is being applied and understood by the ERASMUS agents, and these insights will have implications for policy making at European, national and institutional levels. In addition, our gathered data stems not only from administrators involved in the national and local organisation of the programme, but also from survey responses from students who participated and considered participation in the programme.

ERASMUS and the context of career prospects

From the available literature, it appears that the EP has positive impacts on students' career prospects. Participation in the EP offers students an opportunity to acquire and develop skills, competences and attributes that are valued by employers. The 2007 report of the Polish Foundation for the Development of the Education System (FRSE) stresses the impact that students' participation in the EP has on students' CV:

As shown by the VALERA Survey of Former Erasmus Students 2005, 54% Erasmus students see a positive impact of their participation in the Programme on their subsequent career [...] Career advisers emphasise that the Erasmus experience in a CV of a job applicant is particularly highly valued by multinational enterprises and concerns, because it is a guarantee of their ability to function in an international environment, foreign language skills and mobility (ibid.: 63-64).

In the current world economic climate, changes in skills, career concepts (Arthur et al., 1995, Driver, 1994) and labour market demands have intensified due to rapid technological developments and the international expansion of organisations (Semeijn et al., 2005) and businesses. Therefore, higher education has been under increasing pressure to meet the demands of employers for highly skilled, flexible and mobile graduates with an international orientation (Allen and van der Velde, 2007; de Weert, 2007; Gürüz, 2008; Jahr and Teichler, 2007; Teichler, 2011). Whereas research cited above gives many insights in the macro-level changes in the labour market and the apparent relevance of employability and an international dimension (see Brown et al., 2011, for a critical view), little is known about ERASMUS agents' perceptions of the awareness, motivations and benefits of students' participation in the EP and the role

these agents play, in the immediate social environment, in supporting (or limiting) international mobility.

Research design

This paper originates from a European research project (Vossensteyn et al., 2010) whose objective was to shed light on existing barriers to student participation in the EP and to suggest how the EP could be improved in qualitative and quantitative terms. The data presented in this paper is based on the qualitative part of this project and was collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews with ERASMUS Coordinators, ERASMUS Administrators and International Officers (taken together and referred in this paper as ERASMUS agents) of Polish higher education institutions that are member of the ERASMUS charter, and interviews with representatives from the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MoSHE) and senior members of the Foundation for the Development of the Education System (FRSE). Due to the assurance of confidentiality given to our participants, we do not reveal any data in our paper which would compromise their anonymity. We also use data from the quantitative part of the project, i.e. the EP survey among Polish students, to support the analysis of the qualitative data. The survey data was collected in 2010 in seven countries: Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Spain, Poland, Sweden and UK, with a participation rate of around 21,000 students.

Theoretical framework: A Bourdieusian analysis of cultural and social capital

According to Bourdieu (1997) cultural capital exists in the form of an embodied, objectified and institutionalised state. The long-lasting dispositions of the mind and the body of individuals are the *embodied state*; the cultural goods which are the trace or realisation of theories and their critiques and problematics are the *objectified state*; and the educational qualifications that guarantee and confer entirely original properties on the cultural capital are the *institutionalised state*. Cultural capital ‘can be acquired, to a varying extent, depending on the period, the society, and the social class, in the absence of any deliberate inculcation, and therefore quite unconsciously’ (ibid.: 48-49). In the case of “quite unconsciously”, the role and value of informal education in the creation of cultural capital is visible.

In relation to the objectified state of cultural capital, which involves objects and media such as writings (books), paintings, monuments, instruments (computers), machinery (means of production), research, etc., Bourdieu (1997) claims that these forms of cultural capital involve the need for economic capital to purchase these objects and it also involves the need of the embodied state of cultural capital to study and manipulate these objects. The institutionalised state of cultural capital is represented in the form of qualifications, as they are the objectified embodiment of cultural capital and confer on its holder a conventional, constant, legally guaranteed value with respect to culture. They are the means of comparing a qualification holder with another in a local, national and global labour market and determining the economic value of the holder of the qualification in the labour market.

