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## **PREFACE**

Erasmus Congress (ERACON) is an annual conference organized by the European Association of ERASMUS Coordinators (EAEC) where placement and Internship Managers, researchers and professionals with an interest in the ERASMUS programme are actively participating with presentations, workshops and paper submission. ERACON 2020 was the 16<sup>th</sup> conference organized since 2005.

CAREER-EU is also an annual conference organized by the European Association of Career Guidance (EACG) in cooperation with the European Association of ERASMUS Coordinators (EAEC). Career Guidance Counsellors and other experts are invited to make presentations and submit papers. Workshops and Sessions within the conference are also invited to discuss specific topics and to draw up concrete suggestions, which can contribute to the improvement of Career Guidance Counselling. CAREER-EU 2020 was the 11<sup>th</sup> annual conference organized since 2010.

ERACON 2020 & CAREER-EU 2020, was held under the patronage of the European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, Dr Mariya Ivanova Gabriel.

Due to the unusual circumstances because of COVID-19, it was not possible to organize the congress as physical or even hybrid so it was fully organized online on 19-20 November 2020. In this electronic publication, presenters share their papers with those interested to read further on the content of their presentations.

Prof. Gregoris A. Makrides  
President – European Association of ERASMUS Coordinators  
President – European Association of Career Guidance

# **ERACON CONGRESS PRESENTATIONS**

## **EP3. THE ROLE OF THE EXCHANGE DIPLOMACY ON TURKEY'S IMAGE**

Meltem Özel\*

### **ABSTRACT**

Public diplomacy is a discipline that operates in order to create a positive image and to develop long-term relationships. Exchange diplomacy in public diplomacy has an important role in building long term relations and nation branding. This study, aims to demonstrate the level of understanding and acquisition on academic and administrative staff, who came Turkey in the scope of erasmus exchange program, about Turkey's image. For this purpose, a survey study has been carried out. Between the years 2014-2018 from the scope of Erasmus for higher education institutions in Turkey 7214 incoming staff, constitute the universe of the study. The sample of the research consists of 14 staff selected among 29 staff who came to Istanbul Esenyurt University within a 5-day period within the framework of the erasmus program between 2014-2018. The data of the study analyzed by using the Content Analysis Method. After erasmus mobility, perception of participants about Turkey, Turkish culture and society has been changed positively and participants built long-term relationships. Furthermore, participants have been more interested in some topics about Turkey such as Turkish nation, Turkish politics and Turkey's integrity process to EU. And also participants want to contribute future relations between Turkey and their home country.

**Key words:** Public Diplomacy, Exchange Diplomacy, Long Term Relationship, National Image

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\* Istanbul Esenyurt University, Erasmus Office, Turkey

## **PUBLIC DIPLOMACY**

Public diplomacy is about building relationships by understanding the needs of other countries, cultures and peoples; communicating our points of view; correcting misperceptions; looking for areas where we can find common cause. Public diplomacy involves a much broader group of people on both sides, and a broader set of interests that go beyond those of the government of the day compare to the traditional diplomacy (Leonard, 2002, p. 8).

## **IMAGE BUILDING**

The reputations of countries, cities and regions are just as critical to their progress and prosperity as the brand images of products are to the companies that own them. A powerful, positive national image makes it relatively cheap and easy to attract immigrants, tourists, investors, talent and positive media coverage, and to export products, services, ideas and culture (Hung, 2015, p. 189).

National governments are simply not in control of all of the forces that shape their country's image, and neither is any other single body within the nation. The tourist board cannot control government policies, yet those policies can dramatically affect its business; the success of the investment promotion agency may be influenced by the communications of the tourist board or the cultural institute; institutes of higher education might find that their attempts to attract talent from overseas are affected by the reputation of the products and services exported from the country or the behavior of prominent athletes or media stars from the same country, and so on (Hung, 2015, p. 198).

Nation branding denotes a state government's extended efforts to mobilize multiple forces to project a preferred national identity through dialogues with the international public (Hung, 2015, p. 210). Nation branding aimed at improving the country's image abroad as public diplomacy. Nation branding also engage information exchange to reduce misconceptions. Exchange programs are important tools to reduce misconceptions, create positive image and long-term relations.

## EXCHANGE DIPLOMACY

Nicholas J. Cull analyze the taxonomy of public diplomacy, dividing its practices into five elements which are listening, advocacy, cultural diplomacy, international broadcasting and exchange diplomacy (Cull, 2008, p. 31).

Cultural and educational activities, which are important elements of public diplomacy, are widely used worldwide as an element of soft power. By exchange diplomacy, countries have mutual understanding and persuasion then long-term relations are built between countries.

The capability of individuals to cross national boundaries has been a matter of major result since the arrival of the nation-state, and exchanges are naturally no exception. Even the most politically impartial of exchanges have either political intent behind their creation or are promoted for the aim of developing crossborder relations that can subsequently lead to political outcomes, such as a reduction in conflict (Scott-Smith, 2009, p. 50). Educational exchanges have an important role in public diplomacy, by face-to-face contact between people of different countries helps to lessen stereotypes and in the long run facilitates inter-cultural communication (Lima Júnior, 2007, p. 234). An initiative's success is often tied to the personality of the individual participants (Zaharna, 2009, p. 93).

Exchange diplomacy in Public Diplomacy may be defined as an actor's attempt to manage the international environment by sending its citizens overseas and reciprocally accepting citizens from overseas for a period of study and/or acculturation (Cull, 2009, p. 20).

Scholarly collaborations in all fields of education and academic mobility contribute to the strengthening of international relations between nations through the generation, diffusion and exchange of the acquired knowledge (Waithaka & Maluki, 2016, p. 1).

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

Erasmus+ is the EU's programme to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe. Its budget of €14.7 billion will provide opportunities for over 4 million Europeans to study, train, and gain experience abroad (European Commission). Between the years 2014-2018 from the scope of Erasmus+ program for higher education institutions in Turkey 7214 incoming staff, constitute the universe of the study. The change in the number of staff mobility within the framework of erasmus exchange program between programme countries by years is shown in Figure 1. The sample of the research consists of 14 staff selected among 29 staff who came to Istanbul Esenyurt University within a 5-day period within the framework of the erasmus program between 2014-2018. The data of the study collected by survey and analyzed by using the Content Analysis Method.

STAFF				
	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Outgoing	2 757	2 779	3 334	3 245
Incoming	2 206	1 521	1 199	2 288

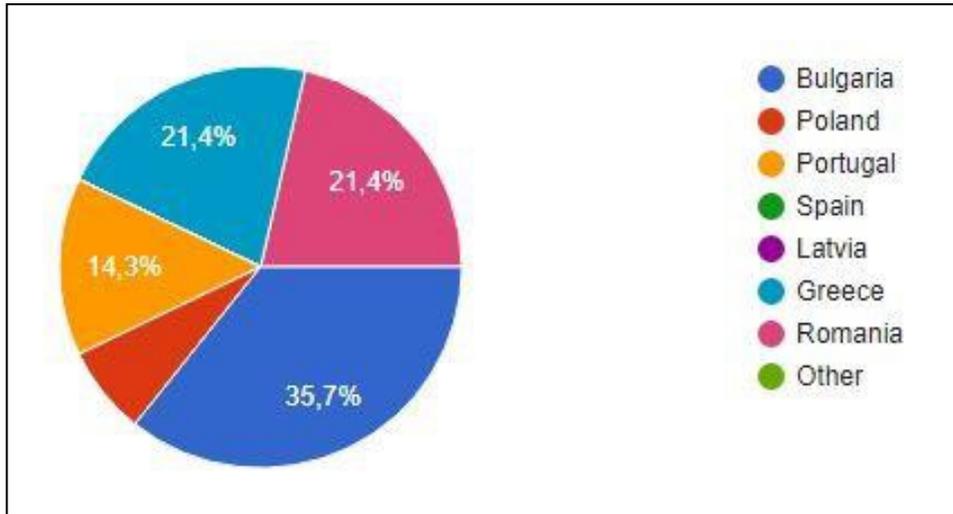
**Figure 1:** The 33 Erasmus+ Programme Countries are the 28 EU Member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, North Macedonia and Turkey. Partner countries are all other countries in the world. (European

Commision, 2020).

## RESULTS

The data of the study analyzed by using the quantitative analysis of content analysis method.

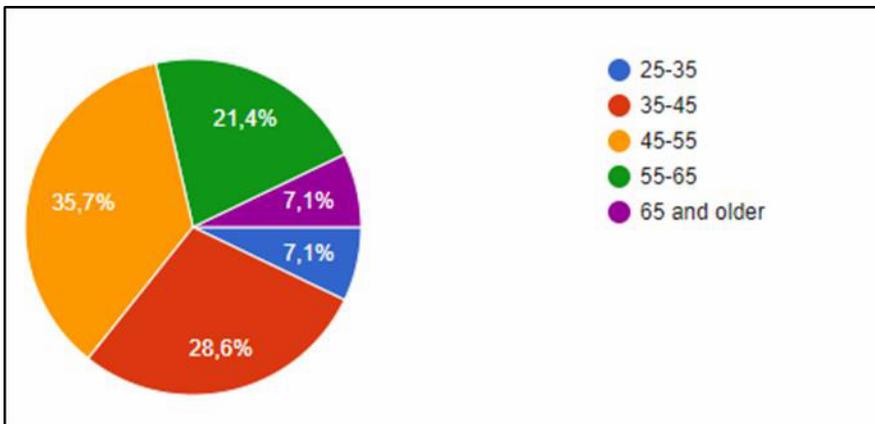
Figure 2 shows the countries where the participants came from.



**Figure 2.** Percentage Distribution Graph of Participants' Home Countries

When figure 1 is examined, it is seemed that 35,7% of participants came from Bulgaria, 21,4% of participants came from Romania, 21,4% of participants came from Greece, 14,3% of participants came from Portugal and 7,1% of participants came from Poland.

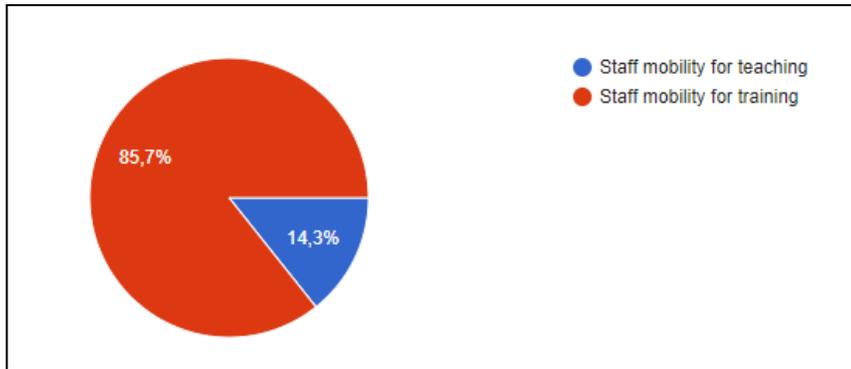
Figure 3 shows the age range of the participants



**Figure 3.** The Age Range of the Participants

When figure 3 is examined, it is seemed that 35,7% of participants are between 45- 55 ages, 28,6% of participants are between 35-45 ages, 21,4% of participants between 55-65 ages, 7,1% of participants are between 25-35 ages and 7,1% of participants are between 65 and older.

Figure 4 shows the erasmus activity type which participants carried out.



**Figure 4.** The Type of the Activity They Carry Out

In figure 4, it is seen that 85,7 % of participants came Turkey in the scope of the staff mobility for training.

In this study, satisfaction status of the staff with the services or facilities used at host University be learned and the results are seen at Table 1.

Satisfaction status with the services or facilities that staff used at host University		Have not use the service	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Total
Assistance of the International Office	f	-	-	-	4	10	14
	%	-	-	-	28,6	71,4	100
Assistance to arrival to the university	f	1	-	-	6	7	14
	%	7,2	-	-	42,8	50	100
Orientation/Presentation of university	f	1	-	-	5	8	14
	%	7,2	-	-	35,7	57,1	100
Facilities of the classes	f	1	-	-	5	8	14
	%	7,2	-	-	57,1	35,7	100
The interest of the students	f	3	-	-	5	6	14
	%	21,4	-	-	35,7	42,9	100
Equipped university as technical and equipment	f	1	-	-	3	10	14
	%	7,2	-	-	21,4	71,4	100
Cultural organization/ tour organized by university	f	2	-	-	4	6	14
	%	2	-	-	4	6	100

**Table 1.** Satisfaction status with the services or facilities that staff used at host university

When the distributions regarding the satisfaction levels of the people in the study about the services and facilities provided by the university are examined; it is seen that the vast majority of people respond very satisfied. When we look at the distributions for each proposition; 71,4% of the staff is very satisfied of the assistance of the International Office and also technically equipped University.

In this study, important reasons in participants' decision to visit Turkey in the scope of the staff mobility asked to the participants. The results are seen at Table 2.

Important reasons on participants' decision to visit Turkey in the scope of the staff mobility		Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
Safe country in the region	f	-	1	4	7	2	14
	%	-	7,2	28,5	50	14,3	100
Tolerant society for foreigners	f	-	-	2	8	4	14
	%	-	-	14,3	57,1	28,6	100
Political and social stability	f	-	2	5	5	2	14
	%	-	14,3	35,7	35,8	14,3	100
Reputation and quality of educational system	f	-	1	1	5	7	14
	%	-	7,2	7,2	35,8	50	100
Availability of financial support	f	-	-	2	10	2	14
	%	-	-	14,3	71,4	14,3	100
The beauty	f	-	-	-	5	9	14
	%	-	-	-	35,7	64,3	100
Cultural diversity	f	-	-	1	4	9	14
	%	-	-	7,2	28,5	64,3	100

**Table 2.** Important reasons on participants' decision to visit Turkey in the scope of the staff mobility

When the distributions regarding the important reasons on participants' decision to visit Turkey in the scope of the staff mobility are examined; it is seen that the vast majority of people respond in the form of agree. When we look at the distributions for each proposition; 71,4% of the staff agree with the availability of financial support in Turkey.

35,7% of people stated that they agree to have the political and social stability in Turkey is important reason of their visit to Turkey and 35,7% stated that they neither agree nor disagree in this regard.

In this study, the erasmus mobility experience in Turkey asked to the participants. The details about the evaluation are seen at Table 3.

Evaluation of erasmus mobility in Turkey		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Total
My perception about Turkey, Turkish culture and society has changed positively	f	-	-	3	8	3	14
	%	-	-	21,4	57,2	21,4	100
I will visit Turkey again	f	-	-	1	5	8	14
	%	-	-	7,1	35,7	57,2	100
I have built cooperation for some projects with university staff	f	-	1	4	7	2	14
	%	-	7,1	28,5	50	14,4	100
I have reinforced or extended my professional network	f	-	-	3	8	3	14
	%	-	-	21,4	57,2	21,4	100
I have built friendships	f	-	1	1	6	6	14
	%	-	7,1	7,1	42,9	42,9	100
I have known much better the Turkish people and culture more	f	-	-	1	7	6	14
	%	-	-	7,1	50	42,9	100
I will keep in touch with people who I met	f	-	-	2	7	5	14
	%	-	-	14,3	50	35,7	100
I have been planning to build some more projects with Turkey	f	-	1	3	6	4	14
	%	-	7,1	21,5	42,9	28,5	100
After my mobility in Turkey, I would my country to deepen its relations with Turkey.	f	-	1	1	7	5	14
	%	-	7,1	7,1	50	35,8	100
After my mobility in Turkey, I feel closer to Turkish values and culture.	f	-	-	2	4	8	14
	%	-	-	14,3	28,5	57,2	100
After my mobility in Turkey, I am more interested in some topics about Turkey such as: Turkish nation, Turkish politics, Turkey's integrity process to EU.	f	-	-	2	6	6	14
	%	-	-	14,2	42,9	42,9	100
I feel more comfortable to different values and other people's way of life	f	-	-	-	8	6	14
	%	-	-	-	57,1	42,9	100

**Table 3.** Evaluation of Erasmus Mobility in Turkey

When we look at the distributions for each proposition;

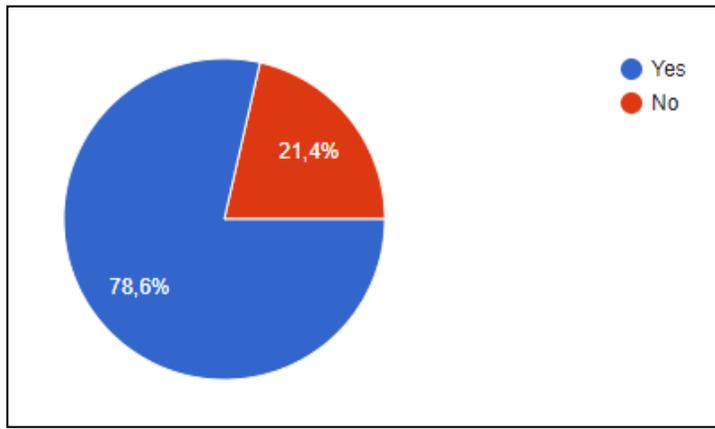
57,2% of the staff agree with their perception about Turkey, Turkish culture and society has changed positively,

57,2% of the staff agree with they have known much better the Turkish people and culture more; 42,9% of the staff strongly agree with they have known much better the Turkish people and culture more,

57,2% of the staff strongly agree with they feel closer to Turkish values and culture after erasmus mobility in Turkey.

42,9% of the staff strongly agree with they are more interested in some topics about Turkey such as: Turkish nation, Turkish politics, Turkey's integrity process to EU, after their mobility in Turkey; 42,9% of the staff agree with they are more interested in some topics about Turkey such as: Turkish nation, Turkish politics, Turkey's integrity process to EU, after their mobility in Turkey.

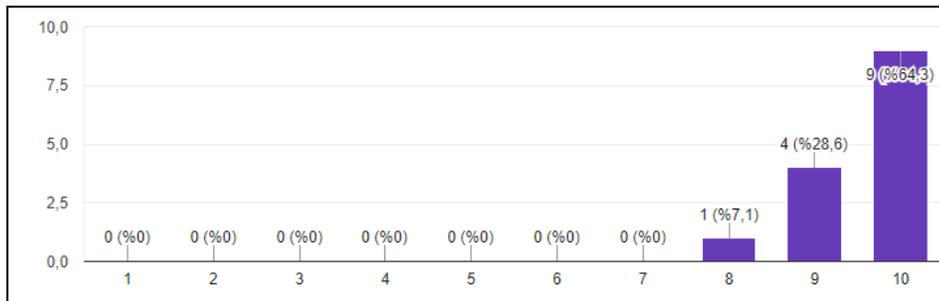
Figure 5 shows the presentation and promotion status of participants' home country.



