

# ERACON 2014

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## ERAACON 2014

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## Preface

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The European Association of ERASMUS Coordinators (EAEC) is completing in 2014 its 10 years of life and it is marked by the 10 years anniversary of the ERASMUS Congress and Exhibition ERACON 2014.

The success of the ERASMUS programme is well established by making the universities in Europe to cooperate and communicate with a maximum impact of the European Education System to the rest of the world, spreading the use and acceptance of its ECTS credit system and promoting the three cycle system.

In ERACON Congress 2014 there were many useful Sessions and Workshops. There were new and innovative ideas to improve ERASMUS, cooperation in HE and internationalization of universities. There are opportunities to network and work together in thematic groups. Quality issues and a collection of good practices from all over Europe and beyond were communicated in ERACON 2014.

A networking between EU institutions and between EU and non-EU institutions was promoted and was supported by the Go-Exchange Fair.

This book provides a selection of full paper proceedings of ERACON 2014 Congress. Parallel to ERACON, one can have the opportunity to attend sessions of the CAREER-EU conference, hosted by ERACON, with topics very much related to ERASMUS as mobility relates to employment and as studies relate to counselling.

The Management Board of EAEC would like to thank its collaborators and sponsors for helping in the organization of ERACON 2014, the European Commission and the Executive Agency for their continuous support and contribution, the ERASMUS student network, the European Association of Career Guidance and the University of Cyprus.

Special thanks to Mrs Androulla Vassiliou, Member of the European Commission, for placing the ERACON Congress 2014 under her patronage.

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# ERACON 2014

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# VIRTUAL MOBILITY: NETWORKING COOPERATION AS A STEP FORWARD

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Universidade Aberta (UAb) has had a very close relation with European and non-European Higher Education Institutions (HEI) namely from Portuguese speaking countries.*

*Virtual Mobility (VM) started to be a pilot project in a specific area, as to test aspects as quality assurance, calendar year, assessment, and communication due to differences in language use, Portuguese versus Spanish.*

*As a PhD student I expect to have a PLUS because ERASMUS will give students an opportunity to do a physical mobility that can be mixed with a virtual one, making blended learning a value-added learning process. Skills and creation of better partnership will not be bordered within European countries but all over the world which can bring alliances. A PLUS after all: beyond borders, taking IT more seriously and making knowledge triangle and H2020 a true reality, linking research, innovation and education. Isn't what this is all about?*

### **UAb, a distance higher education institution in Portugal**

Universidade Aberta (UAb) was founded in 1988. It is the single public institution of distance higher education in Portugal. It has had since its beginning a very close relation with European and non-European Higher Education Institutions (HEI) worldwide where UAb is present in different international networks comprising 4 continents, Europe, Africa, America and Asia (figure1). It covers mostly the Portuguese-speaking countries, but it is also present in Macau.

In Europe, UAb promotes mobility within the framework of the Erasmus program and participates in different Research and Development (R&D) projects.

Within the Portuguese-speaking space, UAb is a member of the Association of Portuguese-language Universities and of the Lusophone Network for Distance Education by hosting one of its Distance Education Centre – CE@D.

**Figure 1: UAb' students are anywhere in the world...like Portuguese**



Source UAb students worldwide 2010/2011 (Universidade Aberta, 2014)

### Virtual pedagogical model of UAb

University teaching activities use the most advanced methodologies and technologies of distance education providing it without any geographical borders or physical barriers, and giving special focus to the expansion of the Portuguese language and culture within the Portuguese-speaking space. These include migrant communities and countries where Portuguese is the official language.

All study programs in UAb are structured according to the Bologna process and taught in e-learning mode since 2008, the year the university became a European institution of reference in the field of advanced elearning and online learning.

Its virtual pedagogical model was recognized by “The European school 2.0” when attributing the “Leading Innovative Practice Award” to UAb in EDEN Seventh Open Classroom Conference to the paper “Learning to Teach *in Second Life*” (Macedo, Angelina et Morgado, Lina, 2014). This award was unheard until then in Portugal.

According to the Bologna process UAb as other “European Higher Education Institutions also faces the major challenges and ensuing opportunities of globalization and accelerated technological developments with new providers, new learners and new types of learning. Student-centred learning<sup>1</sup> and mobility<sup>1</sup> will help students develop the competences they need in a changing labour market and will empower them to become active and responsible citizens” (European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, 2009, p. 1). For allowing so, UAb offers higher education degrees (undergraduate, master and doctorate) and lifelong learning study programs anywhere in the world.