Bourdieu (1997: 51) defines social capital as the ‘aggregate of actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition’. This network

can be a group such as family, class, tribe, group, club, school, church, party, etc. and it is based on acquaintance, recognition, and acceptance of obligations and trust. Bourdieu (1997: 52) claims that ‘the network of relationships is the product of investment strategies, individual or collective, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing or reproducing social relationships that are directly usable in the short or long term’. For Coleman (1988) social capital is defined by its function and by a variety of different entities, ‘with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors...’ (ibid.: S98). In his definition, the proximity factor is very important in the establishment of a membership, whether this is by geographic, blood, faith, profession, interest, study, culture, language, economic, or social proximity. We argue that social capital is power which generates power, because ‘power relations are rooted in the system of social networks’ (Foucault, 1982: 224), where explicit and implicit mechanisms and regulations provide privilege, i.e. who gets to develop his/her cultural capital and sanctions (punishment), i.e. who does not get to develop his/her cultural capital, to members of these networks. According to Montgomery (2000: 5), ‘social capital is not passive; and it is not infinitely pliable’. We further argue that development of cultural capital depends on the support of the social capital available to individuals.

According to Bourdieu (1997), the reproduction of social capital does not only presuppose, but demands an unceasing effort of sociability, a continuous series of exchanges in which recognition is endlessly affirmed and reaffirmed. This endlessly affirmation and reaffirmation of recognition maintain and perpetuate the generation and regeneration of social capital. Cultural capital does not exist without social capital and the embodied, objectified and institutionalised state of cultural capital are the bases on which social capital is built. There are many studies about the EP, but none of them explain and analyse the experience of EP students and the impact that their participation have on their personal, academic and professional development, i.e. the development of their cultural and social capital. It is from a Bourdieusian perspective that we approach our analysis of their awareness of the benefits of their participation in the EP; their motivation to participate; its impact on their personal development, academic achievement and on the Polish labour market.

Findings

The EP agents’ unanimous comprehension of their role is to make Polish students understand the benefits and the impact their participation in the EP will have on their human capital. They argue that the EP participation helps to create ‘changes in persons that bring about skills and capabilities that make them able to act in new ways’ (Coleman, 1988: S100). They make use of a variety of tools, i.e. information booklets, meetings, word-of-mouth, web pages, electronic networks, lecturers and collaboration with career development officers. The agents use terms like “improvement of employability”, “investments in themselves”, and “creating network relations” to illustrate the benefits of the EP.

In the following sections the main findings will be presented: The agents’ perceptions of students’ motivation to participate in the EP; the impact of the students’ participation in the EP on their academic achievement; and the impact of EP on the students’ recruitment in the Polish labour market.

ERASMUS agents' perceptions of students' motivation to participate in the EP

According to the participants in this study, the process of applying to take part in the EP is one of the barriers affecting students' participation in the EP, as the application process and arrangements can be demanding and stressful. However, the overall majority of ERASMUS agents agree that students' motivation to participate in ERASMUS seems to be related more to students' perception of the impact that their participation in the EP will have on their own market value, i.e. their human and cultural capital, rather than the desire for having new life experiences, knowing a different culture and learning a new language. A participant mentioned that:

Students who comeback from the EP show their value added. In the last few years we have seen an increase of interest in the EP, because when students see that the students who took part in the EP have something extra than they do, they start to search for different programmes in the EP for them to take part too.

In this example, one can see that getting 'value added' and that 'something extra' are also motivating factors which encourage other students to participate in the EP. The added value is the development of their cultural capital in its embodied, objectified and institutionalised state, i.e. from dispositions of the mind and cultural goods to qualifications (Bourdieu, 1997). According to Morley (2007), reflecting on the UK experience, knowledge acquisition, processing and transfer are given central importance in today's knowledge economy and educational experiences and processes can contribute to the development of employability skills, what she named 'the X factor', and the commodification of qualifications and competencies. Bracht et al. (2006) found that European employers strongly believe that students with international experience have improved levels of competence, i.e. employability skills, such as: written communication skills; analytical competences; problem-solving ability; adaptability; initiative; assertiveness, decisiveness, persistence; and planning, co-ordinating and organising. Janson et al. (2009) point out that former ERASMUS students believe that competences in socio-communicative skills, intercultural abilities and problem-solving abilities are highly valued by employers. Morley's (2007) major finding was the emphasis that employers place on employability skills in graduate recruitment. These "X Factors" are also perceived as an 'investment', as another participant put it:

Students who are motivated to take part in the EP know that they are investing in their careers, which proves to be a great driving force and incentive for them to go to study abroad. They are aware of the fact that they are investing in themselves.