**Figure 5.** The Presentation and Promotion of Home Country.

78,6% of participants had opportunity to present and promote their home country.

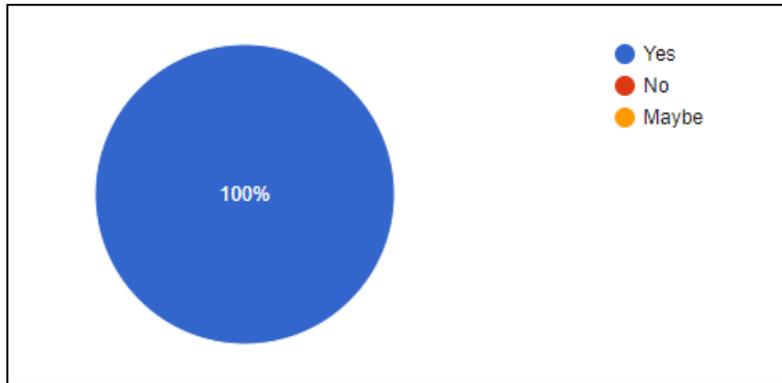
Figure 6 shows the satisfaction status of erasmus mobility of participants



**Figure 6.** Satisfaction Status of Erasmus Mobility of Participants

It is seen that 64% of the participants gave 10 points out of 10 to their satisfaction level.

Figure 7 shows the recommendation status of the staff to their colleagues for mobility at Turkey.



**Figure 7.** Recommendation Status of the Staff

100% of the participants will said that they will recommend Erasmus mobility at Turkey to their colleagues.

## CONCLUSION

Exchange diplomacy in public diplomacy contribute to nation branding and long term relations between countries. National connection and cultural interchange takes place between erasmus Exchange program. In the scope of this study, a survey was carried out with 14 staff who came to Istanbul Esenyurt University within a 5-day period within the framework of the erasmus program between 2014-2018.

Participants came to Istanbul from Bulgaria (5), Greece (3), Poland (1), Portugal (2) and Romania (3). The 85,7 % participants came to Istanbul Esenyurt University in the frame work of staff mobility for training and the others for teaching. Participants chose Turkey for erasmus because most of the participants thinks that Turkey is safe, beautiful and tolerant to foreigners; there is reputation and quality of educational system and cultural diversity; and financial support is available in Turkey.

Most of the staffs think that the International Office assist them well and they oriented easily. The University organized cultural organization which helped to cultural diversity. 11 participants had the opportunity to present and promote their country. All participants satisfied with their mobility experience in general. After erasmus mobility, most of the participants perception about Turkish culture and society has changed positively, they built some cooperations, they have reinforced or extended their Professional network, they built friendships, they have known much better about Turkish people, culture and more, they will keep in touch with people who they met, they have been planning to build some more projects with Turkey, they would their country deepen it relations with Turkey they feel closer to Turkish values and culture, now they are more interested in some topics about Turkey such as Turkish nation, Turkish politics, Turkey's integrity process to EU, they feel more comfortable to different values and other peoples way of life. Most of incoming staff are planning to visit Turkey again. All of the participants said that they recommend Turkey for staff mobility to their colleague

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## **EP5. REACHING TOWARDS GENERATION Z STUDENTS - MAKING THE (DIGITAL) DIFFERENCE IN COMMUNICATION-**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Generation Z (or Gen Z) are today`s teenagers, born between the mid-1990s to the early 2000s, who are now striding into universities` campuses around the world. Being the generation of true digital natives, they use technology as an extension of self in all aspects of their life-and their university life is no exception. Now the pressure is on universities to rise to the expectations of the most technologically fluent generation and they have to learn to speak their language fast. This paper proposes an incursion into the main characteristics of this generation of students and also a series of steps and strategies of enquiry that universities should look to incorporate in their communication strategies with these digital native students.*

### **AN INTRODUCTION ABOUT GENERATIONS**

Generally speaking, a generation has been characterized as "an identifiable group that shares birth years, age, location, and significant life events at critical developmental stages" (Kupperschmidt, 2000, p. 66). It should be highlighted that every human is an individual and not everyone that was born around the same timeframe necessarily shares the same experiences, characteristics or values. However, there is a general common context that contributes to shaping their worldview, as individuals are exposed to the same historical events or are influenced by the same technologies and worldwide trends, which may influence individuals enough, that they "think, make decisions, and behave in a similar way" (Dolot, 2018, p.44).

The literature on this matter has distinguished between six different generations in the modern world, with each generation being of approximately 15-20 years in length:

1. The traditionalists (Silent Generation or the Greatest Generation) who were born between 1928 and 1944;
2. The Baby Boomers (Boomers), born between 1945 and 1965;
3. Generation X, born between 1965 and 1979;
4. Generation Y (Millennials), born between 1980 and 1995;
5. Generation Z (post-Millennials, iGen), born after 1995;
6. Generation Alpha or the Google Kids born between 2010 and 2025 (Dolot, op.cit.; Hernandez-de-Menendez et.al, 2020, p. 849).

Given the different generations and their different characteristics, higher education institutions can use the valuable information provided by generational research for setting in place more effective approaches, practices, programs, that are better suited for the characteristics and for the expectations of each generation of students.

Considering that the majority of today`s students present in higher education institutions are, and will be, part of Generation Z, the following section will focus on emphasizing some of the main characteristics of this generation, which will contribute to a better understanding of this different cohort of students.

After identifying (some of) it`s relevant characteristics, the final section of this paper brings forward a series of steps that higher education institutions can take for a better communication and a more effective engagement with Gen Z.

## **WHO IS GENERATION Z?**

Research on this topic (Seemiller and Grace, 2017) has shown that while Generation Z does share a series of characteristics with the previous generation - Generation Y or the Millennials, they are still a significantly different generation, with some particular attributes.

But which exactly are these different traits that characterize Generation Z and how are they relevant for higher education institutions? These are the main aspects that this section tries to address, as for an appropriate strategy of recruitment, education and internationalization of these cohorts of students, universities must first get to know them, understand them and then adapt their strategies of enquiry accordingly, for a fast and effective response to their needs and expectations.

A thorough literature review can contribute to drafting Gen Z`s profile, which revolves around the following defining characteristics:

### *Digital natives*

While the previous generation was considered to be a tech savvy generation, Generation Z is part of a different category, that of digital natives, that has not experienced life without internet and technology. Born from 1995 through 2010, they have always lived in a connected world, with instant accessibility of information, social media and smartphones. The previous generations might have become acquainted with technology during their adolescence, adulthood or later in life, but Generation Z has used various (smart)devices and technologies from a very young age. They access their devices multiple times per hour, spend around 9 hours online every day and their preferred digital content is represented by online videos (Talmon, 2019, p.9).

Having these as one of their main characteristics means that Generation Z prefers to gather their information and to socialize in the online environment, rather than in a physical, face-to-face format.

This element is of utmost importance for the purpose of this paper, as it emphasizes a change of paradigm from the previous generations. Thus, universities need to focus even more on adapting and updating their communication strategies to 2021 and beyond.

### *Visual communicators*

Generation Z prefers visual communications, more than any other generation before. They rely less on text and more on images, videos, emojis or other types of visuals.

According to a report (Adobe, 2019), 83% of Gen Z feels more comfortable expressing their emotions through emojis than through a phone call. For this generation, emojis have developed into a cultural phenomenon, that plays an important role in shaping the way emotions and ideas are expressed.

What is more, video content is the most popular among this generation, with YouTube being the favorite platform for 89% of them (The Manifest, 2019). According to Google analysis (2018), YouTube is mainly used for gaining knowledge or learning different skills, with 80% of Gen Z reporting that YouTube has helped them become more knowledgeable about something and 68% reporting that it has helped them improve or gain skills that will help them to be better prepared for the future. Videos are a more complex form of content than just text or images and are more versatile as well, and besides their affinity for YouTube, Generation Z also prefers watching videos on other social media platforms or on streaming platforms.

Given these elements that clearly differentiate this generation from other previous cohorts of students, universities need to (learn to) communicate using their (digital) language and integrate elements such as videos, emojis, memes or animated GIFs in their (online) communications with this generation of digital natives.

### *Mobile first*

Smartphones are, by far, the most preferred digital device for Generation Z. With a sweeping majority of 97% owning a smartphone, according to a Snapchat and GlobalWebIndex report (2019, p.22), this generation revolves around their mobile phone for communication, entertainment, information, education and many more, seeing it often as an extension of self. The same report reveals that about 64% of this generation of digital natives is constantly connected online (p.18), using various smart devices. What is more, they are used to juggling multiple screens at the same time and they own, on average, more than 5 smart devices, with laptops, tablets, smartwatches or game consoles being among their next favorites, after the smartphone.

But while all of these elements make them very proficient multitaskers, able to switch quickly between tabs, tasks, devices, projects, digital world and real life, they also have an important influence on their attention span. Their attention is more intensive, but also easier to be lost if not engaged in interesting and stimulating online activities and/or content. Generation Z has an attention span of about 8 second, which is a few seconds shorter than the attention span of the previous generation, the Millennials (which is of about 12 seconds) (Arya, 2019).

These characteristics differentiate this generational cohort from the previous generations of students that populated our campuses before, posing a series of challenges to what has been considered “the norm” in communicating with students. Universities nowadays need to consider (re)designing their strategies, for an effective communication. Messages should be available on various digital platforms. Websites, platforms, institutional accounts need to be properly optimized for mobile devices. Messages should be shorter, more visual and straight to the point.

## **4 STEPS THAT UNIVERSITIES SHOULD CONSIDER FOR A MORE EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT WITH GENERATION Z**

### *Update the social networks for 2021 (and beyond)*

As identified in the previous section, this digital native generation is a very active social media user. Research shows that 89% of Generation Z uses social media daily (The Manifest, 2019), and the percentage is constantly increasing. Thus, the first step in achieving an effective communication with them is represented by using the proper communication channels. Universities should be present where their students are: on social media.

Facebook is the most popular social network and during the last decade universities around the world have started to be more and more present on this platform. However, in 2021 Facebook is celebrating 17 years since its launch, and Generation Z often considers this social network as being “for old people” (Cuthbertson, 2018) and are using it less and less often. The social media landscape is ever changing, and now platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat or, more recently, TikTok are among Gen Z’s favorites. With a shorter attention span of just 8 seconds, communication with Gen Z should be very visual and effective in capturing their condensed attention.

This constantly changing social-media environment poses extra pressure on universities, to keep up with the pace of Gen Z, to update their social network presence and be where they are, across various social media channels. However, just being present on the right platforms is not enough. Universities also have to learn to speak Gen Z’s language while using these platforms, for an efficient communication.

### *Be(come) digital and visual*

Be(come)ing digital and visual is crucial for any initiative that targets Generation Z. But being present on the right virtual channels is only half of the answer. How you communicate your messages is just as important.

For generation Z, visual content surmounts written content and visual communication is always their preferred format.

This means that the visual experience should take over: less text and more images, videos, infographics, emojis, memes, GIFs. All of these elements are a very important part of Gen Z’s language and they need to be integrated fast into universities’ approach, for an effective communication.

What is more, it should be kept in mind that this is a mobile first generation and also a frequent multi-device user. This means that it is very likely that their interaction with any institutional platform or website will be made via a smartphone. Thus, universities should consider (if they haven’t done this already) optimizing their websites and institutional platforms for mobile phones and other smart devices as soon as possible, in order to ensure a smooth online experience across all devices.

### *Develop engaging online activities*

This generation of students is complex and effectively reaching them and engaging with them requires new approaches and initiatives. As mentioned in the previous sections, it is imperative for universities to update their social media networks and to be digitally present where their students are. It is as important to learn to “speak” their language and rely less on text and more on visuals in communicating with them.

Another important element to be kept in mind is that this generation likes to be engaged and prefers to be part of the activity, to play an active role, as opposed to just adopting a passive attitude.

A few useful strategies in this sense could include (but not be limited to) the following:

- Making the content easy to share, whether we are referring to social media posts, videos, institutional website or institutional platforms. This will facilitate and encourage the spread of the university’s content, thus reaching a larger audience.
- Using polls, contests, quizzes, questions and encouraging students to participate;
- Always responding to comments and chats;
- Posting frequent updates and keeping the online community engaged;
- Offering students the opportunity to provide input and/or create content;

### *Organize authentic “off-line” activities*

Being online is generation Z’s second nature. However, this does not mean that the main condition for organizing a successful activity is represented by organizing it in a virtual format. Generation Z can be interested in off-line activities as well, as long as they are interactive, engaging and touch upon the subjects that are of interest to them. All of these preferences push universities to go the extra mile in bridging

communication with them and can act as stimuli for thinking outside the box and organizing authentic off-line activities.

Thus, universities can consider non-conventional spaces and formats for (some of) their activities. Offering the opportunity for interaction, for providing input and for playing a direct role should also be kept in mind when preparing activities for Generation Z.

Besides liking to be engaged, this generation also wants to change the world for the better, and subjects related to the current environmental, social or economic state of our planet are of interest to them. Thus, touching upon these general themes in the activities will stimulate them to engage.

## **CONCLUSION**

This generation of students has a series of characteristics that differentiate them from previous cohorts of students. Given this context, the pressure is now on universities to rise to the expectations of the most technologically fluent generation and they have to learn to speak their language fast.

This paper offers an overview for universities on to how to communicate with the current generation of students and how to effectively navigate the Generation Z's world. After a brief introduction about the different generations in the modern world, sketched in the first section of this paper, the following section engaged into an incursion about some of the main characteristics of Generation Z, that universities should be aware of, should understand and should consider for a better communication and a more effective engagement with Generation Z. The final section brings forward a series of steps and strategies of enquiry, for universities to consider in order to better speak the language of Gen Zers.

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# **EP6. EFFECTS OF CULTURE, TRAITS AND ABILITIES ON STUDENTS' CAREER DECISION-MAKING SELF-EFFICACY (CDSE): IMPLICATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL TEACHING AND MOBILITY**

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## **ABSTRACT**

It is a major goal of university education to prepare students for a later career in whatever discipline they have selected. Mobility programmes like Erasmus, Erasmus plus and others should support the educational goal of career success. However, to completely unfold the value of student and faculty exchange programmes, it is of interest to which extent culture, personal traits, and abilities influence the career decision-making process of students. Knowledge about these drivers would help to adopt international teaching and exchange programmes. This study informs about the effects of culture, trait emotional intelligence and academic performance on students' career decision-making self-efficacy. Business students in three countries (Austria, Turkey, Ukraine) with different educational and cultural conditions were the subjects of the study. Findings reveal that culturally based teaching styles influence students' career decision-making self-efficacy. The author discusses cultural roots in teaching approaches as well as implications for international teaching and student exchange initiatives in the light of this study's findings.

## **1. Introduction**

It is a major goal of university education to prepare students for a later career in whatever discipline the students have selected. 'Career' is a development process of work roles or functions a person experiences across his or her work life [1]. Career decision-making is a complex process that involves environmental as well as individual characteristics [2]. In this study, the cultural variable as well as trait EI as a personality related variable are investigated with respect to career decision-making self-efficacy (CDSE) of business students.

## **2. Career Decision-Making Self-Efficacy**

CDSE is defined as '*an individual's degree of belief that he or she can successfully complete tasks necessary to making career decisions*' [3]. It refers to several competencies in behavioural domains, such as goal setting and planning, information gathering, career-related problem solving, or accurate self-appraisal. Goal setting refers to how one is able to set priorities in order to manage successfully her/his professional advancement. Planning denotes the possibility to establish plans for the future and to identify career paths. Problem solving states the ability to solve career choice problems and reach a socially acceptable and personally satisfying solution. Self-appraisal labels the extent to which a person can accurately assess her/his career-relevant abilities, values, and interests [3]. The measurement instrument, career decision-making self-efficacy scale (CDSSES) has been applied and tested in different cultural settings. It is used in this research as well.

### 3. Personality TRAITS and Abilities

Personality traits play a role in academic achievement and career planning [4]. Traits like self-control, emotionality, well-being, and sociability can be assessed through trait EI measurement tools [5]. Young et al. [6] address the energizing and activating role of emotions in career exploration and decision-making activities in terms of how career possibilities are appraised by adolescents. In this investigation, the trait emotional intelligence questionnaire (TEIQue) in its short form is employed. According to social cognitive theory [7], past performance may positively influence optimism. Social cognitive career theory [8] suggests that students, through feedback on their performance, develop skills that lead to a more positive career outlook [9]. Past academic performance as a proxy of cognitive achievement is used in this study.

### 4. Culture, educational styles and Career

There is large evidence that culture has an influence on how children are raised, educated, and prepared to their professional future. Manikutty et al. [10] relate Hofstede's cultural dimensions to teaching and learning approaches. They discuss positive, negative or neutral relationships of learning categories with power distance, collectivism vs. individualism, uncertainty avoidance, short term vs. long-term orientation, and masculinity vs. femininity. Lee [11] analyzed outcome expectations and professional development opportunities of young people and found that career maturity, confidence, and outcome expectations were culturally based. Consequently, the cultural environment may have a direct influence on CDSE of learners as well as an indirect effect through the transmission of knowledge by culturally assimilated educators. In the current study, three contrasting cultures are compared in assessing CDSE of business students, namely Austria, Turkey, and Ukraine. These have been chosen because of their different historical roots and differences in cultural dimensions that influence teaching styles and educational systems. Table 1 depicts main cultural dimensions of the selected countries.

**Table 1. Cultural differences Austria – Ukraine. [12]**

	Turkey	Austria	Ukraine
Power Distance	66	11	92
Individualism	37	55	25
Masculinity	45	79	27
Uncertainty avoidance	85	70	95
Long term orientation	46	60	86

### 5. Hypotheses development

The hypotheses rely on Hofstede's [13] cultural dimensions framework. Ukrainian and Turkish students learn and instructors teach under the condition of collectivism. Mau [14] found that for collective-oriented cultures students rely less on their individual abilities than on group efforts and teacher evaluation. Ukrainian and Turkish students, thus, may have lower levels of self-efficacy concerning their individual career-planning capabilities. In contrast, Austrian students, as representatives of an individualistic country, may rely more on their capabilities to construct their future environment individually. Furthermore, the presence of a high power distance (like in Ukraine and Turkey) might create the assumption that making plans for the future is highly subject to the activities of superiors (teachers, parents, political leaders), hence the importance of career planning is lower than in cultures with lower power distance (like Austria). In addition, the perceived dependency of their teachers, together with a (fatalist) assumption that those care for them, might lead to a lower confidence in individual planning capabilities.