The characteristics of virtual pedagogical model of UAb are:

<sup>1</sup> The underline word is my own responsibility.

- Elearning mode and extensive use of new online communication tools,
- Strongly student-centred,
- Promotion of the interaction between students and teachers,
- Greater flexibility in learning as the communication and interaction processes are carried out according to the students' availability by sharing resources, knowledge and activities with their peers,
- Dynamic and interactive model as therefore constantly evolving,
- Innovative tool permanently opens to... the Future.

Bologna process geared toward the development of learning outcomes and “(...) *student-centred learning requires empowering individual learners, new approaches to teaching and learning (...)*” (European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, 2009, p. 4), which constituted an opportunity for Institution as UAb and its students.

### **The value of the NEW ERASMUS + for all**

ERASMUS (Union, The European, 2013) gives the opportunities to study, train and gain work experience or even volunteer abroad. The new programme, with the additional word Plus guarantees the development of digital education and the use of Information, Communication and Technology (ICT).

Taking into account that one of ERASMUS Plus + goals are (1) the increasing of the opportunities of transnational mobility and cooperation and (2) developing “collective strategies” in order to transform politics in concrete actions, it is mainly desirable that synergies and setorial alliances with universities and economical sector should be made.

O ERASMUS+ is organized through 3 Key actions (KA) with sub actions:

KA1: Mobility of individuals:

- Mobility of learners and staff,
- Joint Master Degrees,
- Master Student Loan Guarantee, which is a novelty comparing to the current ERASMUS, which is a loan guarantee facility for master's degree students to finance their studies in another country.

KA2: Cooperation for innovation and exchange of good practices:

- Supports transversal Strategically Partnerships among educational institutions and youth organizations with peers in other countries in both their own sector and other sectors, in order to foster quality improvements and innovation through the creation of: (i) multiple online platforms, and, (ii) online courses, among other activities,
- Supports Knowledge Alliances between HEI and enterprises to foster innovation, entrepreneurship, creativity, employability, knowledge exchange and/or multidisciplinary teaching and learning;
- Supports Sector Skills Alliances leveraging the design and delivery of joint vocational training curricula, programmes and teaching and training methodologies,
- Capacity Building projects supporting cooperation with Partner Countries in the fields of higher education and youth, aiming modernization and internationalization processes.

KA3: Support for policy reforms to let young people approaching European political and public deciders

### **Virtual and transnational mobility**

The virtual mobility (VM) in UAb offers the possibility of studying in other university different from the student's home university using elearning methodologies from the host university including platform, books and teachers, with total recognition of studies done in the host university as there is a learning agreement previously signed between home and host universities. In this type of mobility, students stay physically in their home university. The project VM started in UAb as a pilot project in a specific area, as to test aspects as quality assurance, calendar year, assessment, and communication due to differences in language use, Portuguese versus Spanish. We were successful in doing it within two HEI, one from Spain and the other from Argentina, even though it was much difficult for students from UAb who had to write and read in Spanish, as it was for teachers that had to assess Argentine and Spanish students.

Virtual mobility for ERASMUS+ is defined as *“a set of activities supported by Information and Communication Technologies, including e-learning, that realize or facilitate international, collaborative experiences in a context of teaching, training or learning”* (European Commission, 2014, p. 264) which in an tremendously step forward.

It is considered that there is innovation when the proposal considers “state-of-the-art” methods and techniques which leads to innovative results and solutions as well as there is a European added value generated through its transnationality.

Transnational mobility involves countries not only within European territory but also “all over the world “in countries like Angola, Brazil, Cape Verde, East Timor, Guinea-Bissau, Macao, Mozambique, São Tome and Principe, among others where the university is present worldwide through its students.

As a UAb PHd student it is very challenging that this elearning university is present in 42 countries (Universidade Aberta, 2014) and that virtual mobility is accomplished in ERASMUS+ through strategic partnerships making “2 in 1” in what is called “blended mobility”. This is a mixture of short-term physical mobility (less than 2 months) and virtual mobility. Doing so, we can have a truly networking system.

### **The link between ERASMUS +, Europe 2020 and Horizon 2020**

*“Europe 2020 is the EU's growth strategy for the coming decade. In a changing world, we want the EU to become a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy. These three mutually reinforcing priorities should help the EU and the Member States deliver high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion. Concretely, the Union has set five ambitious objectives - on employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate/energy - to be reached by 2020. Each Member State has adopted its own national targets in each of these areas”* (Durão Barroso, President of the European Commission)

The alliances between HEI with economical sector are fundamental to define the competences that the working “world” lacks off. The link to EU 2020 (European Union) and its priorities, targets and 8 indicators as well as the link to H2020 (Horizon: research, innovation and education) is quite important (table 1).

