

THE IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT MOBILITY ON ENTREPRENEURIAL ATTITUDE

Kristina Stamenovic¹ 

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Abstract: *The Erasmus international mobility programme represent a significant step in a student's development. In the past decades, millions of European students gained experience and lifelong learning period from prestigious universities abroad. Erasmus students are seen as independent people, curious about cultures and languages, open to new ideas and especially predisposed to become entrepreneurs. This study was designed to identify the entrepreneurial attitude of Erasmus students in order to ascertain the contribution of international mobility. For this purpose, the expectations of international students who benefited from the Erasmus Plus Programme were compared to the level of satisfaction after completing the international mobility programme at Institute of Business Administration (IAE), University of Sophia Antipolis, Nice. Factors that most influenced students' departure in Erasmus mobility are academic and professional opportunities abroad. The data for this study was collected using a questionnaire and sent in collaboration with International Relations Office of IAE Nice. The results indicate that international mobility had a high impact on student's self-confidence and relational skills. Regarding professional and social life, the entrepreneurial attitude was increased by the Erasmus experience.*

Keywords: *Entrepreneurial attitude, Entrepreneurship, International mobility, Erasmus.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the last decades the Erasmus programme become the most important student exchange program and represent significant step in a student's development. Erasmus programme provides scholarships for million students of all ages, helping them develop knowledge and experience at institutions and organisations abroad (European Commission, 2020). Main objective of EU programme is to provide students with academic, cultural and linguistic benefits.

At the academic level, international mobility programme enables students to attend some of the most prestigious universities and benefit from different teaching methods and lifelong learning period. However, the experience of studying abroad extends the students' horizons in a wide range of areas, thus allowing students to gain greater independence, maturity, learn a new culture, new language and make new friends (Almeida, 2018). Regarding professional and social life, student's priority motivation to go abroad is related to a new experience, by acquiring new technical, social and behavioural skills. Erasmus students are seen as independent people, curious, open to new ideas and especially predisposed to become entrepreneurs. Several studies emphasize that it is important to identify the advantages, difficulties and challenges faced by Erasmus students. For this purpose, the objective of this study is to analyse the skills that students gain abroad and impact of international mobility on student's entrepreneurial attitude. The importance of generic skills is highlighted in numerous studies. ... "Generic skills' is used widely to refer to a range of qualities and capacities that are increasingly viewed as important in higher education. These include thinking skills such as logical and analytical reasoning, problem solving and intellectual curiosity; effective communication skills, teamwork skills and capacities to identify, access and manage

¹ Institute of Business Administration (IAE), 5 rue de 22e B.C.A. 06300 Nice, France

knowledge and information, personal attributes such as imagination, creativity and intellectual rigour and values such as ethical practice, persistence, integrity and tolerance". (Hager, Holland & Beckett 2002, p.2). Entrepreneurial skills are part of these generic skills and they accentuate the students' capacity of thinking critically in real business context, of making successful decisions and solving complex problems, of coming with new ideas in new situations demonstrating originality skills and openness to learn from both successes and failures (Sin, Tavers & Amaral, 2016). On the European level, the importance of entrepreneurship as a generic skill is that the European Union initiated 2009 a new programme called 'Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs', which gives entrepreneurs acquire relevant skills for business by spending time in one European enterprise. Main benefits of Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs are: reinforces entrepreneurial attitudes by offering skills, knowledge and experience, increases the number of start-ups, helps to create jobs, cross-border transfer knowledge and cooperation between small firms, helps small firms to innovate and go international (European Commission, 2019).

At the core of entrepreneurship are novelty, uniqueness, creativity and knowledge sensitivity. The entrepreneur creates value, they apply their competences to create something novel of value of use to society (Frederick, O'Connor, Kuratko, 2018). Entrepreneurship is seen as the identification, evaluation and exploitation of opportunities (Shane, 2000 apud Khin & Lim, 2018). The ability of entrepreneurs to identify and evaluate new opportunities, to obtain the necessary resources and to take risks for setting up the company, becomes a „sine qua non” quality for all those involved in the entrepreneurial process (Nhemachena and Murimbika, 2018). Previous studies have identified several factors that influence the individual's intentions to become an entrepreneur. One of the most important factors is attitude, that reflect the individual beliefs and perceptions determined by the individual's personality, formal and informal education, personal values and experiences (Krueger and Carsrud, 1993). A strong and positive relationship between attitude and entrepreneurial intentions has been confirmed by previous studies (Krueger, Reilly and Carsrud, 2000; Franke and Luthje, 2004) being considered the main determinant of entrepreneurial intention (Ajzen, 1991). Akmaliah et al. (2010) highlights that changes in entrepreneurial attitude can be influenced through the process of education, experience, interaction with the environment, as well as with intensive entrepreneurship education program. Yaqub et al. (2015) demonstrate that there is a strong relationship and positive correlation exist between attitude towards entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship education. Souto-Otero & McCoshan, (2006) show that 65-95% students reported that the Erasmus mobility program has had a positive impact on their attitude towards career and aspirations, and accelerate their general knowledge, their personal values, their understanding of persons coming from different cultures or ethnic background, the improvement of their interpersonal relations and their self-confidence. This study was designed to identify the entrepreneurial attitude of Erasmus students in order to ascertain the contribution of international mobility. For this purpose, the expectations of international students who benefited from the Erasmus+ Programme were compared to the level of satisfaction after completing the international mobility programme.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Sample characteristics

