

Hakan Ushakli

Lifelong Learning Programs of Education Faculty in Sinop:  
Evaluation of Participants' Problems and Worries

In this paper Lifelong Learning Program of Education Faculty in Sinop was evaluated in terms of interrelations between LLP and cultural shock. The barriers of LLP in Education Faculty in Sinop can be examined in two main parts: difficulties of finding suitable partner and students' difficulty in deciding whether to apply or not. These two main parts are also divided into two parts. Plot and interview were used as qualitative data gathering methods. As a result, it was found out that not only finding bilateral contract and arranging international meetings occupy a lot of time and they require full time working hours but also there are different kinds of problems and worries in terms of the students who attempt to participate in LLP of Education faculty in Sinop. Loosing luggage, stolen money and valuable things and academic problems seem to be surface problems. But in addition for these events, other events such as suicide, quick decision to return and depression due to missing date mate, family and friends are the main factors that make the students who are eager to apply for Erasmus student mobility programs change their minds.

Keywords: Education Faculty in Sinop, Lifelong Learning (Erasmus), Problems and Worries.

## ***Introduction***

Sinop is a city with a population of 47,000 on Boztepe cape and peninsula which is situated on the most northern edge of the Turkish side of Black Sea coast in Turkey. It is famous for historic places, fish, jail and Diogones. Sinop Education Faculty is a newly situated institution which was attached to Ondokuz Mayıs University in Turkey. It has been with in the body of Sinop University since May 2007. The faculty has three departments under the head of primary education department. These are Early Childhood Education, Primary School Education and Science Education. In all departments, there are over 490 full-time students getting education.

Erasmus studies have started for three years in Education Faculty in Sinop. Faculty's main aim is to introduce the faculty to National Agent (UA [www.ua.gov.tr](http://www.ua.gov.tr)) in Ankara capital city of Turkey. It has only limited works which have been done so far. There has been an intense work which is being done for Lifelong Learning programs in Education Faculty in Sinop by Erasmus Coordinator since December 2006. Lifelong learning program is the main program of E.U. education programs. Its importance is stated in a good way in Malta's Ministry of Education website like this: "Lifelong learning is no longer just one aspect of education and training; it must become the guiding principle for provision and participation across the full continuum of learning contexts. The coming decade must see the implementation of this vision. All those living in Europe, without exception, should have equal opportunities to adjust to the demands of social and economic change and to participate actively in the shaping of Europe's future."

A broad definition of lifelong learning would incorporate: cradle to grave, learning to learn and citizenship. Lifelong learning must include learning from cradle to grave. That includes period from birth through early childhood in school and also family involvement to retirement years. The demand for closer interaction between educational institutions and the world of work reflects the growing importance of human and intellectual capital to the overall economy. Lifelong learning can contribute to the development of human resources whether at work or outside. Learning to learn is the most effective student success program in higher education. It can be beneficial to the quality of life and it can encourage the involvement of the individual in society.

According to European Commission (2001), lifelong learning is not limited to a solely economic outlook or just to learning for adults. However, it emphasizes on learning from pre-school to postretirement, lifelong learning should include the whole spectrum of formal, non-formal and informal learning. The principles supporting lifelong learning and guide its effective implementation stress the centrality of the learner, the importance of equal opportunities and the quality and relevance of learning opportunities (European Commission, 2001:3).

Life long learning is a valuable opportunity for mobile students who are aware of their way of life. It is important for self actualisation. Not only inner communication of communication with other people. It's importance behind the get along with all barriers personally and Europe wide (Usakli, 2007: 80).

## ***Present Study***

The aim of this study can be outlined in four parts. The first aim is to find out what the problems are which make students give up their decision on not applying Erasmus student mobility. The second one is to

define new cultural guidance help line definition. The third one is to determine some standards for incoming and out going students to help coordinates. The last one is to advice some lectures or lecturer topics for all students. The last aim is very important for not only out coming students but also incoming students because they will see immediate help from their foreign peers.

