



UNIVERSITATEA
LUCIAN BLAGA
DIN SIBIU

Școala doctorală de Științe Sociale

Domeniul de doctorat: MANAGEMENT

TEZĂ DE DOCTORAT

MANGEMENTUL PROIECTELOR DE MOBILITATE ERASMUS ALE PERSONALULUI ACADEMIC ȘI STUDENȚILOR DIN CADRUL INSTITUȚIILOR DE ÎNVĂȚĂMÂNT SUPERIOR

Doctorand:
REBECCA-CLARA RĂULEA

Conducător de doctorat:
Prof.univ.dr. **DĂNUȚ-DUMITRU DUMITRAȘCU**

SIBIU2022

MANGEMENT OF ERAMUS MOBILITY PROJECTS OF THE ACADEMIC STAFF AND STUDENTS FROM HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Internationalization can be defined by a series of activities or strategies that institutions formulate to cope with globalization and to increase the quality of education. Under these circumstances, the management of educational institutions faces a series of challenges that require special resources and the approach of complex strategies in carrying out activities and achieving their objectives. The same can be said about the way in which the financing of various education and research programmes is obtained, within educational institutions, from external funds, so that the quality of education is one of international standards. This aspect also influences the academic staff and students from higher education institutions.

The Erasmus program, within higher education institutions, represents an important engine of internationalization. Based on this program, funding can be obtained for various cooperation projects but also for the mobility of academic staff and students, which offer the possibility of study or placement internships, for the first category, but also teaching and training stages for the second category. This is of great interest to higher education institutions both due to the financial resources and the opportunities that the program brings to the beneficiaries and to the higher education institutions implicitly. Thus, teaching staff, administrative staff and students have the opportunity to travel abroad, to broaden their cultural, professional and academic horizons within other universities and institutions where they can do training internships, for academic staff, and practical internships for students. At the same time, Erasmus is "a field" on which inter-institutional collaboration agreements can be signed, partnerships can be developed and research possibilities, in different fields, can be opened.

The main direction of internationalization is characterized by the increase in the number of projects implemented, the development of the quality of services offered to international students and to the academic staff, as well as the improvement of the quality of courses and programs.

Students' mobility often play an important role in the internationalization strategy of universities, followed by the mobility of teaching staff, strategic partnerships and projects,



international research and innovation, internationalization of curricula and "home" internationalization for students who don't go on mobility.

These aspects require the existence of a management of the Erasmus offices well established, which allows the achievement of internationalization objectives and a high-quality standard of mobility projects management.

The present paper aims, as its main purpose, to evaluate the management of Erasmus mobility projects in higher education institutions, from the point of view of participants in mobility projects, students and academic staff, from Romania and abroad, and to establish the factors that determine its quality improvement. Most of the studies in the field are made up of materials and statistics of the European Commission that follow the evaluation of the program from the point of view of academic material, acquired skills or logistical aspects. The importance and originality of this theme emerges from the research of how the management of mobility projects, within the higher education institutions in particular, is evaluated by the beneficiaries of mobility projects. This aspect is very important because it establishes the factors that can determine an improvement in the performance of the Erasmus program for participants, for higher education institutions and for European Commission.

The main objectives of the paper are to highlight, in the first part of the study, the current framework in which projects run in institutions and organizations, namely in schools, companies, higher education institutions, the method of management approached in these institutions and organizations, as well as to emphasize the particularities of management in higher education institution and that of mobility projects in particular - and to evaluate the quality of management in HEIs, from Romania and abroad, from the point of view of mobility participants, namely students, teachers and administrative staff, in the second part of the study.

In order to achieve this set of objectives, the paper is divided into two sections.

In the first part of the thesis, there were studied the bibliographic sources - books, magazines, specialized materials and brochures. Based on these studies we were able to determine what makes project management so important and what are the factors that determine how management decisions are made. We have continued then with the analysis of educational management, as role and importance, to see what exactly characterizes, nowadays, this field defined, moreover, by internationalization.



The next step was the study of the management of mobility projects in higher education. Were analyzed the particularities of this type of management, the role that mobility projects have in professional training, which are the countries included in the mobility exchanges (at the time of the study) and the resources involved.

In order to have a complete view regarding the evolution of mobility projects and to determine how they can be managed in the future, in the first part of the thesis there was also made a research on their quantitative evolution, respectively from the point of view of the number of participants in Erasmus programme in past years and the countries that have been involved in the programme. We can thus observe the increase in the number of mobility projects in recent years, both in Romania and in Europe, but also the increase in the number of the countries involved in the Erasmus programme.

A comparative study of Romania with other countries was also carried out, regarding the status of mobility projects, from which it emerges a need for our country to orient itself more towards the private environment and to show a greater interest in internationalization.