The participants of this study are international students (N=25) at Institute of Business Administration (IAE) Nice, who have benefited from the scholarship of Erasmus+ programme. The data for this study were collected using a questionnaire developed in collaboration with Inter-

national Relations Office of IAE. The survey was conducted with incoming Erasmus students during the academic year 2019–2020. Formulated research questions are:

- What is the impact of student’s international mobility on entrepreneurship attitude?
- What is the relationship between Erasmus students and entrepreneurs?
- How international mobility affects students’ attitudes towards entrepreneurship?

The descriptive statistics was used to gain information about the respondents’ gender, age, education background, the factors which influence their departure in Erasmus mobility, impact of international experience on student’s entrepreneurial attitude and the satisfaction regarding the study condition in host university. From total of 40 individuals we received 25 responses, 72% of whom were female and 28% male.

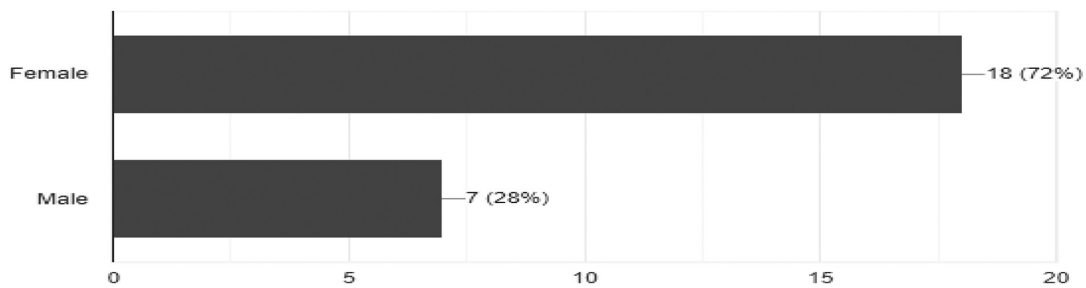


Figure 1. Gender of the respondents

In terms of degrees, 52% of respondents were bachelor degree students, 44% were masters level students and 4% were doctoral students. In terms of respondents age, most were between 19-23 years old (72%), followed by 24-30 years (20%) and 31-35 years (2%). The students’ age structure is listed in the following figure (fig.2).