## **Method**

Over all of this study conducted as a qualitative research technique. This study has conducted for insight LLP in Sinop Education Faculty. As Patton stated that, "Phenomenology aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences." (Patton, 2002: 104).

As method for this study, plot was mainly used. Methodology of plot has been used in literal criticism of novel in general. The plot was presented in appendixes as date order. All data arranged with the help of Nvivo 2 (statistic program for social science in qualitative research context). This is also one of qualitative data analysis. Within-site analysis it can develop "event listing" method (Miles and Huberman, 1984: 121).

Two instruments were used in this study. The first one is university's Erasmus burro open ended questioner and the other is students' interview. An open ended written questionnaire is directly used for the students and Erasmus coordinators (2 coordinators) about their ideas on Erasmus program. These are mirrors to their direct ideas that reflect realities about Erasmus program's advantages, disadvantages, and problems. The other instrument is the structured interview that was held by the researcher directly to the students (n=25) who wanted to join to LLP programs. The interviews made between students were also transcribed.

The visit of two scholars coming from Netherlands became a turning point for both the academic staff and the students. They had a circle meeting in canteen and a conference for the students and academic staff about IPABO attracted the students' attention and awakened the students to participate in Erasmus programs.

It is apparent that this first time meeting with foreigner scholars made the students exciting and 25 students showed their willingness to go E.U. universities especially IPABO . After Erasmus coordinator had made an intense work about arranging international meetings, two bilateral agreements was signed between Education Faculty in Sinop, IPABO and Pädagogische Akademie der Diözese Graz-Seckau in Graz-Eggenberg. In 15<sup>th</sup> April 2007, the announcement was hanged about these agreements and said to the students "apply for the coordinator to selection for visiting students". According to announcement, only third graders could apply as visiting students.

But three sad and boring news deeply affected students negatively. The first one was that Lithuanian student committed suicide by jumping from the window by herself on 07 February 2007 ([www.hurriyet.com.tr](http://www.hurriyet.com.tr)).

The second event was one of the visiting Turk student's quick decision of returning from U.K. This conveyed between students as scandal condemnation. The last event was also quick decision of male students to return to Turkey from a European country.

These circled news conveyed between the students so quickly that there were only limited counts of the students applied for this bilateral agreement (7 students). From these seven students, five of them applied for written English examination. And finally only four of them joined to interview (as oral examination).

Students' limited application for Erasmus program in Education Faculty in Sinop was examined in two parts. It can be separated as problems and worries. Here are the intense close look for the problems and the worries of the students. Problems are specific occurrence that students faced in only E.U. countries. Here is the list of problems. This problem list was gathered from E. U. university coordinators.

Problems: loosing suitcases, stolen private goods such as wallets or mobile phone, course credit problems, adaptation of culture.

In case written announcement could be taken no consideration by students, a signature list was prepared for students. In this paper the students could his or her preference on “except” or “no except” apply to Erasmus programs (Table 1 shows the numbers of Erasmus application of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students).

Table 1 Erasmus applications of 3<sup>rd</sup> grades.

| Gender | Total 3 <sup>rd</sup> graders | Wants to join | Application | Taken written test | Taken interview (oral test) |
|--------|-------------------------------|---------------|-------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| Male   | 45                            | 5             |             |                    |                             |
| Female | 87                            | 20            | 7           | 5                  | 4                           |
| Total  | 132                           | 25            | 7           | 5                  | 4                           |

Table 1 shows that only 5 female students out of 132 (total) took written test and one student didn't enter the oral test.

Analyze: To analyze the dates collected by researcher, Nvivo computer program was used. To summarize all collected interviews, recorded speeches and written notes were turned into written in rich text format (in Microsoft Word program).

### ***Findings and Comments***

In this study, EU' LLP in Education Faculty in Sinop has been examined. Before December 2006, there were little attempts done for Erasmus work due to Faculties main aim is to introduce itself only in National Agent. Only within the intense work of Faculties new coordinator there were signed two bilateral agreements. The lack of agreements results from neglect of other European Universities coordinators.