Also in this part of the paper, there were analyzed the role of resources, human, financial, material and informational, used in the management of Erasmus projects that are necessary in order to achieve the objectives of the programme, respectively the implementation of mobility projects. Each of these resources has an important role through which the Erasmus offices can manage the mobility projects: competent teams oriented towards achieving the objectives (human resources), a basis for the implementation of the projects (financial resources), the framework that allows their development (material resources) and a way to make them known (informational resources).

Based on the bibliographic study of project management in organizations, companies, schools and higher education institutions, the aim is to outline its operation mode regarding the most important theoretical aspects and the factors that influence project management nowadays. We analyzed the management of projects in schools characterized by the decentralization of the way of financing and administration, in companies characterized by the acquisition of "know-how" (knowledge), and in higher education institutions by internationalization.

Also in the first part of the paper, there was also carried out a research from primary sources, based on questionnaire, in order to determine the importance of the Erasmus program in professional training, respectively the impact that the Erasmus experience has on students who have benefited from mobility projects, from the point of view of employers. We have therefore



collected, using the questionnaire method, a number of 60 answers from students from "Lucian Blaga" University in Sibiu who benefited from Erasmus mobility projects abroad. Based on the obtained data, there were determined the relative frequencies with the help of Microsoft Excel and were presented in the form of diagrams for an easier presentation of the results. This study highlights important aspects regarding the skills acquired by students during Erasmus mobility projects and how they can lead to a better appreciation by the employer. Based on these results, we can say that the Erasmus program has an important influence on the professional training of students for the labor market.

Aspects such as the quantitative evolution of Erasmus mobilities, the evolution of linguistic and digital skills are prioritized within the Erasmus programme. Through the objectives established by the European Commission, it is hoped that in the future studying abroad will become a directive and the acquisition of linguistic and digital skills will be necessary abilities in order to adapt to the European labor market. Thus, starting from the objectives of the Erasmus program in the near future and based on the bibliographic resources issued by the European Commission, we made a forecast of the program in the period 2021-2027, regarding the number of mobilities, the need to acquire language skills and digital skills, ending the study with a short proposal regarding the management of mobility projects in higher education institutions, based on the sources obtained.

In the second part of the thesis, the management of Erasmus mobility projects in higher education institutions was evaluated from the point of view of mobility participants, students and academic staff, from Romania and abroad in order to establish the factors that determine the improvement of its quality. A mixed research methodology was approached based on interviews and questionnaires with Likert measurement scale. Questionnaires were disseminated via e-mail and social media using Facebook platform, to reach as many respondents as possible from different universities/institutions and countries.

In the first phase of the research, based on the in-depth interviews, we sought to obtain information, in a particular and direct way, regarding the perception of the participants in Erasmus mobility programs, both Romanians and foreigners, on the quality of the management of mobility projects, from the moment that they were engaged in a mobility at their home university/institution and until they returned from the mobility from the host university/institution. The interviews were carried out using the communication platforms Skype, Zoom and Google Meet. Mobility participants, from Romania and abroad, were able to personally express their opinion regarding



influence the probability of assessing the quality of the management of mobility projects within the home university/organization and host university/organization based on the three stages of mobility - before mobility, during mobility and after mobility, based on the measures applied within the program (simplification of the application procedures within mobilities, better services of the staff who manages the programme, better communication between partner universities, providing more online information, increase of staff within the Erasmus offices, better coordination between home and host universities, digitization of procedures and an increased transparency), based on the "actors" involved in the management of the programme (Erasmus offices, Erasmus coordinators, teaching and administrative staff) and on the management of the programme practiced within institutions and organizations. In addition to the practical part of the factor analysis to "reduce" the amount of data studied and to determine the relationships between the studied variables, the modeling part represents a valuable part of the work because it establishes a way in which higher education institutions can increase the performance of the Erasmus program.

The importance of the present paper is therefore based both on the bibliographic research in the field of project management and mobility projects in higher education institutions, as well as on those obtained from primary research sources; results that have been used in international publications in the field of management.

At the end of the thesis and the analysis of the obtained data are presented the general and final conclusions of the paper, the limits of the research and future research directions in the field. These conclusions establish important information regarding mobility projects, both from a theoretical point of view - based on the study of bibliographic sources - but also empirically based on the research of primary sources.

The work constitutes an ample study of the management of Erasmus mobility projects that is addressed both to higher education institutions and to other institutions that manage them in order to improve the management of the Erasmus program, as well as to beneficiaries of Erasmus mobility projects who thus have access to a lot of information regarding the advantages and impact of a such programme on the acquisition of skills and the improvement of their professional activity.

The contribution of the work in the field of management of Erasmus mobility projects in higher education institutions is a relevant one considering the dynamics, importance and complexity of the researched topic.



Ph.D. candidate _Răulea Rebecca-Clara

Keywords: Erasmus, Higher Education Institutions, Management, Mobility Projects