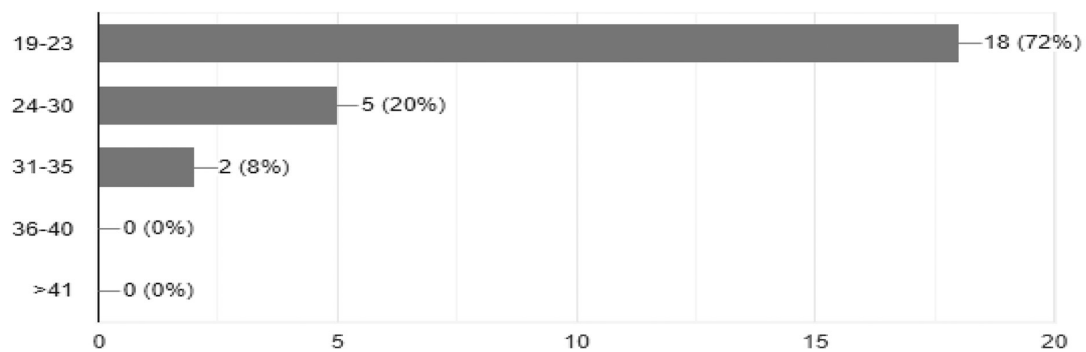


Figure 2. Age frequency distribution

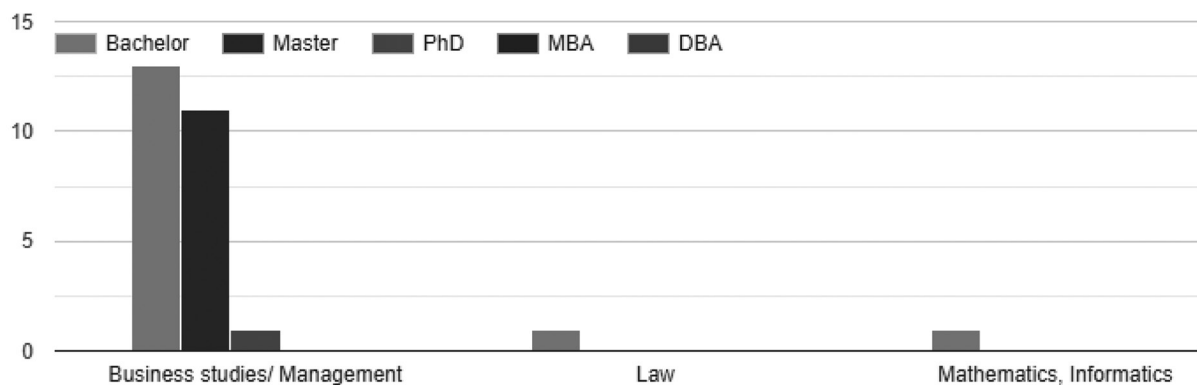


Figure 3. Education background

Regarding the factors that most influenced the departure of students in Erasmus mobility, we identified the following: academic and professional opportunities abroad (40%) the curiosity to find out what is studied in another country (16%), the need for academic training (16%), the curiosity of living in another country (12%), and the need for professional training (8%). Other studies (Pomona, Rodríguez, Sevillano, 2013) mention motivated factors the student to go abroad are: European experience, academic and cultural factors, a new foreign environment, career planning and friendship. According to Mazilescu et al. (2016) priority motivation for young people who apply for Erasmus programmes, are related to new experiences, to learn something about different cultures and to meet new people.

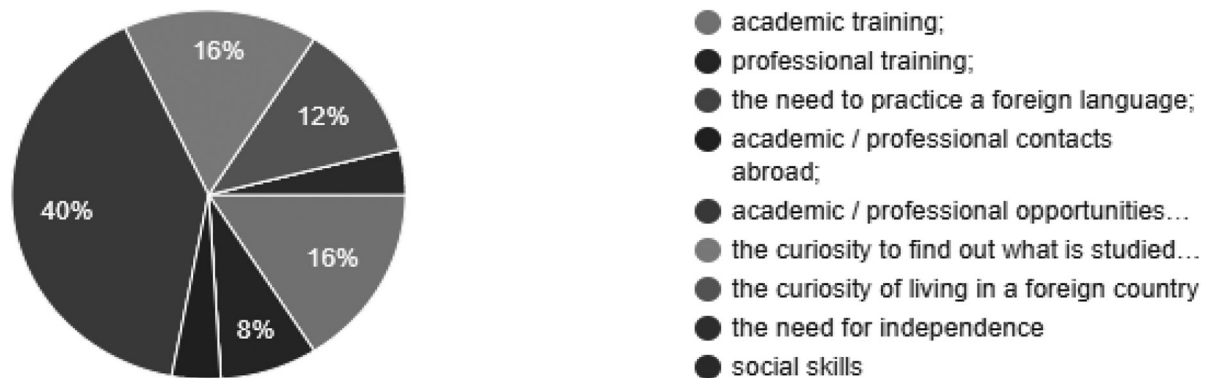


Figure 4. Factors that influence the student’s departure in Erasmus mobility

At the level of the difficulties encountered by Erasmus students aboard, respondents highlight language barriers (48%), bureaucracy (44%), lack of support (28%), cultural differences (12%).

3. FINDINGS

The results indicate that international mobility had a high impact on student’s relational skills (28%), self-confidence (24%), career opportunities (20%), language skills (12%), professional knowledge and skills (8%) and business opportunities (8%). The following personal traits of Erasmus students changed because of international mobility: problem solving ability, independence, taking the risks and maturity. Here is important to make an observation that these personal characteristics represent entrepreneurs and can be importantly related to entrepreneurial start-up intentions and behaviour. Risk-taking propensity is considered crucial for the decision to enter an entrepreneurial career (Antoncic at al., 2012). Problem-solving skills and need for independence are also mentioned inherent for starting a business. Strong need for autonomy is reflected in people motivation to make decisions independently and take control (Perry, 1990; Kollmann, Christofor & Kuckertz, 2007).