Similar to the arguments presented above, students' self-efficacy in managing and organizing career-related steps and activities is supposed to be different for Ukrainian, Turkish and Austrian students. Students from a collectivist culture may rely more on others to help them managing career-related processes and related problem solving than do students from an individualistic country. Actively managing and troubleshooting is also not a characteristic of a feminine culture like Ukraine, and, finally, at a high level of power distance goal directed behaviour [15]. Also, as Earley [16] states, power distance correlates with the importance placed on high status group members' collective judgments. Hence, own problem-solving skills are not as important as in low power distance cultures, because one can rely on the fact that other people help with guidance and judgement. In contrast, masculine societies lend larger significance to tangible success. Educators in masculine societies openly compliment good students, set best students as the benchmark, reward good performance, and create an intense, though a stressful climate [17].

Lastly, research suggests that people in collectivistic cultures have interdependent self-appraisal and such in individualistic cultures have independent self-appraisal [18]. Bandura [19] argued that performance experience (immediate feedback on success or failure) and verbal persuasion (active influence) drive self-efficacy and self-appraisal. In a comparison of (former) East and West Berlin schools, Oettingen [20] argued that East Berlin students (collectivist) have a lower sense of self-efficacy and are more dependent on the opinions of in-group members (e.g., class-collective) and authorities (e.g., teachers). Lastly, a high level of uncertainty avoidance might students be less confident in appraising their future career to be congruent with their values and lift expectations. In an educational context, such students may have a feeling of dependency of their professors, together with the expectation that the professors watch out over them and help them to succeed. It is proposed that:

*H1a-c: Career-related planning and goal setting (I), problem solving (II) and self-appraisal (III) increases with higher levels of (a) individualism, (b) masculinity, and lower levels of (c) long-term orientation, (d) power-distance, and (e) uncertainty avoidance.*

The second hypothesis deals with the question whether EI has an effect on CDSE. It is suggested that trait EI has an influence on students' CDSE. Individuals with high EI have a stronger emotional awareness and a greater tendency to integrate thoughts and actions into their emotional experiences [21, 22]. As such, EI may influence individuals' career planning and organizing processes. Emmerling and Cherniss [22] demonstrated that individuals with higher EI identify their interests and values more clearly and communicate them more effectively during the career counselling process. According to trait activation theory [23], traits become more predictive of outcome variables when trait-relevant cues are triggered by context. Gunkel et al. [24] argued that self-control is encouraged in high power distance cultures; collectivistic cultures encourage suppression of emotions; and feminine cultures promote control of emotions. Likewise, representatives of cultures with high uncertainty are subject to inner nervous energy when faced with unstructured situations. Hence, higher levels of EI including the ability to regulate emotions might have stronger effects with representatives of such cultures. [25]. Individualistic cultures stress the needs of individuals, hence they emphasize and value the emotional capabilities of individuals as well as they are used to employ emotions to signal pleasure, optimism, or frustration to others [24]. In high power-distance cultures, the expression of emotions tends to be suppressed, especially to unknown or higher-status others [24]. Low power-distance cultures, in contrast, value equality and are therefore more experienced in tolerating as well as observing other's emotions. In long-term oriented cultures, relationships play an important role, and too strong emotional reactions might be avoided in order not to danger those relationships. Also, as long-term orientation is connected to the practice of saving face [26], it is more likely that emotional intelligence has a smaller influence on career decision-making self-efficacy in long-term oriented cultures. Consequently, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H2a-c: Trait EI has a stronger effect on career related planning and goal setting (I), problem solving (II), and self-appraisal (III) with higher levels of (a) individualism, (b) masculinity, and lower levels of (c) power distance, (d) long-term orientation, and (e) uncertainty avoidance.*

Thirdly, grades are the ultimate currency of an educational system. They signal achievement and skills to students, parents and future employers [27]. Grades provided by teachers suggest that students are capable of achieving as much as their teachers' judgements suggest or how they rank in comparison with the class collective. This is typical for collectivist and high-power distance societies [20]. Better grades nurture career related self-efficacy and grow self-appraisal. At high levels of uncertainty avoidance, students classify themselves unambiguously in accord with the status assigned to them by teachers, as this seems to be a low-risk behaviour [20]. With respect to the masculinity/femininity dimension, Hofstede [17] suggests that in masculine societies 'students compete with each other in class', and 'system rewards students' academic performance' (p.315). A positive correlation of grades and self-esteem has been found e.g. by Yu et al. [28]. Also Şahin [29] found that Turkish teachers are autocratic and the teaching systems are strongly teacher-centred. Which, in turn, reflects the relevance of teacher-awarded grades to students' perception of their capabilities. Summarizing, the following hypothesis is stated:

*H2a: Academic performance has a stronger effect on career related planning and goal setting (I), problem solving (II), and self-appraisal (III) with lower levels of (a) individualism, (b) masculinity, and higher levels of (c) power distance, (d) long-term orientation, and (e) uncertainty avoidance.*

## **6. Methodology**

This study uses a questionnaire distributed to students in Austria, Turkey and Ukraine. Students from undergraduate programmes specializing in business and economics participated in the study. A total of 298 responses was collected, of which 64% were female, 36% were male, 116 were from Austria, 94 were from Ukraine and 88 were from Turkey. Developed by Taylor and Betz [30] and validated and shortened by Betz et al. [31], the Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale (CDSSES) is widely used and has been validated in several countries. 14 of 25 items of this scale were used ( $\alpha=.889$ ). An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was computed to reveal underlying factors of the construct. A principal component analysis with varimax rotation was conducted. KMO test of sampling adequacy was sufficient (.929), as well as Bartlett's test of sphericity ( $\chi^2=1961.725$ ,  $p=.000$ ). Three factors were identified which were in accordance with previous studies [3, 32]. They were labelled 'career-related planning and goal setting' ( $\alpha=.739$ ), 'career-related problem solving' ( $\alpha=.763$ ), and 'career-related self-appraisal' ( $\alpha=.798$ ), respectively. EI was assessed by using the trait EI questionnaire (TEIQue) in its short version (30 items), a self-report measure of emotional self-efficacy [33]. To compute trait EI, Petrides' [34] scoring syntax was applied to produce a global trait EI score ( $\alpha=.867$ ). Academic performance was measured as a control variable. It was self-assessed by the students on a 1-100 scale regarding their own past performance. Gender was self-reported by the respondents. For Austrian and Turkish students, an English version of the measures was translated/retranslated to the local language. Ukrainian students received the original English version. Those students, however, have an excellent command of English as this is an enrolment criterion of the Ukrainian University where the study took place. Analyses were computed using SPSS V. 25.0.

## **7. RESULTS**

To test the first hypotheses, multivariate regression (GLM) was conducted to reveal statistically significant difference between the countries and the effects of emotional intelligence and academic performance. Career related planning and goal setting (CRPG), career related problem solving (CRPS) and career related self-appraisal (CRSA) were entered as dependent variables, trait emotional intelligence (EI), academic performance (PERF) and gender served as co-variates.

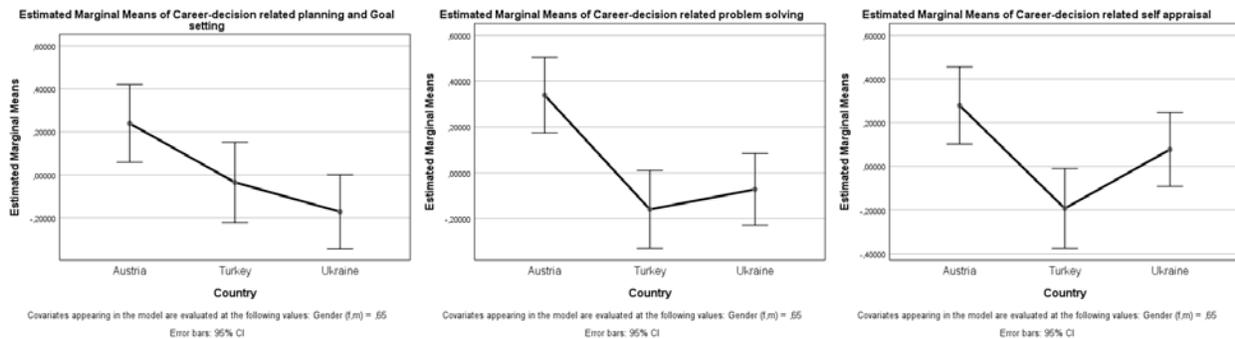
**Table 1: Estimated marginal means for CRPG, CRPS, and CRSA for Austria, Turkey, Ukraine**

Dependent Variable	Country	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Career-decision related planning and Goal setting (CRPG)	Austria	.213 <sup>a</sup>	.076	.063	.362
	Turkey	.072 <sup>a</sup>	.095	-.114	.259
	Ukraine	-.160 <sup>a</sup>	.084	-.325	.005
Career-decision related problem solving (CRPS)	Austria	.304 <sup>a</sup>	.069	.168	.440
	Turkey	-.044 <sup>a</sup>	.086	-.214	.125
	Ukraine	-.085 <sup>a</sup>	.076	-.235	.065
Career-decision related self appraisal (CRSA)	Austria	.217 <sup>a</sup>	.075	.070	.363
	Turkey	-.093 <sup>a</sup>	.093	-.276	.091
	Ukraine	.055 <sup>a</sup>	.082	-.107	.217

a. Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: Gender (f,m) = .64, EI = .0364487, Academic Performance = .0046381.

The multivariate result was significant for country, Wilk’s lambda = .906, F = 4.627, df = (5,550), p = .000, indicating a difference in the level of CDSE factors between Austria, Turkey and Ukraine. The univariate F tests showed there was a significant difference between countries for CRPG (F = 5.323, df = (2,277), p = .005), CRPS (F = 8.442, df = (2,277), p = .000, and CRSA (F = 3.373, df = (2,277), p = .0036.

**Exhibit 1: Graphical illustration of marginal means of CRPG, CRPS, and CRSA for Austria, Turkey, Ukraine**

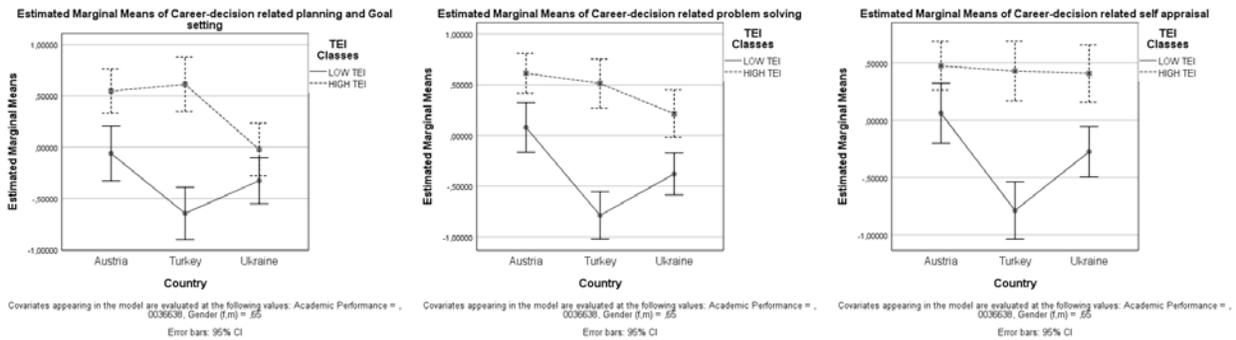


We expected CRPG, CRPS and CRSA to be higher with higher levels of (a) individualism, (b) masculinity, and lower levels of (c) long-term orientation, (d) power-distance, and (e) uncertainty avoidance. Hence, Austria should have the highest levels of all three factors, followed by Turkey, and Ukraine. Estimates for factor means (cf. Table 2, Exhibit 1) revealed that Austria, as hypothesized, ranks higher in CRPG, CRPS, and CRSA than Turkey and Ukraine. However differences are only significant between Austria and Ukraine for CRPG. For CRPS significant differences were found between Austria and Turkey, and between Austria and Ukraine. For CRSA, significant differences were found between Austria and Turkey, not between Turkey and Ukraine or Austria and Ukraine. As such, hypothesis 1a-c were partly confirmed in a way that higher levels of (a) individualism, (b) masculinity, and lower levels of (c) long-term orientation, (d) power-distance, and (e) uncertainty avoidance led to higher levels of CRPG, CRPS, and CRSA). However, there were no differences between Turkey and Ukraine, perhaps because the differences in (a) individualism, (b) masculinity, (c) long-term orientation, (d) power-distance, and (e) uncertainty avoidance are too small to yield meaningful differences. To test the effects of EI on CRPG, CRPS, and CRSA (dependent variables), EI was transformed into a categorical variable with high/low values split at the median. Multivariate GLM was employed to analyse effects with academic performance and gender as covariates. The multivariate result was

significant for the interaction of country and EI, Wilk's lambda = .743, F = 30.935, df = (3,268), p = .000, indicating a difference in the level of EI factors between the countries.

We expected EI to have a larger effect on CDSE factors with higher levels of (a) individualism, (b) masculinity, and lower levels of (c) long-term orientation, (d) power-distance, and (e) uncertainty avoidance. Hence, Austria should have the highest levels of all three factors, followed by Turkey, and Ukraine.

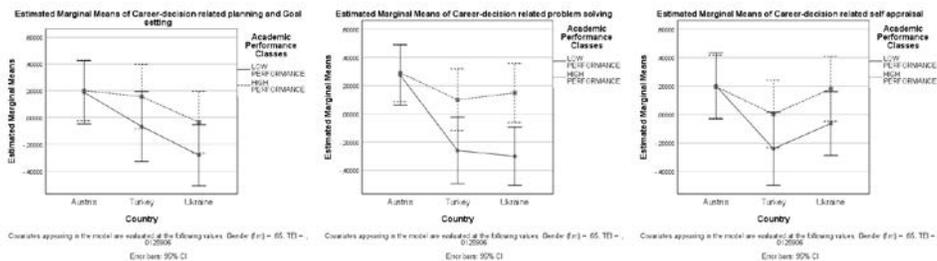
**Exhibit 2: Graphical illustration of EI effects on CRPG, CRPS, and CRSA for Austria, Turkey, Ukraine**



Estimated marginal factor means show that higher EI has an effect on CRPG in all countries (cf Table 3, Exhibit 2). However the effect is only significant in Austria and in Turkey. In Ukraine, there is no significant difference between high and low with respect to CRPG. For CRPS, significant effects of EI were found in all three countries, with Austria showing the highest value on high EI levels, followed by Turkey and Ukraine, which was expected. For CRSA, significant effects were found in Turkey and Ukraine. Austria showed the highest effect on high EI, however, within the 95 % CI, it was just not significant. Lastly, to test the effect of academic performance on CRPG, CRPS, and CRSA, academic performance was transformed into a categorical variable with high/low values split at the median. Multivariate GLM was employed to analyse effects, with EI and gender used as covariates. The multivariate result was significant for the interaction of country and academic performance, with Wilk's lambda = .968, F = 2.977, df = (3,268), p = .032.

It was expected that academic performance has a larger effect on CDSE factors with higher levels of (a) individualism, (b) masculinity, and lower levels of (c) long-term orientation, (d) power-distance, and (e) uncertainty avoidance. Hence, Austria should have the highest levels of all three factors, followed by Turkey, and Ukraine.

**Exhibit 3: Graphical illustration of academic performance effects on CRPG, CRPS, and CRSA for Austria, Turkey, Ukraine**



Estimated marginal factor means show that higher academic performance does not significantly contribute to higher CRPG and CRSA in Austria, Turkey and Ukraine (cf Table 4, Exhibit 3). For CRPS, a significant effect was found in Ukraine only.

## 8. Discussion

Austrian students (representing an individualistic, masculine low-power distance and medium high uncertainty avoidance culture), Ukrainian students (archetypal for collectivistic, feminine and high levels of power distance and high uncertainty avoidance) and Turkish students (with most values in between Austria and Ukraine) differ in their confidence to plan, manage and appraise their future professional career. However, the hypothesis could be only partly confirmed, mostly because of Turkey and Ukraine being not significantly different in the findings. Austrian students rank higher in their belief to plan their future career, to solve career related problems as well as in their self-appraisal of their future career decision-making. Cultural factors as well as culture related educational styles and learning approaches might account for this. Austrian students are used to take individual responsibility and to be held responsible for their decisions, which might be the reason for higher levels of self-efficacy in planning and managing their career development. These findings are in line with Oettingen's [20] cross-cultural study with students on their general study-related self-efficacy. For collectivist and high power-distance cultures, self-efficacy is linked to their level of congruence with their parents and teachers. Representatives of these cultures might be less encouraged by the latter ones to develop self-sufficiency and independence [35]. Also, as suggested by Manikutty et al. [10], culture exerts an influence on learning and teaching styles. EI as a personality related variable was found to have a positive effect on all factors in all investigated countries and there is a tendency towards the hypothesized relationships. These findings support Boyatzis et al.'s argument [36], that emotionally intelligent people are adaptable, transparent, innovative, and conscientious about new challenges to perform well in their jobs. It appears that EI facilitates the ability to access and use information relevant to career decision making, occupation, and self-appraisal in the career decision-making process [21]. Surprisingly, the differences of low and high EI in their effect on CDSE factors were far larger in Turkey than in the other countries. Academic performance was expected to have an influence on the CDSE sub dimensions. However, this could not be proven, as differences were insignificant in all three CDSE factors in Austria and in Turkey. In Ukraine, academic performance was significant in the "career-related problem solving" dimension only. This result suggests that Ukrainian students believe they are capable of solving career-related problems better if they have better grades (because they are used to receive teachers' judgements on their general problem-solving skills). This is a typical pattern for especially post-communist collectivist and high-power distance societies [20]. Evidently, better grades nurture career related self-efficacy in these countries.

## 9. Conclusions and implications

For cross-cultural research, this study provided evidence on the powerful influence of culture in education and educational goals. Furthermore, the study introduces EI as a variable, which has an influence on students' capabilities and perceptions of planning and organizing their future career. For higher education practitioners, the findings might help to better understand the concept of career decision-making self-efficacy and how it can be improved. A teacher's sense of self-efficacy has been consistently recognized as an important attribute of effective teaching and has been positively correlated to students' outcomes [37]. Content-specific knowledge with a pedagogical emphasis [38] could help teachers to better counsel students regarding their future career and as such increase students' CDSE. Also, as suggested by Scott and Ciani [39], specialized career classes could increase students' CDSE. Fostering career-related knowledge and self-efficacy of teachers by providing career counselling training helps students to grow their CDSE. With respect to the positive effect of trait EI on CDSE, positive intervention through EI training, as suggested by Di Fabio and Kenny [40] might be recommended. They found encouraging effects of EI training on perceived indecisiveness as well as on career decisional problems. Students from the investigated countries could benefit from EI training as e.g. suggested by Brackett and Katulak [41] to also increase their CDSE. Teachers should not only focus on career management and job search skills and neglect the development of EI skills. Liptak's [42] confluence counselling model could be helpful to effectively combine career counselling with personal counselling in a more holistic manner. Lastly, mobility and the exchange of students and faculty members helps to bridge cultural gaps and helps to unite the best of different pedagogical and didactical worlds.