The relationship between participation in the EP and the financial benefits acquired is stressed by a participant who claimed that:

We have noticed an increase in the number of students applying to go abroad to gain skills and to practice and get experience in order to get more money, i.e. better salaries. These seem to be the reasons why students find EP beneficial more than going abroad to study and have fun.

ERASMUS agents emphasised that students know that skills, practice and experience have “remuneration value” in the job market. Jahr and Teichler (2002) argue that formerly mobile graduates earned more money some four year after graduation than formerly non-mobile graduates. Another participant opened up the scope of the EP to include the opportunities that the EP offers students of internships/placements abroad. He said:

We found that internships of all kinds are highly valued by potential employers, and an internship abroad provides ‘added value’ to a graduate’s diploma.

The perceptions by ERASMUS agents presented above are supported by the findings of the EP participation survey (Vossensteyn et al., 2010) and the 2008 FRSE Report. In Table 1, below, we present the findings of our survey focusing on students who selected their reasons for participating or consider participation in the EP.

Table 1 –Perceptions of students who participated and who are interested in participating in the EP of the benefits of taking part in the EP

Survey statements: the ERASMUS Programme...	Students who participated in the EP	Students who are interested in the EP
‘benefits for my future employment opportunities in home country’	84%	87%
‘benefits for my future employment opportunities abroad’	72%	74%
‘opportunity to develop soft skills, i.e. adaptability, demonstrating initiative’	87%	76%

The percentages above are the sum of students who perceived these statements as being *relevant* and *very relevant* in the Likert Scales.

The FRSE (2008) reports that around three-quarters of the students, who took part in an internship/placement through the EP, felt that their experience had a positive effect on their future careers. Also, around three-quarters of the student who studied abroad through the EP felt that their experience would have a positive influence on their future careers. As one ‘cannot separate a person from his or her knowledge, skills, health, or values’ (Becker, 1993: 16), i.e. their cultural capital, these graduate attributes are increasingly important in the recruitment process (Harvey, 2000). One can see that the EP provides an “expanding educational opportunities”, as Apple (1997) would term it, for Polish students to develop their cultural capital. These views are also represented in the MoSHE, as participant concurred that:

Of course, employers prefer graduates who have some international experience, because they have been impacted by different cultures and were exposed to different working practices.

In the examples above, one can observe that working, studying or travelling towards developing a “marketable CV” is the overall motivation of students taking part in the EP. This motivation is even stronger when the institution of higher education they

attend has a considerable “reputation”. Bracht et al. (2006) found that 38% of employers consider the reputation of the host higher education institution as a criterion for their recruitment decision when employing ERASMUS students. It is important to observe that perceptions of students in the findings of the EP survey (Vossensteyn et al., 2010) can be compared to the perceptions of employers in the findings of Bracht et al. (2006), as students also perceive the reputation of the host higher education institution as having an impact of their employment prospects. In Table 2, below, we present the findings of our survey focusing on students perceptions of the impact that the quality of the institution of their choice has on their career prospects.

Table 2 – The perceptions of students who participated and who are interested in participating in the EP of the impact that the quality of the institution of their choice has on their career prospects

Survey statements: the ERASMUS Programme...	Students who participated in the EP	Students who are interested in the EP
‘quality of the host institutions’	48%	73%
‘opportunity to choose the institution abroad’	60%	84%

The percentages above are the sum of students who perceived these statements as being *relevant* and *very relevant* in the Likert Scales.

In the Reflex project, Allen and van der Velden (2007) pointed out that their findings confirmed the prevalent view that having followed a prestigious study programme increases the chance of gaining career and/or professional/innovative dimensions advantages. Studying abroad and international elements of studying in their home countries also help to prepare students for employment at home or abroad (Teichler and Jahr, 2001; Teichler, 1996; Teichler, 2001) because EP students have more extra-cultural capital than non-EP students. This is a belief that is also shared by employers (Teichler and Janson, 2007)

The possibility of acquiring future financial benefits is not the only factor influencing the motivation of students. Although all participants recognise that students get value added from participating in the EP, some of the participants do not recognise that ‘Academic tourism’ or ‘ERASMUS tourism’ is a learning opportunity for personal growth. For these participants, ‘ERASMUS tourism’ is still a problematic issue. As a participant stated that:

One thing we have noticed is that when a student takes part in the EP, for example, in Spain, then they want to go to France, Italy, the UK and etc. They chose another programme in the EP in order to get to see those countries. Their choice is based not on the programme which they are going to participate but on what they can see in those countries. This is a type of academic tourism, i.e. ERASMUS tourism.