It is apparent that EU countries' governments have budged for their student mobility, sometimes it is not easy to arrange all kind of activities such as signing bilateral agreements, meeting for foreigner scholars, introducing foreign universities.

Here, these three incidents deeply will be discussed. The effects of three different events will be examined in detail. That's because these three incidents seem to be highly effective to the students who want to apply due to their power of abundances of the students' application.

The students' limited application for Erasmus program in Education Faculty in Sinop can be examined in two parts. These were problems and worries. The problems reflected real events that were experienced by Erasmus mobility students all around the European Union countries. In addition to problems, worries showed students' inner feelings of being a part of Erasmus students' mobility programs. Loosing suitcases, stolen private goods such as wallets or mobile phone, course credit problems, adaptation of culture are common problems for any students taking part in this program (Table 2 shows problems that Turkish student face). Suicide, quick decision for returning home country, depression resulting from being lonely, missing family, opposite sex partner living problems in short cultural shock are sources of giving up from apply to Erasmus student mobility program (Table 3 shows worries of Turkish students ).

Table 2 Problems.

| Problematic Situation                                | f | %    |
|------------------------------------------------------|---|------|
| Loosing suitcases                                    | 5 | 41.6 |
| Stolen private goods such as wallets or mobile phone | 5 | 41.6 |

|                        |    |      |
|------------------------|----|------|
| Course credit problems | 11 | 91.6 |
| Adaptation of culture  | 8  | 66.6 |

Table 2 shows problematic situation of 12 Erasmus students' ideas about student mobility program. These problems can be called as surface problems. These are very common problems for any students who take part in Erasmus programs. Credit problems of courses seem to be as the most problematic situation.

**Table 3 Worries.**

| Worries                                 | f | %   |
|-----------------------------------------|---|-----|
| Loneliness                              | 5 | 100 |
| Fear of losing date mate                | 2 | 40  |
| Feeling of extra load for family budget | 3 | 60  |

Table 3 shows worries of the students who joined only English written examination.

Erasmus institutional coordinator and international relations officer administrator's e mail about quick decision of returning home highlighted the quick need for multi cultural advisor.

And second event is one of art and science faculty students' quick decisions to return to Turkey. Although these seem to be no trouble for her academic adviser and faculty coordinator the female students complain for students' behaviours in home country is that environmental untidiness of host country that we know from her e mail.

### ***Discussion and Conclusion***

Erasmus programs are executing for university students and academic staff mobility. Faculty management gives great importance to Erasmus to enhance the quality and reinforce the European dimension of higher education by encouraging trans-national cooperation between universities, boosting European mobility and improving the transparency and full academic recognition of studies and qualifications throughout the Union. The researcher who was appointed as associated professor also was charged with Erasmus coordinator. The first work was to send electronic post (e mail) to 980 different Erasmus coordinators who were working for education faculties in all E.U countries (Table 4 shows response distribution of Erasmus Coordinators of to Faculty invitation letter). All these e mails were written for the name of Faculty's Dean about invitation and making bilateral agreement with Europe Education Faculties.

**Table 4 Response to faculty invitation letter .**

| Spam | Un-used | Negative answer | No answer | Positive answer | Acceptance | Positively answer but no department | Positively answer but quota limit | Total |
|------|---------|-----------------|-----------|-----------------|------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------|
| 280  | 250     | 127             | 133       | 60              | 5          | 68                                  | 57                                | 980   |

Spam: un-wanted e mail

Un-used: automatic e mail serves response that mentions about as "un using"

Negative answer: Response written by counterpart as "No I don't want to make cooperation with your faculty.

Positive Answer: The answer that covers positive response.  
Acceptance: Direct positive answer covers acceptance  
Positively answer but no department  
Positively answer but quota limit: Maximum bilateral agreement of any faculty

Researches have shown that there can be some problems among students in mobility in Europe. In one of wide ranged research project report, the followings are found out: The institutional surveys confirmed the key role of language in both channelling mobility and acting as a barrier. However, most staff thought that financial problems were an even bigger obstacle to maintaining or increasing out-mobility. Both the student questionnaire survey and the student interviews confirmed the staff views about finance and language as the two main barriers to mobility. Other factors which had some importance in the eyes of students were lack of information (or having information too late), actual or perceived academic/institutional barriers (course structures, credit transfer, worries over grades etc.), and attitudinal factors (fear of the unknown, etc.) (King and others, 2004).