## **10. Limitations and directions for future research**

Although the countries that have been selected for this analysis (Austria, Turkey and Ukraine) differ a lot in main dimensions of Hofstede's cultural model, the findings should be generalized with caution. Other combinations of power distance, masculinity/femininity, collectivism/individualism, and uncertainty avoidance may yield different results. Also, the sample sizes were relatively small; hence, a replication of the study with larger samples would be much appreciated and may yield more robust results. Thirdly, only business students were asked to participate in the survey. Research suggests that students of business and non-business disciplines are different in their value sets, or in their risk-taking behaviour [43, 44]. Hence, future research might focus on other disciplines than business in order to contribute to a broader picture. Lastly, the study only measures self-reported efficacy cross-sectionally, and does not include a longitudinal perspective nor objective data of career-related achievements. It would be interesting to investigate the relationship of students' CDSE and their performance in their first employments after graduation.

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# EP7. SUSTAINING AN ERASMUS CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT (2010-12): 'DENTCPD' TEN YEARS ON

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## INTRODUCTION:

The title of the Erasmus Lifelong learning project was, '*Harmonization and Standardization of European Dental Schools Programs of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for Graduate Dentists*' (2010-2012). It was completed under the auspices of the Association for Dental Education in Europe (ADEE). The project team included researchers based in Cardiff (UK), ACTA (Netherlands), Helsinki (Finland), Riga (Latvia), Athens (Greece) and ADEE. The author list, of this original project and subsequent research publications, are displayed in *Table 1*. The team are celebrating 10 years of additional research achieved through dissemination and exploitation, supporting the EU Commission's key directive of demonstrating sustainability beyond the duration of the project. All project outcomes and subsequent publications will be of interest, globally to dentists, allied dental professions and across other healthcare and non-healthcare professions. One of the key outcomes was the published '*Dental CPD Reference Manual*'<sup>1</sup>

In addition to celebrate this anniversary, the website set up during the project has been modernised, updated, and populated with a wealth of additional information and links to research relevant to continuing education and development - the DentCPD website.<sup>2</sup>

The outcomes of the original Erasmus project included: a comprehensive literature search; the identification of 'Compulsory' and 'Recommended' 'Core Topics of CPD'; Guidelines for providers of CPD activities; an exemplar e-module on 'Sterilisation in Dentistry'; and guidance on e-module production.

The following four 'core compulsory' dental CPD topics were identified: medical emergencies; cross-infection control; the medically compromised patient; and radiation protection (for those taking X rays, using scanners). In addition, three 'core recommended' CPD topics were identified: health and safety; pain management; and, safeguarding children and vulnerable adults

As would be expected, all projects usually identify issues that warrant further investigation. In this case, there was much confusion on what constituted certification and /or accreditation of dental CPD activities. There was a need identified to produce a robust process for external accreditation and quality assurance (QA) of CPD activities. Regarding quality QA of CPD activities, the consensus from the research was that it was variable and there was a lack of clarity. QA of CPD needed to be addressed and strengthened and there was a need to identify who would provide QA monitoring. Should it be the regulatory body or a commissioned, and as far as possible, impartial body or organisation? It was recognised that any progress could incur significant resource implications and it was questioned as to whether the defined various CPD learning outcomes were achievable and measurable. It was suggested that a guidance or framework document for QA would be helpful but that any defined criteria would need to cover the variety of CPD activities. In addition, the Erasmus project identified limited responses to what respondents considered were the criteria required for accreditation of CPD educational activities. Overall, there appeared to be a lack of clarity on the issue of accreditation, with a degree of confusion about the criteria used when accrediting CPD activities. In addition, there was a lack of clarity over how CPD activity is or should be measured in terms of hours of activity or credits for an educational activity.

## **ERASMUS PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY AIMS:**

1. The aim of the original Erasmus *DentCPD* project was to identify evidence based good practice for CPD to inform regulatory bodies, professional organisations, and dental professionals, to enhance the role of CPD in support of a high standard of patient care.
2. Subsequent research was carried out to demonstrate through dissemination and exploitation the sustainability of the objectives and aspirations of this project which has continued well beyond the original Erasmus project's duration.
3. In addition, we aimed to demonstrate that all the outcomes are of relevance not only to dentists and allied dental professionals but also to other healthcare and non-healthcare professions - UK & internationally - (doctors, nurses, midwives, optometrists, pharmacists, etc., solicitors, engineers etc.,)

## **OUTCOMES OF SUBSEQUENT RESEARCH AND INVESTIGATIONS:**

Details from some of the publications that members of the original Erasmus Project Team either contributed directly or indirectly to are described below. In addition, team members have also contributed to an EU Review of CPD for five Healthcare Professions 2013<sup>3</sup>; A review of CPD in Implant Dentistry 2014<sup>4</sup>; and the EU Manual of Dentistry 2015<sup>5</sup>.

### **Standards for Dental Educators (2013)<sup>6</sup>**

Standards for Dental Educators was published by the Committee for Postgraduate Directors and Deans, UK (COPDEND). Educators, trainers, supervisors at all levels of expertise can map their activities roles and responsibilities, across the criteria to demonstrate evidence of their educator quality status at their annual progress review. The standards can also be used by educators to support their aspirations for promotion to a senior position in education and training.

### **Quality Assurance Framework for Workforce Development (2014)<sup>7</sup>**

Additionally, COPDEND have published a Quality Assurance Framework for Workforce Development which was first published in 2014 and has since been refined and upgraded in 2016 and 2019. The Framework provides a series of defined criteria/statements listed under four themes, namely: i) Planning & Development ii) CPD Delivery iii) CPD Evaluation iv) CPD Administration. This Framework provides a suitable measure of what one should expect of CPD activities, in turn, enhancing the continuing education of the dental workforce. It can be utilised by 'CPD Users' – registered professionals - to measure the value of a CPD activity. This information can be recorded in a personal reflective portfolio and the mapping against the framework criteria can provide robust evidence of the value of their continuing education. Equally, it can be used by 'CPD Providers' to strengthen their portfolio of CPD educational activities. The aspiration, in a wider context must be that this quality management of an individual's continuing education and training will promote mobility of dental professionals, throughout their career progression and wherever they may be geographically, with appropriately quality assured records of their continuing education and development.

## **Proposed External Accreditation Process for Dental CPD<sup>8</sup>:**

Following completion of the DentCPD project, the research team explored the issue of external and robust pan-European accreditation of dental CPD. A proposal was put forward and discussed with the ADEE executive and debated further at the Life-Long Learning Special Interest Group at the 2015 and 2016 ADEE conferences. A Pan European Accreditation process<sup>9</sup> has been devised.

It provides an accreditation mechanism for continuing educational activities undertaken by graduate dentists in the EU on a Face-to-Face (F2F) basis. This is similar to the process for e-learning activities offered by ADEE – Platinum Peer Review<sup>6</sup>. The project team believed that for ADEE, this could be an opportunity to support international harmonisation and improve the quality of continuing dental education and training delivered through a variety of CPD educational activities.

The following are components of the ‘accreditation process’ for F2F educational activities. Essentially the application form, completed by a provider of a CPD activity, should address all the ‘essential criteria’ listed in the application proforma. There are twenty-three essential criteria: three relate to the Educational Objectives (Learning Outcomes), six to the Description of the Educational Activity, six to the Content of the Educational Activity, five to Details of the ‘Provider’, and three to evidence of quality assurance secured by the ‘Provider’. ADEE nominated quality assessors can consider the information provided. There is an opportunity to provide amendments, an appeal mechanism is in place and the number of continuing education credits deemed applicable to the educational activity are identified.

## **Review of Continuing Professional Development (2019)<sup>10</sup>**

The GDC commissioned an ADEE project team (*see Table 1*) to undertake a wide-ranging review of continuing professional development (CPD) across healthcare and non-healthcare sectors. The researchers aimed to identify evidence-based good practice in CPD, learn about innovations in CPD and, appraise the move away from quantitative towards qualitative CPD models.

The Review of CPD investigated four themes:

1. Interactive CPD Activities: including Peer Learning, Mentoring, and Reflective Practice
2. E-Learning: investigating Innovative Developments in Continuing Education
3. Insight & Intelligence Gathering: how do they influence registrants, CPD providers and regulatory bodies
4. The move towards a qualitative-based CPD policies and procedures

A selection of the findings are as follows: The approaches to CPD should acknowledge an individuals’ responsibility for their own professional development and the undertaking of educational activities that meet the needs that are relevant to their particular clinical and professional practice. Undertaking CPD should not be a tick-box exercise, not just ‘a means to an end’. Professionals should have pride in achievements. When that is the aspiration then they should be keen to share their achievements and how that has impacted in a positive way for their patients.

Regulators should be encouraged to support their registrants, offering guidance and educational tools where possible. In turn, it is to be hoped that this will strengthen engagement between registrants and their regulatory body for the good of patients. Whilst CPD should be of value and underpins life-long learning for many healthcare professionals the acquisition of quality CPD is a compulsory requirement for them remaining on their professional register.

The evidence suggests that a blended approach to the provision and delivery of CPD is most likely to address the variety of registrants needs and it's important to incorporate more 'higher order thinking' in the approach to CPD. CPD activities should strive to go beyond the basic observation of facts and memorisation. Beyond book reading, conference attendance and passive learning. The activities should embrace - critical thinking, reflective practice, active learning, mentoring, appraisal and feedback, portfolio, and personal planning. The Role in CPD development and regulation is emerging. This is clearly confirmed by the recent revalidation and CPD schemes in a range of professions worldwide. The GDC's own agenda for CPD development continues to evolve, in which unanimously advocate the inclusion of such higher order thinking activities.

The review identified a definite move towards Quality Outcomes-Based Model approaches for CPD across a number of professions. Ideally, this should support engagement by professionals in meaningful and relevant CPD. In turn, it is to be hoped that this will promote a greater potential to positively impact on practice and strengthen a high standard of patient care.

### **Reports on 'Preparedness for Practice' of UK dental graduates<sup>11</sup> and 'Professionalism in Dentistry' (2020)<sup>12</sup>**

In 2020, an ADEE project team (*see Table 1*) undertook two parallel projects, commissioned by the GDC. One resulted in a Report on 'Preparedness for Practice' of UK dental professional graduates at the point of graduation prior to entry into the clinical workforce. The springboard into a career long period of Life-Long Learning underpinned by CPD which should be of value and strengthen their ability to provide a high standard of care for their patients. This report contributed to the wider thematic research being undertaken by the dental regulatory body

The other review resulted in a Report on 'Professionalism' in healthcare and non-healthcare professions. This is a subject of relevance to all professionals throughout their careers.

The methodology, for both reports, involved an extensive literature search, interviews with topic experts and contributions to learning events held by the GDC during the projects' duration. For the 'Professionalism' Report focus groups were held with dental professionals and members of the public and in addition a survey was carried out as part of a Delphi Process. For the latter, the project team aimed to receive around 100 responses. However, the response was overwhelming with in excess of 1000 responses in round 1 and 665 responses in round 2, providing a wealth of additional data to analyse.

The research questions investigated in the 'Preparedness for Practice' review are displayed in *Table 3*. The research questions investigated in the review of 'Professionalism' are displayed in *Table 4*.

The following describes a sample of the key messages from the review of 'Preparedness for Practice' of UK dental professional graduates<sup>11</sup>. In the UK, the concept of a new graduate as a 'safe beginner' is widely accepted, but the definition is not clearly understood by all stakeholders. Good communication between stakeholders, including those involved in undergraduate and postgraduate training, facilitates 'preparedness' and the transition into the workplace. There is evidence that integrated, patient-centred teaching in a variety of settings (including outreach facilities) provides a valuable educational base. However, it is important to ensure that structured quality control management is in place across the different teaching sites to ensure a consistent and high-quality approach within the teaching strategy, across the different work settings. The literature suggests that new graduates were, in general, less well prepared in the more complex tasks such as treatment planning, crown and bridge procedures, endodontics (especially molar), surgical extractions and orthodontic diagnosis. However, it should be recognised that education providers (Dental Schools) found it difficult to find sufficient cases for the more complex treatments. This may be because of changing demographics and the diversity of dental disease but it could also be related to curriculum constraints.

A series of observations and recommendations were made as a result of the evidence gained from the review of 'Preparedness for Practice'. There are increasing pressures to expand the dental undergraduate curricula in response to: changes in disease processes; demographic, societal, and cultural changes; development of new techniques and new materials; and the continued complexity of some dental procedures. Identifying what is essential for the 'safe beginner', as they enter the workplace, presents a huge challenge for the new graduate, educationalists, and the regulator. The transition of a new graduate into the working environment can be a monumental step. Closer engagement across stakeholders, including those in undergraduate and postgraduate education and training, the regulatory body, and employers, is required. This significant point was raised in this review and at stakeholder events.

The following describes a sample of the key messages from the review of 'Professionalism'<sup>12</sup>. When considering the public's expectations and perceptions about lapses by professionals, professionals' interactions with their patients, the importance of good communication, joint decision making, good clinical skills and a safe environment were high on the public's priority list. Lapses in behaviour or actions do not necessarily imply that a person is unprofessional, what is important is that professionals should learn from their mistakes, many of which tend to occur more commonly in challenging situations. Professionalism is multifaceted and the context in which a given behaviour is considered unprofessional is an important factor. There are a variety of factors that may influence the professionalism of a dental professional. These include cultural or religious factors, the environment and work settings, the observer or individual the action is directed towards and their perceptions, and whether the scenario was a one-off event or a patterned behaviour. There were variations between the perceptions, of dental professionals and members of the public, about what constitutes professionalism. Members of the public appeared to take a more lenient approach in their views compared with the views of the dental professionals. There is little evidence to suggest what is the best way to teach or learn about professionalism. It is accepted that aligning theory with practice and experiencing real life scenarios is pivotal. This could include a range of approaches to support learning, including role modelling, mentoring, awareness of the 'hidden curriculum', reflective practice, and the importance of effective communication.

A series of observations and recommendations were made as a result of the evidence collected through the review of 'Professionalism'. The data collected exceeded expectations, not least the on-line survey which received ten times the number of responses the project team had anticipated. The Review highlighted the importance, to patients, of being treated in a safe healthcare environment and that they expected good clinical skills from dental professionals. In addition, patients expect professionals to communicate and engage with them appropriately, put them at their ease. They want to be involved in decision making about their treatment so that they ultimately have trust in those who care for them. Evidence of good teamworking within a clinical practice and continuing education and training were also important to patients. The importance of the context in which a professional behaviour is interpreted was highlighted. A one-off lapse, with minimal implications (considered to be out of character) was understandable by professionals and patients alike, as long as the individual learnt from this experience and could personally move on. However, it is recognised that dwelling on a lapse, by a professional, rather than learning and moving on was seen by all concerned as detrimental to that professional both from a mental health perspective and a clinical service provision point of view.

## **CONCLUSIONS:**

The main messages in sustaining the DentCPD Erasmus project over the last 10 years are as follows:

It is to be hoped that the 'Standards for Dental Educators' will strengthen proof of the quality of educators and that the 'QA Framework for Dental Workforce Development' will facilitate professionals and providers to map CPD outcomes against defined quality learning outcomes. This should, in turn, strengthen proof of the quality of CPD activities. The CPD structured 'accreditation' process should improve European wide CPD recognition. The CPD Review (2019) has identified a shift to outcome-based models, with an emphasis on personal development planning, e-portfolios, reflective practice, and mentoring. The focus being more on quality rather than on quantity of CPD and encouraging ownership and responsibility of their own CPD by

professionals. In the Report on 'Preparedness for Practice', which is the springboard to life-long learning underpinned by CPD, it is important to identify the level of competence and confidence of professionals, at the point of graduation, to help them identify their needs through CPD, going forward and support the early transition for new graduates into the workplace through wide stakeholder cooperation. In the Report on 'Professionalism', there is a need to focus on pride in being professional and to support professionals who have lapses in actions or behaviours to help them learn, change, and improve.

Ultimately CPD underpins Life-Long Learning. Thus, it is essential to strengthen the value of CPD. Importantly, it is clear that there is a need to evaluate whether these CPD activities improve everyday clinical practice and strengthen a high standard of patient care by dental professionals? It is to be hoped that the original Erasmus project and the subsequent relevant publications have gone a long way towards supporting these aspirations and that more robust QA and accreditation processes will facilitate this. Much of the work we have carried out is relevant across a wide range of healthcare and non-healthcare sectors.

### ***Acknowledgement:***

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<sup>1</sup>Reference Manual for Dental CPD 2013.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/toc/16000579/17/s1>

<sup>2</sup>Updated *DentCPD* website – 10 years on.

<https://www.dentcpd.org/>

<sup>3</sup>Study concerning the review and mapping of continuous professional development and lifelong learning for health professionals in the EU 2013.

[https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/workforce/docs/cpd\\_mapping\\_report\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/health/sites/health/files/workforce/docs/cpd_mapping_report_en.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>CPD in Implant Dentistry 2014.

<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/eje.12087>

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<sup>6</sup>Standards for Dental Educators COPDEND 2018.

<https://www.copdend.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Guidelines-for-Dental-Educators-.pdf>

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<sup>8</sup>Pan-European Accreditation Framework, 2016.

[www.DentCPD.org](http://www.DentCPD.org)

<sup>9</sup>ADEE Platinum Peer Review. [https://www.adee.org/sites/default/files/ADEE\\_Membership\\_Benefits-Platinum-peer-review.pdf](https://www.adee.org/sites/default/files/ADEE_Membership_Benefits-Platinum-peer-review.pdf)

<sup>10</sup>Review of CPD – 2019. <https://www.gdc-uk.org/about-us/what-we-do/research/research/detail/fitness-to-practise/review-of-the-literature-on-cpd---2019>

<sup>11</sup>Review of Preparedness for Practice – 2020. <https://www.gdc-uk.org/about-us/what-we-do/research/research/detail/fitness-to-practise/preparedness-for-practice-of-uk-graduates-2020>

<sup>12</sup>Review of Professionalism – 2020. <https://www.gdc-uk.org/information-standards-guidance/standards-and-guidance/promoting-professionalism>

***Table 1: List of Project Team members and authors of the relevant publications:***

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***Table 3: ‘Preparedness for Practice’ Research Questions***

1. to what extent are new dental graduates meeting required learning outcomes and is this an effective starting point from which to practise safely?
2. what factors contribute to variance in preparedness for practice, are there specific skills, tasks or knowledge that graduates are achieving or lacking and what evidence demonstrates this?
3. what is the potential impact, on both patients and the profession, of graduates being inadequately prepared for practice?
4. what is the evidence (from dentistry or other healthcare professions) of ways that preparedness for practice has been defined, addressed, and evaluated?