In this example, one can see that the location of the host institution is also one of the factors influencing students’ decision on the EP. The EP provides students with two grants: one study and another for work placement. That means that students have two

opportunities to engage in “ERASMUS tourism”. These perceptions are supported by the findings of the EP survey (Vossensteyn et al., 2010). In Table 3, below, we focus on students’ perceptions of the impact of living abroad on their personal development.

Table 3 – The perceptions of students who participated and who are interested in participating in the EP of the impact of living abroad has on their personal development

Survey statements: the ERASMUS Programme...	Students who participated in the EP	Students who are interested in the EP
‘opportunity to live abroad’	94%	89%
‘opportunity to learn/improve a foreign language’	95%	96%
‘opportunity to meet new people’	92%	83%

The percentages above are the sum of students who perceived these statements as being *relevant* and *very relevant* in the Likert Scales.

Some ERASMUS agents seem to perceive ERASMUS tourism as a waste of time and resources, because students are making their choice to study abroad based only on what they can see and not on what they can learn. However, ERASMUS agents appear to not be aware that although students choose to study abroad via the EP only to see a different country and have different experiences that are not course related, these students are also enriching and enhancing their cultural capital. As Bourdieu (1997) points out, long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body – i.e. the embodied state – is a form of cultural capital as it develops students’ appreciation of culture, art, museums and historic places. ERASMUS tourism also develops the objectified state of students as they can practice and develop their linguistic skills (Bourdieu, 1997) – i.e. their ‘linguistic capital’ (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990: 73), their understanding and use of an international language. Therefore, ERASMUS tourism is a means of self-improvement.

ERASMUS agents’ perceptions of the impact of students’ participation in the EP on students’ academic achievement

All participants, in this study, agreed that student participation in the EP has a huge impact on the progress of students when they come back to their home universities. Students who took part in the EP acquired additional knowledge, skills and competencies, but they also acquired new life skills and experiences. A participant argued that:

When student go abroad they have to become more independent. They have to take care of themselves. So, when they comeback they feel more self-confident. They can do anything. That is a very good experience. They have also learned what other methods of teaching are used abroad. They have had access to libraries with foreign literature. And sometimes, when they are specialising in a particular field, they can go and work with equipment that are just not available in their home universities.

In this example, one can observe that the EP not only offers the possibility of acquiring different life experiences, but also the opportunity to learn to work with equipment and have access to resources which are not available in their home universities. Another participant claimed that:

One of the greatest things I have noticed, as far as the EP is concerned, is that when students come for the very first time into my office, they are often very shy and unable to specify their goals. They are unable to clarify their objectives. They do not even know whether they want to take part in the EP or not. Suddenly, when they decided to take part in the EP and when they come back after having taken part in the EP four or six months later, they are unrecognisable. They are very different people. Something has changed in their attitude towards life. They have become more mature and industrious. They know what they want to do in the next five years. They have clear career paths. They become self-motivated towards achieving higher goals. And I notice these changes very often, and this is something that fascinates me. This is the biggest effect of taking part in the EP and it is very satisfying.

Bracht et al. (2006) notice that some of the expert participants in their survey ‘notably perceive a growth of “soft-skills”, such as problem-solving ability, openness and flexibility’ (ibid.: 19), on students when they come back to their home universities. According to them, 73% of the expert participants rate the knowledge and skills of EP students when they come back to their own institutions as being better than non-EP students. Jahr and Teichler (2002) contend that internationally mobile students also rated higher in competences such as: cross-disciplinary thinking, problem-solving and learning ability, analytical competence, ability to work independently and under pressure, and in oral and written communication skills. Another participant stressed that the new perspectives and additional points of view, newly acquired practical skills and new information which students bring home from their participation in the EP not only benefit themselves, but also their fellow students. He asserted that:

They tend to bring to their home school a new take on a variety of topics that locally are considered obvious. In case of internships, since we work only with the best partners abroad, the students bring lots of new information on latest trends, and machinery skills, etc.