With regard to the setting up a new business, students claim that international experience changed their attitude toward entrepreneurship (80%). In this regard, we notice that 44% of students indicated that one of the members of their immediate family run own business. According to the fact that most respondents are between 19-23 years old, when asked the question: What would you like to do immediately after finish your degree? The students have answered that they will do internship 56 %, following by entrepreneurs 32%, and employee 24%. It is important to emphasize that most of the students who have entrepreneurs in the family have responded that they want to start a new company and have argued that mobility had a positive influence on their entrepreneurial attitudes.

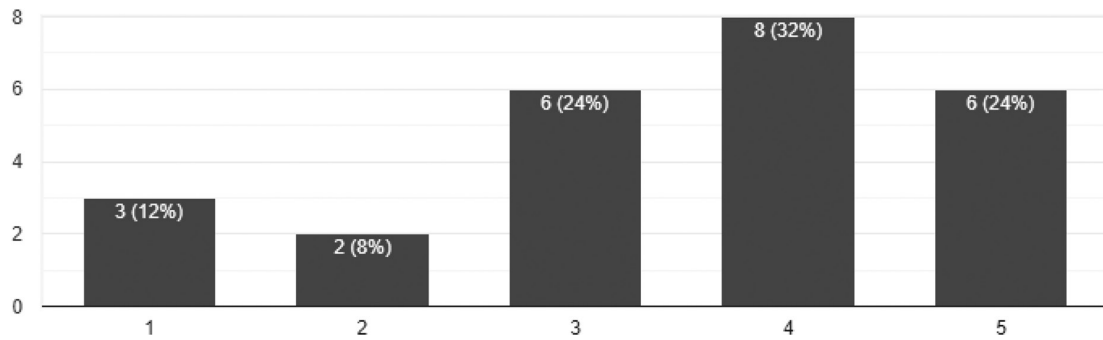


Figure 5. Impact of international experience on student attitude towards setting up own business (1 –no impact, 5-high impact)

The influence of Erasmus program on satisfaction regarding the studying conditions in the host university were positively rated. Moreover, students are highly satisfied (76%) with education at Institute of Business Administration (IAE).

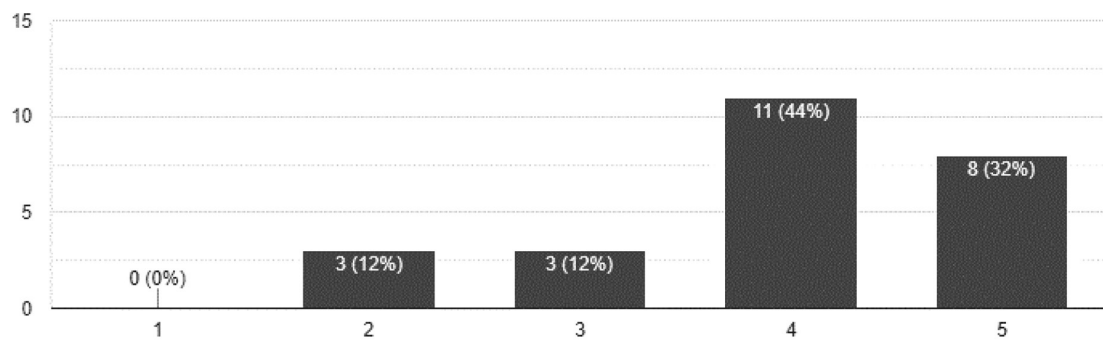


Figure 6. Students satisfaction regarding the studying conditions in the host university (1 – not at all satisfied; 5 – very highly satisfied)

Research contribution is based on identification of research gap (presented in section 1). Managerial implications are showing that by efficient use of student's international mobility program, their entrepreneurial attitudes are increasing and therefore research is significant for Universities and other stakeholders in international student mobility and state employment agencies. Further research is proposed with larger sample size, more countries and different educational background.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that the international mobility has a positive impact on entrepreneurial attitudes and skills of students, which make students more employable. The international mobility contributes to the development of personal traits (problem solving, independence, taking the risks and maturity) and had a high impact on student's relational skills, self-confidence, career opportunities and language skills. Erasmus students are highly satisfied (76%) with education at host university. Regarding the factors that most influenced the departure of students in international mobility, we identified the following: academic and professional opportunities abroad (40%). With regard to the setting up a new business, students claim that international experience changed their attitude toward entrepreneurship (80%).

Based on managerial implications, it is recommended that educational institutions consider more Erasmus students as future entrepreneurs, to offer more courses related to entrepreneur-

ship and to contribute to the development of students' skills and knowledge which should enable development of student's interest and gaining skills and competences relevant for future entrepreneurs.

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