***Table 4: ‘Professionalism’ Research Questions.***

1. What aspects of professionalism does the public expect from dental professionals (what causes a patient to lose trust), and why are these perceived as important?
2. How can aspects of professionalism be categorised (e.g., moral, clinical, personal behavioural, in work, outside work)?
3. Do expectations of professionalism differ in dentistry compared to other professions or between dental professionals?
4. The teaching of professionalism - how does the undergraduate curriculum prepare students to meet professionalism expectations and how this is evidenced

# EP10. VALUE-BASED COMMUNICATION IN DIGITAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT: THE CASE OF ERASMUS+ MICROMASTER PROGRAM

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## ABSTRACT

Digital learning is an increasingly developing technology structured to get students involved in the process of learning independently. In this paper, the effectiveness of digital learning systems with respect to teacher-student interaction and educational process through value-based perspective is examined. The EU Erasmus+ project “Internationalization at Home through Online Micromasters and Virtual Mobility” and its digital training program MicroMaster1 is taken into consideration. More specifically, the study includes students’ feedback and comments, which were provided after completing three courses and capstone project within MicroMaster1 training program from January to July 2020. In total, 110 students responded to the evaluation questionnaire, which was made available on Google Forms platform and disseminated after each course.

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**Key words:** digital learning environment, learning management system, value-based communication, intercultural communication, internationalization@home, Erasmus+

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## 1. INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of value has penetrated all social institutions, which we frequently encounter in our daily lives. It may be argued that values are formed as a result of various social relations and are maintained through the interaction of social institutions and individuals. The concept of value may be applied within corporate climate, which separates an organisation from others and influences the behaviours of individuals in it. Collective beliefs that create communication climate are related to 8 communication factors: supportiveness, being people-oriented, participation in decision-making processes, trust, responsibility, credibility, transparency and neutrality, high performance objectives. All these factors also demonstrate a value-based perspective in a positive organisational climate.

Similarly, educational process also creates its own organizational climate. The climate created by the European Union (EU) to promote educational mobilities and cooperation is very important. In this climate teachers and students are adapted to the specific educational process and environment, communicating and collaborating with each other, creating course contents, collecting course materials, identifying individual and team assignments, establishing the Learning Management System (LMS). Teachers and online tutors have a great role as creators of a positive learning environment.

Distance learning is an increasingly developing technology structured to get students involved in the process of learning independently. This system utilizes electronic technologies for communication between students and teachers separated in space (location), time, or both (Razik and Swanson, 2010; Silverthorne, 2001, qtd. in Beketova et.al, 2020: 2). In education system, an online tutor or teacher acts as a leader who guides and manages students at all levels. With respect to the type of education teachers may also manage student teams as well. Management is a process of making right decisions, even though they may not satisfy the majority of participants engaged in learning (Judge et al., 2002, qtd. in Beketova et.al, 2020: 2). A leader assumes the responsibility to unite the group members and direct them according to assigned objectives. At this point a leader or a teacher enables that students in distance learning participate in decision making and solution - finding processes (Beketova et.al, 2020: 2). Digital learning is using new communication technologies to connect learners, potential learners, teachers, researchers, research founders, IT professionals in LMS for the online courses contents management and in virtual field for using management systems to control educational processes in a flexible ever-changing network organization (Pankowska, 2006: 29).

In this study, the effectiveness of digital learning systems with respect to teacher-student interaction and educational process through value-based perspective will be examined. In the framework of KA203-Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education (HE), the EU Erasmus+ project “Internationalization at Home through Online Micromasters and Virtual Mobility” will be taken into consideration. The digital training project that this study is based on is aimed to develop and implement two international online MicroMaster programs, which have been provided by a virtual campus of four HEIs – Istanbul University (Turkey), Institute of Communication Studies (Macedonia), DOBA Faculty of Applied Business and Social Studies (Slovenia), and Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania). The 6-month specializations have provided deep learning in the specific career fields of (1) Entrepreneurship Ecosystem and Innovation Strategy and (2) Digital Communications and Marketing. The MicroMaster1 has equipped students with knowledge and competencies relevant for the international labour market while ensuring a competitive advantage for their professional success or advance of their career. Virtual mobility and collaborative online learning enriches the international experience and intercultural understanding of students from different European countries. Game-based learning has been used as an innovative teaching method capable of offering key skills and information regarding different subject matters while incorporating collaborative learning and learning by doing. The MicroMaster1 credentials can be recognized by all four project partner HEIs as a part of formal education.

The project aims to improve the quality of education through Internationalisation of Higher Education at Home and virtual mobility. It envisions the following objectives through which its aim will be achieved:

- To create a new model of internationalized teaching and learning in a virtual environment that drives employability and public participation.
- To enhance individual's potentials to effectively enter an inter-connected, cross-cultural labour market in a digital era.

While all partner HEIs have already introduced some elements of internationalisation of their study programs, they all need to make additional steps to achieve a long-term goal of internationalizing their study programs and mobility for all students. The diverse experiences, approaches and cultural backgrounds of the partner HEIs are ideal for mutual learning and for introducing innovations in their educational approach.

Coming into e-Education domain a person is involved in psychological contract – unique and informal set of rules and conditions. A special, unwritten agreement exists among students and teaching staff. It covers expectations concerning non-material aspects of educational processes. The focus is on relations not on transaction of buying or selling educational services, although breaking the psychological contract can have economic consequences. Students expect transfer and creation of new knowledge, evaluation of knowledge, opportunities to create trust (Aurum, et. al, 2003; Lewis, 1985 qtd. in Pankowska, 2006: 32). They expect assurance that the educational process will be successful. Teaching staff expects that students will behave according to the pre-specified rules and that they will be creative in a cognitive educational processes.

## 1.1 STUDENT-CENTRED APPROACH IN DIGITAL LEARNING

Changes in economy (globalization) and in technology (e.g. the fourth industrial revolution, artificial intelligence, information explosion) have impact on higher education and new approaches to teaching (innovative pedagogies such as open education, MOOCs, augmented reality, virtual reality, online learning, mobile learning, intelligent tutoring systems, gamification, simulations, digital storytelling, lifelong learning) have to be developed and applied in order to response to the increasingly diverse future needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century workplace and consequently of new generations of learners. Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is characterized by the following development tendencies (Bregar et al., 2020): education takes place everywhere, in different places, in different forms, circumstances, far from just in the classroom; learners are increasingly taking on the role of organizer of education; learning is a lifelong process that takes place at different times and is not only linked to educational institutions; learning takes place in learning communities, which can be formal and informal in nature; learning is no longer teacher or the institution centred. The education system and the role of the teacher have to transform themselves for the future (Ally, 2019).

In order to achieve the UN Sustainability goal 4 («quality education for all») digital technologies will be spread and used for learners in remote and difficult to access locations with lack of infrastructure, teachers will be trained to use digital technology to teach virtually (Gaskell, 2018). A student centred approach (SCA) and student centred learning (SCL) will be applied, not the teacher centred approach. Learning and teaching should be designed and carried out in such a way that the learner will be an active creator of knowledge and the teacher a guide and moderator/ facilitator in this process.

Education of the future will be self-organizing, students will decide where and when they will learn and it will be supported by technology (Chai and Kong, 2017). In the future students will satisfy their information needs by the increasing use of digital technology, by use of open educational resources (OER). According to Cronin (2017), open education practice (OEP) will become the norm. Their digital skills must be comprehensive and inclusive (Guo, 2018).

OERs, together with MOOCs, are today the most recognizable and pervasive element of the open education movement. OERs were initially defined as learning, teaching or research material that is publicly available on any medium or has been published with an open license allowing free use, or for other purposes depending on the type of license used. The use of OER for commercial purposes has not been ruled out in this definition (Atkins et al., 2007, p. 4 in: Bregar et. al, 2020). Learners will have to learn, re-learn and update learning continuously due to the exponential explosion of information (Huang, 2018) and big data. To teach effectively and successfully in the world of artificial intelligence and robotics teachers have to adapt to the challenges of the fourth industrial revolution.

## 1.2 VALUE-BASED COMMUNICATION IN DIGITAL LEARNING

Lecturers and students who will come together within the scope of Online Distance Learning Education (DLE) need to be prepared for the culture and climate of this education system. This culture is an understanding of education based on a value-based approach. Being value-based is first related to person focus. This study is about a SCA. Three main criteria for value-based communication in DLE include governance, trust and student focus:

### **Governance**

- a. Students' participation in the educational process
- b. Clarity (educational process in terms of content, expectations regarding work load – assignments, assessment criteria)
- c. Transparency (evaluation of assignments and providing feedback)
- d. Accountability (online tutors, teachers and students)

### **Trust**

- a. Providing continuous information / feedback (among tutors, lecturers and students).
- b. Giving priority to quality in education with respect to webinars, preparation of study materials and communication styles with students.
- c. Reciprocity: Meeting needs and expectations in the context of the principle of reciprocity in student-teacher communication and based on mutual satisfaction.
- d. Dialogue: Continuous dialogue between students- lecturers.
- e. Interaction.
- f. Assuming Responsibility.
- g. Conformity with Ethical Standards: Compliance with ethical standards within the scope of the course project in speeches and correspondence (European Union, 2019).

### **Actions Pertaining to SCA**

- a. Meeting the needs of teachers and students: Meeting the cognitive, cultural and social needs of students. Current, understandable, rich content and systemically prepared literature on the subjects they want to study, as well as providing examples for implementation, not just theoretical. Creating social sharing areas where they can interact and develop themselves with the support of teachers and in collaboration with other students from different cultures. Creating spaces where they can express themselves online and on different social media platforms and discuss their problems.
- b. Qualified Teaching Personnel, learning materials and LMS system.
- c. Quick Response from teachers or online tutors to students related to their assignments.
- d. Research (developing new and more effective teaching methods etc.)
- e. Technical Value: Optimum output with available sources.
- f. Personal Value: Proper Care for the Fulfillment of Students' Expectations.
- g. Social Value: Enabling the engagement of students related to the topics on education process by means of their evaluations providing motivation for students to constantly improve themselves. Continuous information, updates to students and teachers on social media platforms and LMS, to be informed about changes in a timely way.

Addressing the education process in a value-based approach to distance education requires developing a positive relationship with students and also among teachers. Students of different cultures who come together within the scope of online digital education create a small society among themselves. This small society has its own culture and climate. The working teams of students develop and use a common language, perspective, and forms of action begin to form. Students expect successful accomplishment of educational goals. It is very important that program managers and teachers pay attention to the process of implementation and to the communication process, with accent on communication style. Since values exist within the culture as a concept, a value-based education system requires a SCA where governance and an environment of trust is created. A prerequisite for ensuring an environment of trust is the preparation of teachers and online tutors for educational process in online environment through preparatory meetings, research, development of goals, content, anticipation of possible challenges, risks, obstacles to personal development that students should achieve in the program. The quality, flexibility and effectiveness of the communication that teachers and students establish with each other is very important for the creation of this culture and climate.

Values, as part of both individual and cultural belief systems, give us the opportunity to gain insights regarding what motivates students. Therefore, to provide institutions with much needed information about the value profile of the distance-learning student, it is essential that research on student values is performed. This information could help create and implement programs aimed at increasing student success and decreasing student withdrawals (Tejeda –Delgado, et.al. 2011: 119) from the program.

Another important point about being value-based is to ensure student participation in the courses. Special accent is given to the time spent on studying the course materials, on preparing assignments and best utilization of LMS.

A significant challenge with ODL courses is large number of course participants dropping out. Multiple reasons have been identified for low ODL retention rates – students’ difficulties in effectively balancing educational, work and personal commitments; their frustration with technical difficulties; and low self-efficacy along with learning self-regulation. Research indicates that perhaps the most significant issue is a lack of students’ engagement with ODL environment (Bawa, 2016; Kahn et al., 2017; Lee and Choi, 2011; Martin and Bolliger, 2018 qtd. in Starr-Glass, 2020: 126).

However, engagement is commonly identified by specific facets that can be observed in students’ and in their relationships with the learning environment. These facets can be conceptualized as independent but, in most learning contexts, they co-exist, co-mingle and overlap (Bowden et al., 2019; Fredricks, 2011; Reeve, 2012; Sinatra et al., 2015 qtd. in Starr-Glass, 2020: 126):

**Affective engagement:** A degree to which learners are motivated by perceived value and utility (present and future) of the learning material, a sense of pride/passion in learning and anticipation of expectancy of success.

**Behavioral engagement** which involves the extent to which learners are actively involved in their own academic conduct – in their course work, their educational program and institution in which they are enrolled.

**Cognitive engagement** that relates to the level of psychological involvement, the desire to initiate and sustain learning activities, learner acceptance of higher levels of self-efficacy in demonstrating knowledge gains and the self-selection of mastery-goals as opposed to performance-goals. (Starr-Glass, 2020: 126)

Full participation of students in the process, which is an element of value-based view, will improve the quality and performance of the educational process, while a more objective review and improvement of the philosophy, tactics and strategies of the system will be ensured. This is already part of the concept of governance.

According to Foucault (qtd. in Jørgensen, 2004) value-based collaboration as a new form of governance resembles governmentality. Collaboration is controlled and guided by a set of rules such as procedures, traditions, norms and standards. Moreover, collaboration functions as a matter of participating in language games through which social and organizational realities are structured (Adolpsen & Norreklit, qtd. in Jørgensen, 2004: 87). Organizational and social realities are formed, negotiated, shared and changed through

interaction and collaboration. Collaboration enables people not only to communicate, but also to maintain mutual understanding and perform daily life practices (Silverman & Jones qtd. in Jørgensen, 2004). Value-based communication generally consists of being people oriented, quality, participation, sustainable communication, trust, transparency, conformity with ethical standards, continual research, susceptibility to needs, qualitative and quantitative as well as continuing education etc.

## **2. METHODS**

A quantitative research strategy by means of a structured questionnaire to collect data was applied.

### **2.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE INSTRUMENT**

Online survey was applied to collect student feedback on the following topics: general evaluation of learning experience, assessment of knowledge and competences developed, quality of teachers and online tutors' work, as well as LMS.

### **2.2 SAMPLE DESCRIPTION**

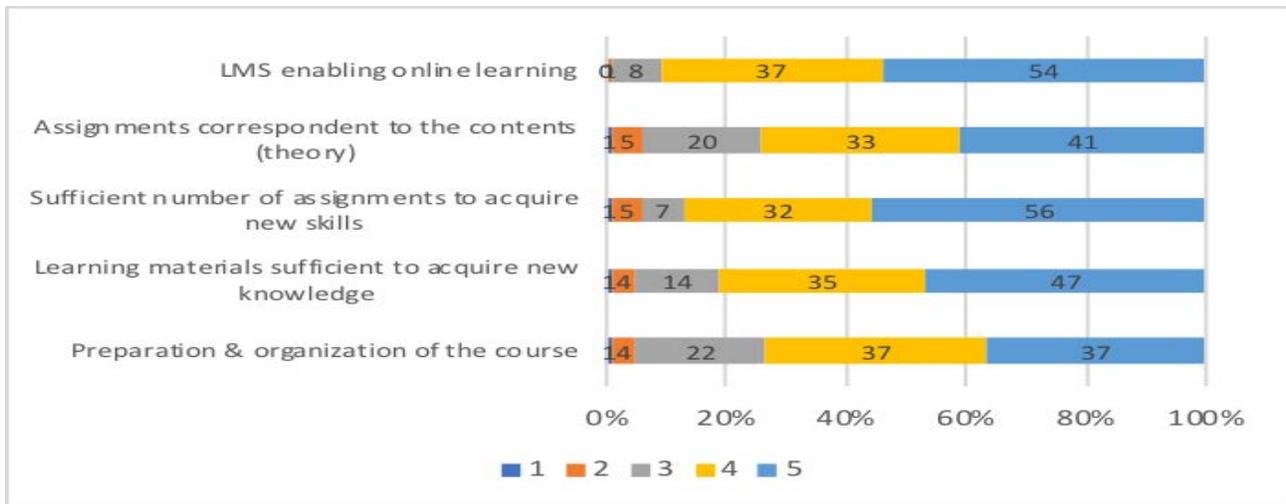
In order to be included in the evaluation process participants of the program had to successfully accomplish the three 4 weeks courses and an 8 week's capstone project. In total, 110 students responded to the evaluation questionnaire, which was made available on Google Forms platform and disseminated after each course.

### **2.3 RESEARCH DESCRIPTION**

The study is based on students' feedback and comments provided after completing each of the three courses and after the capstone project from January until July 2020. The response rate for each course was between 25% and 30%, which should be taken into account in discussion and conclusions. The COVID-19 pandemic and quarantine which started in March and continued through the end of May 2020 was a force major which significantly affected the program. Due to the limited number of responses, only aggregated results for the whole MicroMaster1 program have been analysed with IBM SPSS Statistics.