Bracht et al. (2006) argue that most experts perceive that students with international experience demonstrate an increase in their ‘socio-communicative competences’. Another participant emphasised that students who participated in the EP acquire skills and competencies in ‘solving problems’ and ‘working in international groups’. She stated that:

The EP has an important impact on students’ academic progress when they come back because: they can further develop their personal competences; they can study areas that are not available in Poland; they can practice foreign languages; they can experience different teaching methods; and they become more competent in

solving problems and working in international groups because of their better intercultural and interpersonal competencies.

The evidence presented above seems to indicate that students' participation in the EP has an impact on their holistic development and, therefore, it has an impact on their academic progress when they come back to their home universities. One can observe in these examples that the EP provides students with an opportunity to develop their cultural capital in its embodied and objectified state (Bourdieu, 1997), as students develop their dispositions of mind (personal attributes) and body as well as their competencies and generic skills. As students experience different teaching and learning methods, learn to study independently from their teachers, learn to search for and use relevant academic sources, and acquire the skills of using equipment which are not available to them at their home institutions, they become more independent and self-confident. They change their attitude they become more mature and 'industrious'. They are more focused and become problem-solvers. The evidence presented above is supported by the EP survey (Vossensteyn et al., 2010). In Table 4, below, we present the findings of our survey focusing on the reasons students provided for their academic development and achievement.

Table 4 – The reasons students provided for their academic development and achievement

Survey statements: the ERASMUS Programme...	Students who participated in the EP	Students who are interested in the EP
'opportunity to experience different learning practices and teaching methods'	83%	80%
'opportunity to develop soft skills, i.e. adaptability, demonstrating initiative'	87%	76%
'opportunity to learn/improve a foreign language'	95%	96%

The percentages above are the sum of students who perceived these statements as being *relevant* and *very relevant* in the Likert Scales.

EP participation and its impact on the Polish labour market

Regarding the relationship between ERASMUS participation and the labour market, all participants, in this study, believe that participation in the EP has an impact on the Polish labour market. A participant declared:

We believe that the EP has an important impact on the Polish labour market because all students who went in the EP made contacts for life. When they come back to Poland they look for jobs in international companies, because they did their work placement in international companies. Students who took part in the EP have mentioned this.

Another participant observed that:

It is an advantage for a candidate to have taken part in the EP when they are seeking employment in big companies and international companies.

Two participants pointed out that participation in the EP results in 100 per cent employment. One stated that:

A research done in our labour market shows that employers are looking very much for general competences: competencies in foreign languages, the ability to work as part of a team, and the ability to communicate with people with different cultural backgrounds. Because ERASMUS mobility develops such skills, there is a direct link between employability and ERASMUS mobility. In my experience, students who took part in the EP have far better abilities and skills for employers than those who did not take part in the EP. The only problem is that ERASMUS students are looking for better jobs and they demand higher salaries. Yes, yes! They know their value. That is why sometimes takes them longer to find a good jobs. The EP in Poland achieves 100 per cent employability and which can be creating problems for universities, because students are not able to complete their degrees because they have been employed and are getting high salaries. My university had to start providing those students with weekend courses in order to help them complete their degrees.

One can see in this example, that students' participation in the EP, independently of their socio-economic backgrounds, has an advantage and a disadvantage for the students themselves and for their universities. The advantage is that ERASMUS students develop their cultural and social capital by taking part in the EP and, therefore, they get better and higher paid jobs. The disadvantage is that these better and highly paid jobs prevent students from completing their degrees, i.e. developing their full institutionalised cultural capital by completing their degrees.

Although their institutionalised cultural capital has been partially developed, i.e. EP students have completed a huge part of their degrees, it appears that the international perspective of their curricula and their experience abroad fill in the gaps in the Polish home and international markets, as employers offer them highly paid jobs. One can also notice that there is evidence that some institutions are adapting and providing weekend courses in order to help students to complete their degrees and in order to avoid institutions having high incompleteness and withdrawal rates, as it can impact on their reputations and funding. Bracht et al. (2006) found that internationally experienced graduates work more often in positions with high responsibility in 42% of the organisations and that they command higher salaries in 21% of the organisations surveyed in their research, mainly in organisations from Central and Eastern Europe. ERASMUS Polish students know that to be true. Their findings suggest that study abroad makes the CV more interesting and substantially increases the opportunity to be considered in the recruitment process. Jahr and Teichler (2002) argue that their data showed that former ERASMUS students are over-represented in some high level occupations and earn about 10% more than non-ERASMUS students. According to this participant, his university had to start providing those students with

weekend courses in order to help them complete their degrees. The other participant pointed out that:

In an EP course in logistics delivered in conjunction with the Czech Republic, 100 per cent of their students, after the EP programme, all acquired good jobs because they had the enhanced knowledge, skills and experience which employers were looking for.