It is a common belief that such kinds of problems seem to trigger culture shock. It is a phenomenon of terminology on which has been worked for more than fifty years. The term “culture shock”, found out by Oberg (1960), is in itself an indication of the negative slant taken: living in a foreign environment for a period of time is considered traumatic and stressful. Cultural shock is a kind of anxiety resulting from contact with a new culture and the feelings of loss, confusion, and impotence resulting from loss of accustomed cultural cues and social rules (Oberg, 1954, 1960).

Mobile students who have cultural shock may need multicultural counselling. Some research findings indicate that multicultural counselling is essential for the students in mobility.

Multicultural counselling has been a basic source of variation. It has been recognized that multicultural counselling isn't specific in nature. It means it is generic. That's why, it can be said that all counselling is multicultural (Patterson, 1996: 227-231). Even though it mustn't be perceived as a new approach, it must be dealt with as multiculturalism which has joined the movement toward a universal system of counselling (Patterson, 2004, 67-73).

Academic staff experience differences when responding to students with mental health problems. In a research made by Bradley (2000: 417-433), students with mental problems are investigated. The views of academic staff are recorded concerning what was helpful to them when considering these needs. This data is linked to research on working cross culturally with international students and set within a national framework. Research data is also got from focus groups which centred on the mental health needs of international and home students. Identical questions were asked to both groups students and similarities and differences recorded. International students expressed experience of a range of economic, social and academic pressures. These experiences seem to be different in degree and often in kind from those experienced by 'home' students.

Of course not all the students who are in abroad for their education have difficulty in adapting to new culture. In a research made by Wiers-Jenssen (2003: 391-411), experiences and viewpoints of Norwegian students abroad are investigated. The students appear highly talented in adapting to new situations, and the majority of them are very content with their staying in abroad. These students think that studying abroad academically has advantageous, and they give importance to the social, personal, linguistic and cultural rewards they obtain in addition to professional skills. When compared to students in Norway, it is very obvious that those studying abroad are more satisfied with their educational institution, and they spend more effort for their studies.

Sinop which has small population is situated on the most northern edge of the Turkish side of Black Sea coast in Turkey. Sinop Education Faculty is a newly situated institution which has three departments

under the head of primary school teaching. These are Pre-School Teaching, Primary Teaching and Science Teaching. There are some attempts for LLP in Sinop Education Faculty. As it is stated in European Commission (2001), LLP is important for its equal opportunities and the quality and relevance of learning opportunities.

In this study, lifelong learning program of Education Faculty in Sinop since December 2006 was examined.

Barriers of LLP of Education Faculty in Sinop can be examined in two main parts. The first one is the difficulties of finding suitable partner. The second one is that the students have difficulty in deciding whether to apply or not. The first part is divided into two parts: Turkey's not being member of European Union and reluctance in other countries' universities. The second part is also divided into two parts: problems and worries. The problems are universal for any mobile students. Worries are specific for Sinop Education Faculty's students. These worries arise from three events: suicide, depression because of being in a foreign country and quick decision for returning to Turkey. In this study, Education Faculty's EU LLP in Sinop was examined in terms of phobias of cultural shock, need for multicultural counselling. But all this conceptual frames were seen after the events sequences that occurred directly or indirectly to the Faculty's Erasmus studies.