## **3. RESULTS OF STUDENTS' EVALUATION**

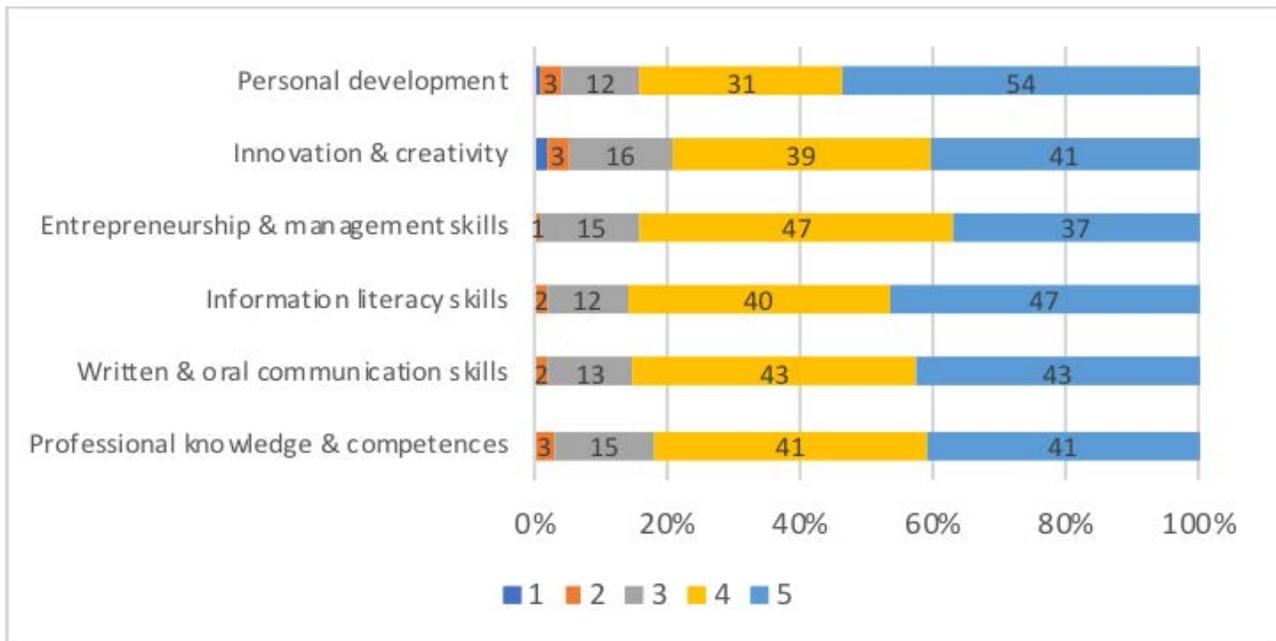
General evaluation of learning experience during MicroMaster1 courses included the quality of organization of the course, course materials, assignments and LMS. Likert scale was used (scores from 1 to 5, 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest). 91% of students assessed positively the selected online learning platform and 54% were very satisfied with the LMS (Figure 1). LMS is an important tool for sharing course materials, it is a place to connect with and receive feedback from teachers and online tutors. LMS has been used extensively by students to discuss the assignments and projects, and to get immediate feedback to their questions. In this way, students' motivation, interests, feelings and thoughts were monitored and guided during the digital learning process. Effective communication through the LMS created a safe and participatory environment of openness, transparency, reciprocity and dialogue.



**Figure 1.** General evaluation of Micromaster1 courses (%)

82%, respectively 88% of students assessed the amount of study materials and the number of assignments (including projects) and activities sufficient to acquire and create new knowledge and skills. 74% of the students agreed that assignments were well aligned with the courses' contents. It is important that study materials are application-oriented and well understandable, supporting individual and team efforts.

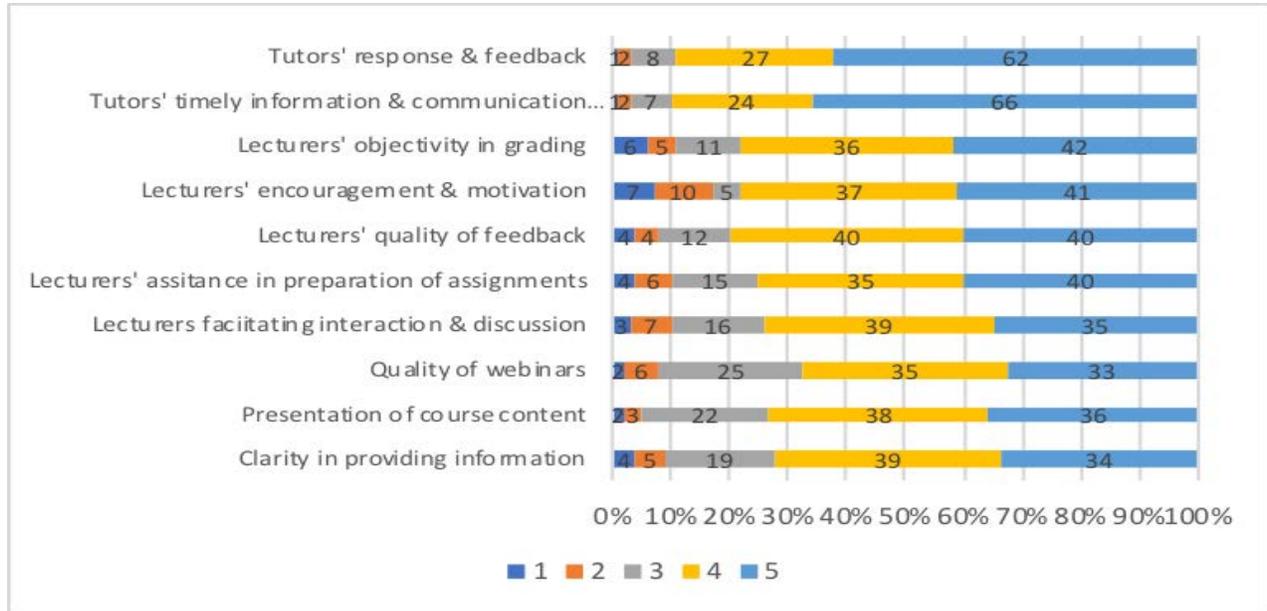
General assessment of knowledge and competencies developed within the courses of MicroMaster1 is shown in Figure 2 for the following categories: professional knowledge and competencies, written and oral communication skills, information literacy skills, entrepreneurship and management, creativity and innovation. Majority of students highly appreciated their knowledge and skills developed during the courses with the top scores for personal development, information literacy, as well as written and oral communication skills.



**Figure 2.** Assessment of knowledge and competencies developed in Micromaster1 (%)

Teamwork has been an extremely important learning practice in the MicroMaster1 curriculum. Intercultural communication, cultural differences, exchange of professional knowledge and skills, collaborative learning experience, also problem-solving skills were assessed by the students as the main benefits of the program. Despite many positive comments about the mixed teamwork experience, program participants also mentioned challenges like different levels of motivation and engagement, time management, English language skills, online communication tools, also the pandemic affected the quality of teamwork.

The study revealed that majority of students were very satisfied with online tutors facilitating the online learning process. Most of the students appreciated highly online tutors for their professional approach and assistance in providing timely information and communicating on their challenges (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Evaluation of online tutors' and teachers work (%)

When asked about the teachers, majority of students assessed highly the encouragement and motivation, quality of feedback, interaction and discussion, objectivity in grading etc.

In general, the main strengths emphasized by the participants include relevance and quality of the program, intercultural communication and collaborative teamwork, as well as online learning and professional development opportunity during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the main challenges that coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic and identified by participants, we can make some recommendations for improvement: greater coherence between courses, less theory and more examples, even more interaction with teachers and other participants in the program, even more feedback on achievements and grading.

## 4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The concept of value has a long tradition in sociology, philosophy and economics. It became very prominent by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the questions of societal differentiation and integration were addressed. The answer was seen in moral, social and cultural values, rather than religious beliefs, as it was in the pre-modern society (Durkheim, 1973; Parsons, 1960 qtd. in Von Groddeck, 2010: 72). As Talcott Parsons formulates: "Values in this sense are commitments of individual persons to pursue and support certain directions or types of action for the collectivity as a system and hence derivatively for their own roles in the collectivity."

One of the best ways to understand the cultural and organizational structure of the online education process and whether the education is value-based is to approach students' assessments of the elements involved in the education process that affect them directly. These assessments are excellent tools for finding out the elements that make up the ODL, such as ODL environments, instructors, designing learning space pedagogical approaches, course contents, materials, teachers and online tutors and forms of communication, the way lessons are thought, explanations of assignments and projects, and expectations from them, as well as philosophical tactics and strategies for licensing.

In our study, DLSs with respect to teacher-student interaction and educational process have been examined. Based on value approach, MicroMaster1 training program has been studied in the context of three main criteria, namely governance, trust and student focus. While addressing the governance issue in the digital learning environment, attention has been paid to participation of students, clarity, transparency and accountability. The main program objectives were clearly explained, students' questions were answered during the webinars and in continuous online communication with teachers and online tutors. Instructions and requirements related to the assignments and projects, as well as evaluation criteria were clear. All the learning outputs determined at the beginning of the program (before the courses' contents were created) were considered in the context of knowledge transfer and creation and skills.

Students confirmed that they developed a continuous communication and received support related to any issues regarding team work or assignments during the entire program. This is where the environment of trust was created. In distance learning programs, communication style in the teams and professional writing are of great importance, because they encourage motivation and engagement in the LMS system. In the same way, innovation and creativity, ability to problem solving, flexibility, conflict resolution, critical thinking are critical factors in developing entrepreneurship and management skills. As for the personal development in the program with regard to self-initiative, positive orientation and continuous learning students scored very high for all the courses and capstone project. The respective aspects are essential for self-development, which can be considered as a value-based approach.

The power and impact of interaction between teachers and students is a key objective in the digital learning. This can be achieved through effectively crafted webinars, continuous and quality feedback and support, motivation and encouragement of students. Webinars create an important digital learning platform for interaction between the teacher and the student, exchange ideas and expectations about the course. Position of the teachers was that weekly webinars were enough to share the theoretical frameworks and more detailed information and explanation of the assignments while forums were opened for students' questions and discussions all the time during the courses. Their position was that teams of students should change for each course, as this would add even bigger intercultural dimension, that as the program is a master level program, assignments should be more demanding and evaluation criteria at the higher level of expectations. On the other side students' opinion was that webinars would be more effective if being shorter and focused to assignments. They complained due to some changes made at the beginning of the course as adjustments based on evaluations of the previous course, as well as adjustments to the sudden pandemic outbreak. The Course 2, which coincided with pandemic outbreak, was the first course related to entrepreneurship and innovation, and according to their opinion it was too intensive, with too many assignments and too strict grading. Although

Capstone project lasted for 8 weeks and was a team effort, some students found it difficult to face all the challenges. They expected even more empathy because of pandemic with regard to the grading system. They expressed their desire for even stronger interaction with the teachers – not only online tutors.

From a value-based point of view it is expected to collaborate, support, motivate in a positive direction and accomplish the goals. These are also elements of governance and trust. Students, who find themselves in an environment where they are trusted, supported and constantly provided feedback, actively participate in both behavioural and psychological sense. After the experience with the Course 2, the Course 3 was adjusted, students worked on only one instead of three, but very complex assignment, consequently they evaluated the entire interaction very well (with a high ratio). The Course 1 as an introductory course referring to the team work and intercultural dimension has been assessed well, too. In assistance with the assignments and projects, to make students understand the problem and help them resolving the dilemma during the preparation of the assignments students evaluated Course 3 well and Course 1 very well.

In a SCA students expect immediate response to their questions and feedback to their assignments. The highest score was given to the Capstone project. Clarity and objectivity in grading reinforce trust between teachers and students. If students believe that teacher has not graded them correctly, they lose confidence in both the teacher and the program and their active participation can be adversely affected. Grading is an important way of establishing a relationship between the teacher and the student as a method of evaluating the students. Evaluation criteria must be clear/ transparent. Majority of students very positively assessed objectivity in grading, as well as encouragement and motivation of the teachers.

In general, students want to work with teachers in a more interactive context. They prefer to work on examples, not as much on theoretical framework. On the other side teachers had to provide theoretical frameworks for the assignments as participants came from very different backgrounds. Students expect teachers to take even a more open, feedback-providing and positive approach to courses, assignments and projects. With an assignment-oriented approach, it should be revealed exactly what is expected of the assignment and evaluation criteria should be even more detailed. All courses and the Capstone project were evaluated positively, but Course 2 raised the most complaints and got the lowest scores from all the courses. On the general level students liked the approach of the teachers, the way they lectured and the professionalism of discussion and immediate response to their assignments and projects, but on the other hand some webinars were evaluated very theoretical, feedback as inadequate, and some teachers introduced too little empathy into communication.

Online tutoring is very important and it is a strategic task to monitor students 24/7, to solve their problems, to answer their questions instantly, and to help and guide them with a positive attitude. In fact, tutorship is a position that encourages student participation the most and drives students to understand educational process psychologically.

There were mixed feelings about the teamwork. Despite many positive comments about the intercultural teamwork experience, participants mentioned challenges like different levels of motivation and engagement of team members, especially with the outbreak of pandemic, time management, different levels of English language skills, use of online communication tools.

## **5. CONCLUSIONS**

Lessons learned from the implementation and evaluation of the MicroMaster1 program have been all considered and taken into account in final preparation and implementation of the MicroMaster2 program, which started in September 2020 and will finish in spring 2021.

The needs and expectations of the students should be taken into account in such an educational program. Students should be included in the program using the elements that make up a value-based perspective, and the educational process should be maintained in this way. Students should adopt the program, contribute, and

participate actively, behaviourally and psychologically in the educational process. This is the only way an effective, qualified and value-based training program can be improved. In this respect, according to the evaluation of the courses in MicroMaster1 program, the courses (especially Courses 1 and 3 and the Capstone project) were generally planned and implemented with a value-based perspective. However, within the scope of the program, of course, there are elements that need to be corrected and improved. Accordingly, some tactical errors have been identified within the student and value-oriented approach within the strategic planning of the program and steps have been taken to address them instantly. Final evaluation results have shown that from the beginning until the end of the MicroMaster1 program there was a positive development.

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# **CAREER-EU CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS**

## **CP3. CAREER GUIDANCE AS A COMMUNITARIAN SERVICE IN TIRANA CITY, A NEW SERVICE IN THE REGION**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Municipality of Tirana is driven and focused in capacity building of career guidance as a part of the policies in local level, it has opened a new sector to offer career guidance services to the community focusing to the youth by offering a specific institutional platform, involving the main actors of this process from other fields like education, businesses, recruiting companies, etc.

The model has been taken from EU countries and has been implemented in the best form according to the Albania mentality in Tirana Municipality.

In this paper we will analyze the role of career guidance center as a community service, offered for the first time as a service provided form a governmental institution especially in the local level.

The effects in short and long term of this kind of service to the community, to the youth, to the job market, to the promotion of new professions and as the result of all this to the economy of the country might be subject of further studies. From the individuals receiving services from the wide range of services offered by this office it is proven effectiveness of the service especially in encouraging young persons and in coaching them toward their path (employment and / or education).

### **Introduction**

Career guidance and counseling is a process including career on one side and guidance on other side. Career can be defined as *the path of an individual during his education and work* (Enhancing Youth Employment, 2014) and guidance is defined as *“help and advice about how to do something or about how to deal with problems connected with your work, education or personal relationships”*. (Cambridge Dictionary) It includes a large scale of services (information, intermediation, training, referral) and it can be offered by different centers / institutions / organizations (private organizations, state organizations, private universities, high schools, etc.). Even though the details of how career guidance is provided have often been of limited interest to public policy-makers, public policies set the frameworks for career guidance and provide the funds for much of it. (Organization for economic co-operation and development, 2004) Career guidance becomes increasingly important for public policy as education and employment policies seek to widen individual choices and to create systems that can respond to very different needs throughout life. (Organization for

economic co-operation and development, 2004) Career guidance is commonly agreed as net contributor to the achievements of public policy goals in education, employment and social equity. Another definition, a wider one, sees career guidance *as a way to improve the interface between education and the labour market*. (Organization for economic co-operation and development, 2004)

Career guidance provision can help to better articulate demand for learning, contribute to enhancing education access and completion and improve the match between labour market supply and demand. Career guidance has a two-fold benefit: First, young people benefit from a well-informed career decision resulting in their social, financial and emotional well-being. Second, employers' benefit from well-informed and better qualified young people entering the job market.

Career information and guidance services traditionally have been seen as a public service available from educational institutions, government departments and their agencies. Increasingly, in countries competing in the global economy, common notions about career information and career development is emerging:

- It is an individual responsibility – services should help people help themselves manage their career development. This is career self-management;
- It is an ongoing (lifelong) learning process – it is everybody's business and not just something undertaken at a time of crisis;
- It requires worker and learner flexibility and adaptability – changes in the nature of work and employment require that most individuals be prepared to successfully manage several works and learning transitions; and,
- It requires different kinds of tools and services at different points across the life span. (Bezanson, & Kellett, 2001).

Career development is very important not only for the development of individuals by them self but also for organizations. The reasons why it matters stand to:

- Careers are how higher-level and business-specific skills and knowledge are acquired.
- Careers are how skills and knowledge are deployed and spread in organizations, as employees move from one job to another in response to where they are needed – which is critical to organizational flexibility.
- Career movement is also how culture and values – the “glue” of the organization – are transmitted, and how personal networks are extended and strengthened: these networks are often key to rapid and effective action.
- Career development is a major tool for attracting, motivating and retaining good-quality employees. (South African Qualifications Authority, 2009)

## **Structure and services offered by Career Counseling Office at Tirana Municipality**

### **Office establishment and aim**

This paper aims at analyzing of the role of career guidance center as a community service, offered for the first time as a service provided form a governmental institution especially in the local level and describing the functionality and services offered in this framework. The methodology used includes literature review mainly focused in concepts and experience of other countries and interviewing with the responsible persons (key persons of this office).

Support by public policy-makers for career guidance has traditionally rested upon a belief that it can improve the efficiency and effectiveness of labour markets and educational systems, as well as contribute to social equity. (Organization for economic co-operation and development, 2004)

In Tirana Municipality, for the first time, starting from December 2019, as part of Directory for Employment Promotion, it is established Career Counseling Office. The ultimate goal of establishing career guidance services in municipalities is to reach young people and enable them to adopt their decisions and actions in

terms of educational, training and occupational choices. This office offers community services for all the citizens of Tirana Municipality that require information and coaching for possibilities they have with regard their education, professional forming and coaching. The career guidance / counseling office at Municipality of Tirana aims at counseling and supporting young people and adults in their professional and academic choices, based on their skills and interests. These decisions should serve towards their personal and professional fulfillment.

The center has its own dedicated staff and is organized as a sector comprised of 1 chief of sector who is the director of the office and 2 specialists, part of the central office. The counselors are full-time personnel and to the office are affiliated another group of part-time advisors. The degree level, profiling and experience of these advisors play an important role in offering of the services. In Tirana only during the latest year it was opened a master program focused on coaching, the first of this profile. The role of the coach is very important and he / she should have some skills that by the acronym is: REUNDA:

R – Relationship building

E – Exploration of the client’s problem

UND – Understanding client’s problem

A – Action Plan.

So, this includes the most important aspects and the skills that this person should have – he / she should have communication skills in order to build relationship (professional one), evaluate the clients need and understand it in order that together with the client to build the action plan.

The center has a very strategic environment placed in the heart of Tirana, making the most fascinating office of the institution and facilitating access for the citizens. This is a thematically dedicated environment with high visibility. The activity of the center develops in its own environments, in schools, in libraries, youth centers, social centers, etc. The service is available from 08.00 until 16:00 hrs. in the evening. The environment creates possibilities for self-service, short conversations in common environments and counselling sessions in private environments.