**Table 1: Innovation Triangle**

INOVIATION TRIANGLE of HORIZON 2020				
PRIORITIES EU 2020				
Employment	Climate change and energy sustainability	R&D	Education	Fighting poverty and social exclusion
75% of the 20-64 year-olds to be employed	<b>greenhouse gas emissions 20%</b> (or even <b>30%</b> , if the conditions are right) <b>lower than 1990</b>	3% of the EU's GDP to be invested in R&D	<b>Reducing the rates of early school leaving below 10%</b>	at least <b>20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion</b>
	<b>20% of energy from renewables</b>		<b>at least 40% of 30-34-year-olds completing third level education</b>	
	<b>20% increase in energy efficiency</b>			

Source: (Farinha, 2014).

**As a Social Sustainability and Development PHd student why should I be so interested in ERASMUS +?**

ERASMUS + support the development of new pedagogical approaches and in particular elearning tools, which fit in UAb's strategy and are very suitable for a PHd student. The on-line collaborative platform that we already have as a UAb student allows us to get in touch with students and teachers due to the innovative pedagogical model is another advantage.

Not only elearning mode is available as it can be combined with practical exercises, in what it is called Open Educational Resources (OER).

ERASMUS + gives us the possibility to join the programme with:

1. Lower costs due to elearning systems and platforms,
2. The assumed purpose of studying linked to the "real/working world" (from the "lab" to the enterprise) as new forms of practical training and simulation of real life cases (as quoted in knowledge and sector skills alliances and capacity building),
3. Go "step by step" beyond EU frontiers, when cooperating with Partner Countries (as quoted in capacity building),
4. Eventually, we will have less time for fun (as there will be less time for learning physically, which is something that needs to be confirmed yet), but nevertheless we have another (new) option, the @blended learning.

We believe “knowledge” is beyond Universities, Enterprises, and beyond EU frontiers. And this is why we add that ERASMUS+, UE2020 and H2020 are a fruitful combination.

Concepts like virtual mobility, elearning, OER, better exploitation of the ICT potential, and transnationality comes to our mind when we think about ERASMUS +, as key words.

The sectors that will be eligible are those with skills imbalances and to which Commission policies respond, which is the case of “Environmental technologies (Eco-Innovation)”. The KA 2 that supports the design and delivery of joint vocational training curricula, programmes and teaching and training methodologies is Sector “Skills Alliances”.

As referred in Bologna process European HEI should “(...) *internationalize their activities and engage in global collaboration for Sustainable Development (SD). (...) Within each of the three cycles, opportunities for mobility shall be created in the structure of degree programmes*” (European Ministers Responsible for Higher Education, 2009, p. 4).

And so as a student I would like to be close enough to be part of the building future, and ERASMUS + will certainly give me an opportunity to do a physical mobility mixed with a virtual one, making blended learning a value-added learning process. I will also have opportunities to exchange experiences and get in touch and involved with other realities beyond my own linked to local enterprises.

There is a Plus after all we are beyond EU borders, taking IT more seriously and making knowledge triangle and H2020 a true reality, linking research, innovation and education.

### **ERASMUS borders enlarged versus fixed borders of Planet Earth**

The last but not the least, where there will be a planet to rule in 15 years´ time? Taking into account an oft-quoted definition of sustainable development is defined in the Brundtland Report as “*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs*” (WCED, 1987, p. 54), not only this is a global economy of knowledge but there is also a close link amongst EU 2020, Horizon 2020 and Sustainable Development Indicators.

On one hand the planet earth, that we call “our house” is expected to be inhabited by 8,2 millions of people (in 2030) what is quite above 7,1 millions, the actual figure (Maddison, A., 2008); on the other, there are limited resources and biophysical limits, more and more evident to all of us. Thus Education (sustainable) is a “weapon” (Mandela, Nelson, 2008) in every spot of the globe and now more achievable through ERASMUS and so we expect to puzzle in growth of population with lack of resources and sustainability through +.

Having the weapons will we know how to use them?

“(...) *the development is as a “fierce” process, with a moral that invokes “blood, sweat and tears”: the BLAST view of development*” (Sen, A., 1997).

Bridges bring development and those can be built no matter the sea, the land or the air. The distance is no problem at all, as long as we want learn and/to travel in *lato sensu*.

*“Erasmus+ will support transnational partnerships to foster cooperation and bridge the worlds of Education and work in order to tackle the skills gaps we are facing in*

*Europe*” (European Commission, 2014). Networking cooperation is now a/the step forward.