European Union Life Long Learning programs don't seem to be easy to arrange especially for the countries which are only candidates to participate the European Union such as Turkey. For the candidate countries, the rule for making bilateral agreement is to find the suitable partner which is ready to sign the bilateral agreement. For Education Faculty in Sinop which is only attached to Samsun Ondokuz Mayıs University, finding partner and making contracts occupy a lot of time for all coordinators. These intense and stressful studies also affect the students negatively. The surface problems of Erasmus's students can be listed as follows:

- money
- luggage lost
- stolen valuable objects such as wallet, mobile phone
- credits of courses

The problems stated above are also real for other European Union countries' university students (King and others, 2004).

In addition to these; cultural shock, academic problems, financial problems can also be the general problems of any Erasmus students no matter from which country they come. Especially three events were closely investigated in terms of their effects to the students' application for internal student mobility programs. The extreme events such as committing suicide, quick decision for returning the country and depression resulting from loneliness, separating dating-partners, missing parents, feelings of losing a term or full academic year from the student's home universities can affect the students who have never participated to Erasmus student mobility programs beforehand. So real problems and worries reduce the number of student's applications for Erasmus programs.

As a suggestion, interrelation between LLP and cultural shock must be taken into consideration by scholars who work with mobile students. Multicultural counselling services are needed in order to reduce the students' problems and worries. Multicultural counsellors should take part in every university bodies such as faculties, departments even sub-departments. That's because, faculties such as Education Faculty in Sinop which is situated in the north east part of Turkey and on Black Sea Coast can be valuable place for incoming students but it is apparent that it can't be enough to give information by hanging only ordinary announcement. Even more reporting negative events officially seems to be not suitable, it is impossible to stop any scandal between students. Erasmus programs should be rearranged by universities in terms of their reference points.

As it is clear in one of old Turkish proverb “Loosing your a few goods for getting more in the way of Dimyat”, LLP should be arranged more carefully. Both advantages and disadvantages sides of being mobile student in the extension of LLP must be explained to the students. The students who need psychological support must be taken part in multicultural counselling program not only in home university but also in host university.

### **Recommendations:**

Here are some recommendations for coordinators, mobile scholar and students:

- 1- Every person should aware of what are the problems and worriers that university students bare in their mind for their LLP dream.
- 2- Every European Union countries also Turkey should develop inter countries cultural guidance helper programs.
- 3- Every mobile student should have some standard competence such as psychological well being.
- 4- Every mobile student should get training course both host and guest countries about cultural adaptation.

### **Abbreviations:**

EU: European Union

IPABO: Interconfessionele Pabo (Hogeschool in Amsterdam / Alkmaar)

LLP: Lifelong Learning Program

UK: United Kingdom

### **Glossary and Definitions about Lifelong learning (Erasmus)**

Certificate/ diploma: An official document, which formally records the achievements of an individual.

Coordinator: Teacher responsible for the recognition of your plan of study. You may turn to him/her in case you have problems related to studies. You will have a coordinator in both your home and host universities.

ECTS: System that allocates a certain number of credits to a subject according to the workload it represents to the student. In order to be valid, your plan of study must be made of 60 credits in a year that is 30 credits in a semester.

Guidance: A range of activities designed to assist people to make decisions about their lives (educational, vocational, personal) and to implement those decisions.

Home university: the university in which you are studying in your country of residence.

Host university: the university where you will be studying in the framework of Erasmus.

Lifelong learning: All learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective.

Plan of study: all the subjects that you are going to study and that will be listed in the Learning Agreement.

Lifelong learning programs of Education Faculty in Sinop are summarised at the diagram below.

**Diagram**

| <b>SINOP EDUCATION FACULTY LLP</b>              |                             |
|-------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Difficulties of finding suitable partner</b> | <b>Problems and Worries</b> |

|                                 |                                              |                        |                                  |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>Not being EU<br/>country</b> | <b>Other EU<br/>countries<br/>reluctance</b> | <b>Problems</b>        | <b>Worries</b>                   |
|                                 |                                              | <b>economic</b>        | <b>suicide</b>                   |
|                                 |                                              | <b>luggage lost</b>    | <b>depression</b>                |
|                                 |                                              | <b>stolen valuable</b> | <b>quick decision for return</b> |
|                                 |                                              | <b>academic</b>        |                                  |

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