Risi Albania is the main supporter for the opening of this office. Risi Albania, partner organization, supported step by step the opening of the office in order to have a service with quality and similar to the services offered by other offices in EU. The center’s services follow the model of Swiss examples of career centers, adapted to Albania’s context and youth needs.

In order to offer services fulfilling the standards the office has as main partner and collaborators public institutions, businesses and youth associations. The service is individualized as according to the specific needs of the target groups: group and individual guidance, career education for pre-university students, career development training for young people and interested adults.

Among the public institutions to be mentioned are:

The National Agency for Vocational, Education, Training and Qualifications constitutes a resource institution for the national list of professions, description of professions and the public offering of vocational education and training.

Ministry of Education and Sports is key in involvement of schools and managing of activities at schools’ environments. The same ministry and the municipality of Tirana will have an MOU for the sources and involvement of the Psychologist and Social workers of the Elementary and Secondary schools public and private one.

Social Service in local level is a partner institution for the inclusion in the labour market of individuals currently benefiting from social services. With the territorial reform, the competencies in this field will be divided among municipalities and public social service.

University of Social Science, Master program on Career Guidance is a partner of the office by preparing and offering interest tests for the benefiteres, the collaboration with the university is extended also in human resource aspect by offering its alumni students as interns for the office of career guidance, Municipality of Tirana.

From the daily contact with the advisers it is noticed that there is a need to identify and collaborate with more businesses and institutions in order to expand the possibilities for persons of different background to find them self in the labor market or in professional training. Promotion of lifelong learning should be in focus of the policies, practices and the procedures to be followed with the interested.

The center aims to serve to individuals, public and private institutions and organizations. The main target group of persons visiting and receiving services from the Career Counseling Office include mostly young people and it distinguishes between these groups: pupils in compulsory education (mainly grades 3 -9), students of general and professional high schools, parents, teachers, students, interns, unemployed job seekers, employed job seekers, migrants (internal and external), employers. To be emphasized that main beneficiary group of Career Guidance Services is comprised of youth (15-29 years old) and pupils of grades 7-9 (12-15 years old). The number of this group in Municipality of Tirana is about 220,000 (opendata.tirana.al).

Components of Career Guidance Services:

- Onsite help desk and online platform for students, parents, teachers and career counselors providing information on professions, training and education opportunities;
- Counseling services which will be provided through information sessions, group counseling, individual counseling, skills development and interest evaluation tests;
- Hub for connection to the labor market:
- Information on internships, career fairs;
- Collaboration with education authorities to facilitate access of services to schools.

The services offered from this office are free of charge and specifically include:

Infotech (physical and virtual)

Information is offered as a self-service through:

Online portal – at [karriera.tirana.al](http://karriera.tirana.al). In the web it has been elaborated 60 different professions combined with a detailed description on a specific profession (where to study, what training to follow, the approximate salary, what to expect, etc.) together with a detailed video of each profession. A large database of 800 tanning topics offered in Tirana are listed online, also a list of internships and conferences offered by the third party.

Flyers, magazines, catalogues, printed or electronically. In the physical environments of the center, the employees can orient visitors that request information. Information is structured according to users: pupils, students, adults, parents or/and teachers.

Short conversations

These are 20 minutes' conversations and are offered to individuals of every age independently of their current status. These conversations concern education, vocational and employment opportunities for specific fields. These sessions could be used to offer a quick evaluation and advice to individuals. This format is appropriate also for parents, who could join alone or with their child for whom they need orientation. Such meetings could

be also offered in open space environment. For pupils and parents, these meetings could be offered in the school environment as well.

#### Individual sessions (60-90 minutes)

Such sessions are appropriate for individuals who would like to choose a profession or would like to know and explore their fields of interests and skills towards labour market opportunities by exchanging with a professional career advisor. The session allows them to clarify status, to offer suitable information, to offer support for decision-making and identify and plan next steps that the individual should undertake. This format is suitable for pupils, students and adult unemployed jobseekers. Such sessions require prior registration and take place in quiet environments that provide privacy. During these sessions will be offered different tools to measure the interest of the benefiter like offering one of the tests which are online and the access to them is given by the counselor. There are 3 interest tests to be given by the counselor to the benefiter with a specific login account later the interpretation of the results has to be done in the upcoming meetings.

#### Information sessions and group counselling

Such sessions are usually offered in groups in school environment. There is a calendar of activities (days and hours) at the schools. Every counsellor gets assigned a group of schools depending on number of pupils. This activity requires coordination with respective psychologists and schools' directors. Standard themes include: counselling for steps towards future education and formation, acquaintance with career services, etc.

#### Open themed activities

These activities have a thematic focus and are offered for groups of individuals, according to interest. The activities may aim deepening in certain professions, education, vocation and training opportunities, etc.

#### Internships intermediation

This is a continuous service of the center. Through this service, the center offers information for the internship opportunities, ideally through an electronic platform.

#### Organization of Job Fairs

#### Promotional Activities ad hoc

#### Special Cases

This group foresees young people (13-25 years old) who because of different difficulties need extra support. The causes of these difficulties may be related to weak study result, low motivation, social inclusion, insufficient social/family support, health problems, etc.

The importance of the services offered based in the typology of the services, categories included and places where it take place, is very high and is a necessity for the target groups. Another important element that takes relevance in conditions where economic conditions of persons cannot afford extra payment for such services is that these services are free. Career guidance offered in local level create a great possibility to expand access to these services and make them available not just to selected groups like school-leavers and the unemployed, but to everyone throughout their lives.

Career Counseling Office at Tirana Municipality is a new office and as such it is facing with some difficulties / challenges.

Pandemic situation is one of the challenges from which depends creation of new open job vacancies, group meetings with the interested; the quarantine had it effects in not promoting the opening of the

office. In this framework of continuing impact of Covid, the structure was adopted to online delivery of the services as well (i.e. individual counselling).

Employability of some specific categories and their ability to require new skills as demands from the labour market. A need for an increased awareness and understanding of the career services by youth. It is noticed lack of awareness on the part of students. It is also very challenging for young people to become more aware and turn to career counselors. Our challenge is to use our information and perseverance to make them need to come and ask for help and advice. Lack of formal training for Guidance and Counselling Teachers / advisors, as the traditional practice has been that guidance and counselling in schools is conducted by teachers who do not have any formal training or knowledge obtained, but it is conducted based on the experience, age and wisdom. Today, training in guidance and counselling is important given the pressure emanating from the changing nature of behavior management among the youngsters. The 21st century world of work is, after all, challenging and confusing enough for adults, let alone unworldly teenagers. Digital technology is advancing at such a rapid pace that many people in work are struggling to keep up. According to a World Economic Forum report, 65 per cent of children entering primary school today will ultimately end up working in completely new job types that don't yet exist. The need to offer relevant information and give guidance is greater than ever, but at the same time our situation has never been more challenging. Young people, collectively, have never left education more highly qualified, with more years of schooling behind them, and yet they are facing unprecedented struggles to succeed in the early labour market. Clearly not enough is done in most schools on the difference between a general CV and a directed CV or how to relate your online application to the job specification. It's our challenge to prepare them and give them all the help they need so they can write properly a successful CV.

## **Conclusions**

The Career Counseling Office, opened for first time in Tirana Municipality provides independent information regarding education, training and career planning and development. Information and guidance for those interested and will provide a safe space for communication and exchange of ideas on topics related to career and professional orientation.

This paper aimed at analyzing of the role of career guidance center as a community service, offered for the first time as a service provided from a governmental institution especially in the local level and describing the functionality and services offered in this framework.

The services offered are various and cover a large specter of persons needs. These services include: Infotech (physical and virtual), short conversations, individual sessions, information sessions and group counseling, open themed activities, internships intermediation.

Even though the office is open to categories in need for this kind of services including job seeker, young people etc. to be highlighted is the fact that main beneficiary group of Career Guidance Services is comprised of youth (15-29 years old) and pupils of grades 7-9 (12-15 years old).

Persons offering services within the office are key persons. They are both - full-time personnel and affiliated are another group of part-time advisors. There is a need for them to have degree level, profiling and experience in this field.

Through the interviews realized in the frame of this article was noticed that this service was needed for the

community, a big number of persons' / target groups have visited the office during this time and that it is functioning and completing its mission.

In order to better function this office has signed and collaborates with different institutions mentioning: National Agency for Vocational, Education, Training and Qualifications, Ministry of Education and Sports, Social Service in local level, University of Social Science, Master program on Career Guidance.

Still there is a need to expand the collaborations with other institutions state or non-state institutions.

Challenges are part of the functionality of this office and the team is working on them. Still some will take time to be resolved because the office is still new and it takes time to stabilize all the services. The opening of this office and its ongoing process are very positive and important steps.

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## CP5. VALIDATION OF ADOR CAREER INSTRUMENT INTO ALBANIAN CONTEXT

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### ABSTRACT

**Objectives.** Making a career choice is a process that every individual is faced with at some point in his or her life and requires significant resource mobilization. So that such an approach may seem easy for some people, for others it may be more difficult. In this context, the main purpose of this study is the rapid and systematic detection of clients' needs and difficulties in making choices, by validating one of career instrument into Albanian context. The objective of ADOR (Analyse de la demande d'orientation) is to propose a system for identifying the needs in orientation of users of guidance services, to help counsellors in their work offering adapted services.

**Material and methods.** The 54-item questionnaire is designed to provide an overview of the needs, strengths and weaknesses of the user's weaknesses in the form of a profile that will be used either by the user or by the guidance counsellor who will follow the case. Each question contributes to one of the 13 scales which are grouped into five main dimensions. The present research is a type of correlation studies, which was performed cross-sectionally on 80 participants by test – retest analysis. For this study a questionnaire was applied to collect data in two different times, on the same persons.

**Results.** A preliminary assessment of the validity and reliability of the dimensions and scales was conducted on a pilot version of ADOR. This version had been completed by 200 people, after was conducted test – retest procedure with 80 other participants. The correlation showed significant relationships between scales among first and second measure such as: knowing yourself .675\*\*, knowing the context .762\*\*, implementation of the project .583\*\*, openness to change .507\*\* and future job .519\*\*

**Keywords:** career orientation, instrument validation, analysis of needs and professions.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Career development is a concept that describes the complex, multifaceted, life-long process of an individual's career experience. It encompasses both structure and long-term changes of career behavior. Thus, career development theories seek to explain the complicated components that make up an individual's career experience. Donald Super and John Holland were some of the first to tease apart the complexity of career development. The many elements that influence the complex experience of career development are outlined in their theories and will be described in detail. While Holland and Super's theories were among the first career theories, they have thrived as working theories despite the emergence of new career development theories. (Hays, et al., 2010).

Dealing with career indecision has long been a focus of theory and research, and helping clients to overcome their difficulties in making decisions is among the core roles of career counseling. Making a career choice is a process that each individual faces at some point in his or her life and requires a significant mobilization of resources. While such a process may seem easy for some, for others it can be more difficult, and the nature of the difficulties encountered can be very different from one person to another (Gati, Krausz, & Osipow, 1996). Career counselling services are intended, among other things, to help individuals overcome such difficulties. In this context, a major challenge to successful counselling is the early and systematic identification of clients' needs and difficulties in making choices.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Making a career decision is a step everyone must take. Whereas some people make such decisions easily and with no apparent difficulties, others face difficulties in making their career decisions. To help the latter, it is necessary to first locate and identify their specific difficulties.

In this context, the objective of ADOR is to propose a system for identifying the guidance needs of users of guidance services, in order to help counsellors offer them adapted services. The identification procedure proposed by ADOR is systematic and resembles other screening approaches used in the field of guidance, such as the PIC (Prescreening, In-depth exploration, Choice) approach by Gati and Asher (2001) or the CIPA (Cognitive Information Processing Approach) approach by Sampson and colleagues (2004). The PIC approach uses the Career Decision-making Difficulties Questionnaire (CDDQ), whereas the CIPA approach is based on a two-stage prescreening. In general, these instruments are used with the aim of providing the user with services tailored to his or her situation and thus offering targeted intervention.

ADOR tool assesses user needs in two steps. The first stage includes four general questions about the person's current professional projects. Each of the four answers provides a score, and the sum of the four scores constitutes an overall score. This global score will automatically redirect the user either to documentary resources and useful links, or to the second stage of analysis, consisting of a questionnaire and personalized advice

ADOR is an instrument that helps you identify what your needs are in the field of vocational guidance. The results obtained from the questionnaire help you to see more clearly your goals and objectives related to career. The information obtained from this questionnaire is the result of an individual self – assessment. This result then needs more professional reflection and interpretation

The 54-item questionnaire aims to provide an overview of the user's needs, strengths and weaknesses in the form of a profile that will be used either by the user or by the guidance counsellor who will follow the case. Each question contributes to one of the 13 scales of the questionnaire, which are grouped into five main dimensions.

## 2.1. Theoretical structure of ADOR : Dimensions and scales

Every career choice should be based on a certain number of prerequisites, which can then be summarized in four basic dimensions:

- *Knowing yourself,*
- *Openness to change,*
- *Knowing the context*
- *Implementation of the project for achieving the objectives.*

Meanwhile, the relationship with current work or expectations for the future, in relation to the satisfaction it receives, constitutes *the fifth dimension* of this instrument

*Knowing yourself* - The first dimension of ADOR thus seeks to assess the degree of knowledge that a person has of himself or herself, i.e., the ability to describe his or her interests, values and characteristics (i.e., skills, strengths and weaknesses). Although these elements are constantly evolving, they nevertheless represent aspects that contribute to personal identity and should, therefore, be clarified in any reflection on change. (Gati & Levin, 2015)

After the process of validation and adaptation in the Albanian context and ongoing consultations with the author, it was proposed that this dimension be summarized in two scales: Recognition of personal interests and values; Recognition of personal qualities .

*Openness to change* - The willingness to change depends in particular on the level of general well-being, openness to change and optimism, all of which determine the ability to envisage new prospects. Optimism, which refers to an individual's positive expectations of a given situation, is a trait associated with the ability to project oneself into the future and with well-being. Indeed, various studies have shown that optimism, like a sense of efficacy, predicts the ability to plan one's career, satisfaction with one's career and, more generally, life satisfaction (Lounsbury et al., 2004; Patton, Bartrum, & Creed, 2004).

After the process of validation and adaptation in the Albanian context as well as continuous consultations with the author, it was proposed that this dimension be summarized only in one scale, namely: Optimism and general well-being

*Knowing the context* - This dimension reflects knowledge of the Swiss education system, knowledge of the labor market, and knowledge of the resources contributing to this knowledge. A good mastery of these three aspects facilitates the choice and enables coherent and informed decisions to be made (Parson, 1909). Knowledge of the education system implies familiarity with the various training channels available and the various continuing education offers. Knowledge of the labor market implies a good knowledge of the economic fabric of one's region, the ability to identify companies likely to recruit in the field in question or in neighboring sectors, and to be aware of employers' requirements and expectations. Finally, knowledge of resources intervenes at all levels of the change process, promoting the autonomous processing and use of contextual information and the implementation of the professional project through proactive behaviors.

*Implementation of the project for achieving the objectives* - This dimension includes different personal and situational resources that the individual can use when implementing a project. Support reflects the social network that the individual can call upon during the implementation of his or her project. Sense of effectiveness reflects the confidence that the individual has in his or her ability to overcome obstacles and deal with the unexpected. The method, for its part, is the ability to define a course of action and priorities to achieve objectives, as well as the ability to commit oneself in a sustainable manner to the pursuit of these objectives. Finally, motivation, here conceived as the person's investment in the project, will be an asset coupled with an effective method for achieving objectives.

*Work Expectations / Job Satisfaction* - This dimension differs from the previous dimensions in that it relates to the person's judgment about the important aspects inherent in his or her current work activity (for people who are in employment) or future work activity (for people who are neither in employment nor in training). It is therefore an initial assessment of the criteria that the individual can use to make a career choice. This dimension thus gives an overview of the individual's priorities with regard to many characteristics of work, such as income, job security, variety of tasks, autonomy and recognition (Blais et al., 1989).

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The main purpose of this study is the rapid and systematic detection of clients' needs and difficulties in making choices, by validating one of career instrument into Albanian context. This research work is conducted through the method of stratification of the sample of youth of the age-groups: 14-17, 18-21, 22-25 years old, throughout Albania. After the test is translated into albanian language, it is piloted in a group of 20 young people and afterwards the test is corrected and send back for final comments and preliminary approval by the author for further proceeding.

The study is spread across *five* phases through which the test (ADOR) will be standardized and contextualized. In this paper we are going to introduce the result of test – retest and to describe the proces up to third phase:

*First phase:* Forward translation of ADOR by a team of vocational psychologist: Each member of the team translates the items and the translation are compared. Pilot Testing with 20 -30 persons & collect feedback. Backward translation of the tool. Then continue back-and forth with the author of the instruments until we had an agreed version of the instruments.

*Second phase:* Administartive and coordination preparation. Testing in small sample – 200 participants. Sample frame & selection of 200 participants. Data collection, field testing with 200 persons for ADOR. Data entry for field testing and analysis. Discussions with authors of the instrument for the draft instrument to be used for the next step.

*Third phase:* Administrative and coordination preparation for test – ritest. Data collection during first step of test - retest– 100 persons. Data collection after two weeks filed retesting. Data entry and data analysis (Test – retest). Discussion with authors for the results.

#### **3.1. Sampling**

A survey research design was used in this study to investigate relations among variables. Pupils from high schools were the participants of this phase of the study. For this study a questionnaire was applied to collect data in two different times with 14 days' distance by each other, on the same persons. The sampling method used in this research first was Cluster sampling which is commonly implemented as multistage sampling. This is a complex form of cluster sampling in which two or more levels of units are embedded one in the other. The first stage consists of constructing the clusters that will be used to sample from. In the second stage, a sample of primary units is randomly selected from each cluster (rather than using all units contained in all selected clusters). In following stages, in each of those selected clusters, additional samples of units are selected, and so on. All ultimate units (individuals, for instance) selected at the last step of this procedure are then surveyed. The same participants were asked after 14 days in order to compare the results.

Data was gathered from researchers in different schools. The age range of the sample was 14 to 18 years. The educational baseline of the sample was graduation.

#### **3.2. Instrument**

The primary data collection instrument was the “Analyse de la demande d’orientation” (ADOR), an instrument specifically designed to measure each of the variables in the career orientation. The questionnaire consists of 54 items, and items were scored on 5 point Liker type scale. It aims to provide an overview of the user's needs, strengths and weaknesses in the form of a profile that will be used either by the user or by the guidance counselor who will follow the case. Each question contributes to one of the 13 scales of the questionnaire, which are grouped into five main dimensions. ADOR has been found to be a reliable measure of the needs in orientation of users of guidance services as the alpha coefficient reliability of the scales were

reported 0.7 and more. A biographical questionnaire soliciting information on respondent gender, age and education level was compiled. The data with respect to these biographical questions were subsequently graphically presented and discussed to provide an indication of the most salient findings with respect to these variables.