ERASMUS participation is a means of adding value to students' cultural capital as the knowledge, skills, experiences and competencies acquired make their CV marketable, and a marketable CV is a ticket to employment at home or abroad. Another participant said:

I think that because participation in the EP also gives students the possibility of internships in some foreign companies, I am sure it does have an impact on the labour market.

These examples seem to suggest that there is a direct link between participation in the EP and the labour market in Poland, because students who took part in the EP acquired knowledge, skills, experiences and competencies that employers are looking for. This not only leads to good jobs, but also to good salaries, because of the investment, i.e. the course programmes attended and internships they participated during their EP. Students by participating in the EP raise 'their future income by increasing their lifetime earnings' (Woodhall, 1997) – lifetime earnings here are cultural capital, and not financial capital. Students' cultural capital has increased as students acquired competencies, including generic skills, i.e. communication in an international language and team-working – their cultural capital in its objectified state – and personal attributes and dispositions, i.e. resilience and commitment – their cultural capital in its embodied state. Therefore, ERASMUS students' value in the labour market has also increased, together with their lifetime employability, due to their language capital. They know that 'the more market-oriented subjects and practical skills they have on their CVs, the more attractive they believe they will be to prospective [employers]' (Thornton, 2001: 44). Of course, the employability rate of students would also be influenced by the supply and demand of undergraduate students in the logistics of students on the labour market. It would even be influenced by the reputation of the host institution abroad and the quality of graduates they are producing. The evidence presented above is supported by the EP survey (Vossensteyn et al., 2010), which are presented earlier in Table 1.

Conclusion

In this paper, we have analysed how ERASMUS agents and students perceive the EP. According to the participants in this study, the personal motivation of Polish students in taking part in the EP varies from gaining skills, practicing a language, getting something extra, investing on one's career, better salaries, add value to a degree diploma, acquiring competences in order to improve their employability, developing their ability to work in a team and to communicate with different cultures on the one hand, to tourism on the other. All participants declared that the EP directly impact on students' academic achievements, because students' self-confidence had improved. They have clear goals and objectives and clear career paths, because they comeback

with new perspectives, skills, and with personal, intercultural and interpersonal competencies and abilities as well as linguistic skills. Also, the participants in this study noted that ERASMUS students have an impact on the labour market because they have the skills which employers are looking for. These skills vary from acquisition of international social networks, better abilities and competencies, international experience, thus making them a preferred choice of employees for big international companies and organisations in Poland.

But one participant pointed out, the ‘ERASMUS Programme is not all about study’. We showed that ERASMUS Tourism, although perceived by some ERASMUS agents as detrimental to the EP, still is a motivating factor for some students to take part in the EP and has its value and place in the EP, because it provides students with the opportunity, during their learning mobility (Wysokińska, 2009: 64), to develop their cultural capital and mainly their linguistic capital. We also showed that Polish students’ participation in the EP has a positive impact on their academic achievement, cultural, social and linguistic capital, because ERASMUS students have the unique opportunity to acquire knowledge and experiences and develop skills, competencies and personal attributes that are vital to the international market and are valued by employers. However, it can also have a negative impact on the degree completion of ERASMUS students, as find employment before completing their degrees. Therefore, it prevents students from developing their full cultural capital. We further argue that the development of cultural capital depends on the support of the social capital available to students, as social capital is power which generates power.

The Bourdieusian analysis of the experiences of ERASMUS students studying, training, working and living abroad, provides a better understanding of the impact student participation in the EP on their development, because ERASMUS student develop as more rounded persons due to acquisition of social capital, i.e. social networks (Bourdieu, 1997; Maiworm, 2001; Papatsiba, 2006) and cultural capital in its: embodied state, i.e. dispositions of mind and body and personal attributes; objectified state, i.e. appreciation of culture, places and art, and acquisition of international language – linguistic capital (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990); and institutionalised state, i.e. acquisition of qualifications, curriculum transcripts and joint awarded degrees (Bourdieu, 1997). Because ERASMUS students have different learning experiences and have probably changed their approaches to learning, they are also more likely to influence change amongst their peers.

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