## 1. RESULTS

For the purposes of determining whether a statistically significant relationship exists between scales and subscales, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used. It provides an index of the strength, magnitude and direction of the relationship between variables.

A preliminary assessment of the validity and reliability of the dimensions and scales was conducted on a pilot version of ADOR first with 30 participants and after with 200. In the analysis of the reliability of measuring scales, the level of reliability was measured as presented in table 1. As it can be seen in table 1, the results show that the Cronbach's Alpha is quite high and sometimes moderate, indicating a satisfactory level of construct validity. Consequently this indicates that this questionnaire measures what it should measure.

**Table 1:** Instrument reliability

<b>Dimensions and scales</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b><math>\alpha</math></b>	<b>Dimensions and scales</b>	<b>Items</b>	<b><math>\alpha</math></b>
<b>Knowing yourself</b>	9	.81	<b>Openness to change</b>	8	.56
Interests	3	.38	Optimism	3	.27
Values	2	.52	Well - being	2	.48
Qualities	4	.76	Openness	3	.32
<b>Knowing the context</b>	10	.87	<b>Implementation</b>	11	.86
Training systems	3	.58	Motivation	3	.75
Labor market	4	.73	Sense of efficacy	4	.65
Autonomuy	3	.71	Support	2	.65
			Method	2	.70

### *Knowing yourself*

The results indicate that there are significant correlations between first and second test among two main scales: knowing yourself ( $r= 0.657$ ) and qualities ( $r = 0.654$ ). The relation among first and second test of values is moderate ( $r= 0.489$ ) and need to improve. Even the interest may be corrected in some of the items.

**Table 2.** Pearson correlation matrix for Knowing yourself

	<b>Knowing yourself (First &amp; second test)</b>	
	<b>Pearson correlation</b>	<b>Sig (2-tailed)</b>
Knowing yourself	.675(**)	.000
Interests	.525(**)	.000
Values	.489(**)	.000
Qualities	.654(**)	.000

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### *Openness to change*

We have two problematic scales in this correlation that need to correct in other testing. These two scales are: openness and optimism. The results indicate that there are significant correlations between first and second test among them, but not in high level: optimism ( $r = 0.412$ ) and openness ( $r = 0.402$ ). During this measure, the third scale (well – being) is mostly correct ( $r = 0.601$ ). Overall all this dimension is moderate: Openness to change ( $r = 0.507$ ).

**Table 3.** Pearson correlation matrix for Openness to change

	<b>Openness to change (First &amp; second test)</b>	
	<b>Pearson correlation</b>	<b>Sig (2-tailed)</b>
Openness to change	.507(**)	.000
Optimism	.412(**)	.000
Well – being	.601(**)	.000
Openness	.402(**)	.000

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### *Knowing the context*

**Table 4.** Pearson correlation matrix for Knowing the context

	<b>Knowing the context (First &amp; second test)</b>	
	<b>Pearson correlation</b>	<b>Sig (2-tailed)</b>
Knowing the context	.762(**)	.000
Training system	.686(**)	.000
Labor market	.763(**)	.000
Awareness for contextual resources	.511(**)	.000

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results for this scale are better and we can say that it is understood mostly. So we can see that there is a high relationship between first and second test among two scales: knowing the context in total ( $r = 0.762$ ) and labor market ( $r = 0.763$ ). There was also a significant moderate relationship for training system ( $r = 0.686$ ). The weakest relation in this dimension comparing with the others is for autonomy ( $r = 0.511$ ).

### *Implementation of the project*

The results indicate that there are significant correlations between first and second test among all scales in this dimension, but mostly in moderate level. So the strongest relationship is for support ( $r = 0.622$ ) and the weakness for sense of efficiency ( $r = 0.443$ ).

**Table 5.** Pearson correlation matrix for Implementation of the project

	<b>Implementation of the project (First &amp; second test)</b>	
	<b>Pearson correlation</b>	<b>Sig (2-tailed)</b>
Implementation	.583(**)	.000
Motivation	.511(**)	.000
Sense of efficiency	.443(**)	.000
Support	.622(**)	.000
Method	.458(**)	.000

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

ADOR is a tool that allows you to establish a "mapping" of your needs in terms of career guidance. Your results from the online questionnaire will allow you to see more clearly in your situation and your objectives. They will also serve as a basis for the orientation process that you will undertake with a guidance counsellor. The elements contained in this paper are the result of a self-evaluation, with the subjectivity that this may involve. Above all, therefore, they constitute a basis for reflection and require a nuanced interpretation. The conclusion, which can also serve as a recommendation for next phases is that some items should be modified and control their reliability step by step. By controlling the construct validity, we can have an instrument validated into Albanian context. Additional recommendations for future steps and research are as follows:

- The future steps should use a larger sample, in several levels of education.
- The questionnaire should be administered to university level, in order to include their opinions, as well.

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## CP6. VALIDATION OF CAREER DECISION – MAKING DIFFICULTIES QUESTIONNAIRE INTO ALBANIAN CONTEXT

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### ABSTRACT

**Objectives.** The choosing of the profession and the career orientation is a long journey and a crucial decision that all of us must undertake in our life. The process of choosing requires the maturity the resources and the instruments we can rely on and it can result difficult and unsure. The aim of this study is to facilitate this process for the Albanian youth. The objective of Decision-Making Difficulties Questionnaire (CDDQ) is based on the taxonomy of career decision-making difficulties and was developed to validate the proposed taxonomy and to be a means for locating the focuses of individuals' career decision-making difficulties, a step that is among the first in providing individuals with the help they need.

**Material and methods.** The CDDQ is targeted, primarily, at young adults who are making their first career decisions. The CDDQ has 34 items, with a 9-point response. The individual's difficulties are captured by a 10-scale score profile corresponding to the 10 difficulty categories, each defined as the mean of the responses to the items included in the category. The three clusters: Lack of readiness, lack of Information, Inconsistent Information. The present research is a type of correlation studies, which was performed cross-sectionally on 80 participants by test – retest analysis. For this study a questionnaire was applied to collect data in two different times, on the same persons.

**Results.** A preliminary assessment of the validity and reliability of the dimensions and scales was conducted on a pilot version of CDDQ. This version had been completed by 200 people, after was conducted test – retest procedure with 80 other participants. The correlation showed significant relationships between scales among first and second measure such as: lack of motivation .583\*\*, general indecisions .615\*\*, dysfunctional beliefs .609\*\*, internal conflict .659\*\* and external conflict .463\*\*.

**Keywords:** career decisions, individual difficulties, instrument validation, assessment

## **Career Decision-Making and Life Satisfaction**

Life satisfaction is sometimes equated with quality of life, or it is seen as part of subjective well-being along with the concept of happiness. There are distinctions made between the definitions of life satisfaction and happiness. Campbell, Converse and Rodgers (1976) describe the distinction by stating that satisfaction implies a judgmental or cognitive experience, while happiness suggests an experience of feeling or affect. Hopkins (1983) states that most definitions of career satisfaction assume the existence of the individual's needs and satisfaction resulting from the fit between these needs and the job (career) environment.

### **Review of related literature and research**

A review of the literature was undertaken to establish a need for the study and to assist in determining the appropriate research methodology.

The main purpose of this study is the rapid and systematic detection of clients' needs and difficulties in making choices, by validating one of career instrument into Albanian context.

Making a career decision is a step everyone must take. Whereas some people make such decisions easily and with no apparent difficulties, others face difficulties in making their career decisions. To help the latter, it is necessary to first locate and identify their specific difficulties.

The goal of the Career Decision-making Difficulties Questionnaire (CDDQ) is to identify the focuses of the difficulties individuals face when making a career decision. The taxonomy of career decision-making difficulties used in the CDDQ-feedback is based on decision-making and information-processing theories. Gati and Osipow (1996) developed a taxonomy for understanding the various difficulties contributing to career indecision. In their taxonomy, a basic distinction was made between career decision-making difficulties occurring prior to the beginning of the career decision-making process and those occurring during the career decision-making process itself. They further subdivided the latter factor, resulting in three major categories overall: lack of readiness, lack of information, and inconsistent information. Gati et al. further identified three theoretical sub-categories of career decision-making difficulties that they believed contributed to a lack of readiness to begin the career decision-making process. These three categories were: (a) a lack of motivation on the part of the individual to begin career decision-making, (b) a general indecisiveness that permeates all types of decision-making for the individual, and (c) various beliefs in dysfunctional career decision-making myths.

We define any deviation from the ideal career decision-making process (i.e., the process carried out by the ideal career decision maker; see below) as a difficulty that may lead to indecision or a less than optimal choice.

## **Difficulties that may arise prior to engaging in the career decision-making process:**

### **A: Lack of Readiness**

This major category consists of three specific difficulty categories:

- ✓ Lack of Motivation - A high score in this scale reflects a lack of willingness to make a decision at this point.
- ✓ Indecisiveness - A high score in this scale reflects a general difficulty in making decisions.
- ✓ Dysfunctional Beliefs - A high score in this scale reflects a distorted perception of the career decision-making process, irrational expectations of it and dysfunctional thoughts about it.

### **B: Lack of Information**

This major category consists of four specific difficulty categories:

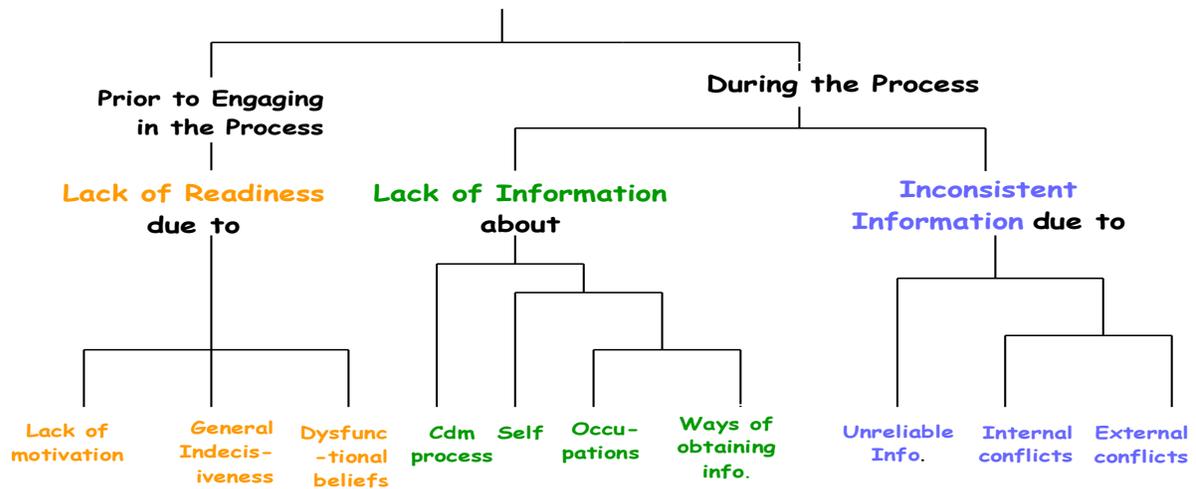
- ✓ Lack of Information about the Decision Making Process - A high score in this scale reflects a lack of knowledge about how to make a decision wisely, and specifically a lack of knowledge regarding the specific steps involved in the career decision-making process.
- ✓ Lack of Information about the Self - A high score in this scale reflects a situation where one feels that one does not have enough information about oneself (e.g., about career preferences, abilities etc).
- ✓ Lack of Information about Occupations - A high score in this scale reflects a lack of information regarding the existing array of career options: what alternatives exist and/or what each alternative's characteristics are.
- ✓ Lack of Information about Ways of Obtaining Information - A high score in this scale reflects a lack of information about ways of obtaining additional information or help that may facilitate decision making.

### **C: Inconsistent Information**

This major category consists of three specific difficulty categories:

- ✓ Unreliable Information - A high score in this scale indicates that the individual feels that he / she has contradictory information about himself / herself or about the considered occupations.
- ✓ Internal Conflicts - A high score in this scale reflects a state of internal confusion. Such internal conflict may stem from a difficulty in compromising in the many factors the individual views as important, when some of these factors are incompatible each other.
- ✓ External Conflicts - A high score in this scale may indicate a gap between an individual's preferences and the preferences voiced by others who are significant to him / her, or a contradiction between the opinions of two significant others.

## Possible Focuses of Career Decision-Making Difficulties



### Methodology:

In Albania schooling system, the tipping point for career decision-making is the age of 17-18 when students are finishing high school. At that age, they need to decide about possible further education on a particular undergraduate university program or about choosing a job. Therefore, we conducted a paper-and-pencil study on a sample of high school students of 15-18 years old. The aim of this study was to explore the structural and construct validity of CDDQ. To test the construct validity of CDDQ, we also collected data using the test retest validation. We expect the highest relations between CDDQ test and CDDQ retest.

### Participants:

The participants were 200 high school students enrolled in the 9 and 12th grade and university students of primary and secondary level (52.7% females). The present research is a type of correlation studies, which was performed cross-sectional on 100 participants by test – retest analysis. For this study a questionnaire was applied to collect data in two different times with 15 days' distance by each other, on the same persons. Administrative and coordination preparation for test – retest and data entry and data analysis with the author. A preliminary assessment of the validity and reliability of the dimensions and scales was conducted on a pilot version of CDDQ. This version had been completed by 200 people, after was conducted test – retest procedure with 100 other participants. The correlation showed significant relationships between scales among first and second measure

### Procedure:

The questionnaires were administered during the regular school classes by the researchers after having a principal permission. The participation in the study was anonymous and voluntary, and feedback on students' characteristics was offered as an incentive for the participation. Almost all of the students attended the classes filled out the questionnaires; the refusal rate was less than 3%.

## Results from test – retest

For the purposes of determining whether a statistically significant relationship exists between scales and subscales, the Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient was used. It provides an index of the strength, magnitude and direction of the relationship between variables.

A preliminary assessment of the validity and reliability of the dimensions and scales was conducted on a pilot version of CDDQ first with 30 participants and after with 200. In the analysis of the reliability of measuring scales, the level of reliability was measured as presented. The results show that the Cronbach's Alpha is quite high and sometimes moderate, indicating a satisfactory level of construct validity. Consequently this indicates that this questionnaire measures what it should measure.

### *Readiness*

The results indicate that there are significant correlations between first and second test among all subscales and the scale of readiness. In total, lack of readiness is mostly reliable ( $r = 0.770$ ). Also the others are in moderate level. Among all, lack of motivation ( $r = 0.583$ ). is the subscales that may need mostly to improve.

**Table 1.** Pearson correlation matrix for “Readiness”

	<b>Readiness (First &amp; second test)</b>	
	<b>Pearson correlation</b>	<b>Sig (2-tailed)</b>
Lack of readiness	.770(**)	.000
Lack of motivation	.583(**)	.000
General indecisions	.615(**)	.000
Dysfunctional beliefs	.609(**)	.000

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

### *Information*

We have only one subscale in this correlation that need to correct the items in other testing. This one is lack of information about ways of obtaining info ( $r = 0.576$ ). We can see also that the results indicate that there are significant correlations between first and second test among the other subscales. Overall the lack of information is correct in total scale ( $r = 0.728$ ).

**Table 2.** Pearson correlation matrix for “Information”

	<b>Information (First &amp; second test)</b>	
	<b>Pearson correlation</b>	<b>Sig (2-tailed)</b>
Lack of information	.728(**)	.000
Lack of decision making process	.618(**)	.000
Lack of info about self	.634(**)	.000
Lack of info about occupations	.703(**)	.000
Lack of info about ways of obtaining info	.576(**)	

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Inconsistent information*

The results for this scale are moderate and we can say that it is understood by most of the participants. So we can see that there is a high relationship between first and second test among total scale: inconsistent information ( $r = 0.679$ ). There was also a significant moderate relationship for unreliable information ( $r = 0.631$ ) and internal conflicts ( $r = 0.659$ ). The weakest relation in this dimension comparing with the others is for external conflicts ( $r = 0.463$ ) and needs to improve in other measures.

**Table 3.** Pearson correlation matrix for “Inconsistent information”

	<b>Inconsistent information (First &amp; second test)</b>	
	<b>Pearson correlation</b>	<b>Sig (2-tailed)</b>
Inconsistent information	.679(**)	.000
Unreliable information	.631(**)	.000
Internal conflicts	.659(**)	.000
External conflicts	.463(**)	.000

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Total scale CDDQ*

In total we can see that all the scale for the instrument is correct because it has a high reliability ( $r = 0.810$ ). In next steps we have to correct only some items for some subscales.

**Table 4.** Pearson correlation matrix for “Total CDDQ”

	<b>Total CDDQ (First &amp; second test)</b>	
	<b>Pearson correlation</b>	<b>Sig (2-tailed)</b>
Total scale CDDQ	.810(**)	.000

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

## Conclusions

The CDDQ provides information about each client’s career decision making difficulties, in three major clusters and 10 specific difficulties. The counselor can then try to enhance the client’s awareness of attitudes and behaviors that could impede the career decision making. In addition, counselors should assess the implications of these difficulties for the counseling by estimating the effect of the overall severity of the difficulties on the expected length of counseling (Gati, Amir, & Landman, 2010).

Career counseling involves helping clients face one of the most important decisions of their lives. Career decision-making difficulties allows counselors to better understand why their clients sought out counseling. This information can facilitate the counseling process by allowing counselors to focus on issues that prevent their clients from reaching a decision independently.

To conclude, this study supports the reliability and the construct and structural validity of the Albania version of the CDDQ for young people in the test retest versions. The CDDQ provides information about each client’s career decision making difficulties, both at a global level and in three major clusters and 10 specific difficulties.

A recommendation for next phases is that some items should be modified and control their reliability step by step. By controlling the construct validity, we can have an instrument validated into Albanian context and the future steps and research are as follows:

- ✓ We have to use a larger sample, in several levels of education. The questionnaire should be administered to 1200 people across the country.
- ✓ We have to check the construct validity
  - 1: Lack of Readiness- 1.1 Lack of Motivation 1.2 Indecisiveness 1.3 Dysfunctional Beliefs
  - 2: Lack of Information- 2.1 Lack of Information about the Decision Making Process 2.2 Lack of Information about the Self 2.3 Lack of Information about Occupations 3.4 Lack of Information about Ways of Obtaining Information
  - 3: Inconsistent Information -3.1 Unreliable Information 3.2 Internal Conflicts 3.3 External Conflicts

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