### **Acronyms:**

CE@D - Distance Education Centre

EU 2020 - European Union

H2020 – Horizon 2020

HEI - Higher Education Institutions

ICT - Information, Communication and Technology

KA - Key actions

OER - Open Educational Resources

R&D - Research and Development

UAb - Universidade Aberta

WCED – World Commission on Environmental and Development

### **ABSTRACT (Português)**

A Universidade Aberta (UAb) tem tido uma relação muito estreita com Instituições de Ensino Superior Europeias (IES) e não-europeias nomeadamente com os países de língua portuguesa. Isto só foi tornado realidade devido ao elevado compromisso que a Universidade tem alcançado neste domínio durante os seus 25 anos de existência. A Mobilidade virtual (MV) começou por ser um projeto-piloto numa área específica, para testar aspetos como a garantia de qualidade, ajustamento do calendário face ao ano letivo, avaliação e comunicação devido às diferenças existentes no uso da língua. Este projeto logrou ter sucesso usando a MV (ou seja, on-line, sem deslocação presencial) com duas IES, respetivamente de Espanha e da Argentina, embora tenha sido muito difícil para os estudantes da UAb escrever e ler em espanhol, assim como para os professores avaliar estudantes argentinos e espanhóis.

Como estudante de doutoramento espero ter uma mais-valia com o novo programa, ERASMUS +, dado que este permitirá aos alunos a oportunidade de fazer uma mobilidade física que pode ser complementada com uma mobilidade virtual, tornando a aprendizagem um processo de valor acrescentado. Para além disso, ter-se-á a oportunidade de trocar experiências e entrar em contato com outras realidades para além da nossa, contactando com empresas locais. A criação de parcerias não estará limitada ao contexto europeu, aplicando-se a todo o globo (UAb é uma Universidade onde a aprendizagem está presente em 42 países e 4 continentes), podendo trazer novas alianças. Esta é uma vantagem, em que para além da “passagem além-fronteiras, se poderá tornar verossímil o triângulo do conhecimento e o programa H2020, vinculando a investigação, a inovação e a educação. Não é este o âmbito e objetivo do programa ERASMUS +?

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## PRACTICE-BASED RESEARCH – A FORUM FOR TEACHERS, RESEARCHERS AND PRACTITIONERS

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### ABSTRACT

*This paper aims to reflect on the constructive role of practice-based and practitioner research (PBPR) in the context and collaboration of education, learning and development in schools and business. It also aims to represent EAPRIL, an international network and platform for those involved in practice-based and practitioner research to exchange and disseminate research, practice and products that make a difference for practice. EAPRIL's vision is that academic teachers, researchers, and practitioners are important in the process of sharing, constructing and creating knowledge in developing practice and theory.*

### RESEARCH AND PRACTICE-BASED PRACTITIONER RESEARCH

OECD (2002) defines research as follows: “Research and experimental development comprise creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications”. Traditional or fundamental research have been separated from practice, dividing them into the two different “worlds”. Following this distinction, these “worlds” own different aims, practices, methods and actors. However, in the last decades the contexts of knowledge production have been diversified and new models in addition to the (*quasi*) *experimental-control-group design research* have been developed (Gibbons et al 1994).

*Applied research* refers to the original investigation undertaken to acquire new knowledge and primarily directed towards a specific practical aim or objective (OECD Frascati Manual 2002, 78). Moreover, Gibbons et al (1994) define two modes of knowledge production. Mode 1 and mode 2 research. ‘Mode 1’ type of producing knowledge refers to investigator-initiated and discipline-based research, whereas ‘mode 2’ type is more closely related to applied research in which theory and practice are tightly intertwined. ‘Mode 2’ type knowledge production refers to research in which knowledge is produced in the environment where the actions take place. Thereby knowledge is generated in the process of providing solutions to problems that are identified in this context of applications. In addition, ‘mode 2’ type research is identified as problem-focused, interdisciplinary, reflective and critical in nature and it

crosses boundaries as well as contexts. Furthermore, 'mode 2' type knowledge production is evaluated according to its feasibility.

*Practice-based and practitioner research* (PBPR) represents the 'mode 2' type of knowledge production, stressing the aim that research contributes to the progression of the praxis. PBPR is therefore more than just applying existing so-called fundamental knowledge. It is much more a knowledge co-creation process of practitioners, researchers (or research-practitioners) and possible other stakeholders. In that sense it is connected to the currently upcoming approach of 'research partnerships', which was however already introduced by Ann Brown and Allen Collins in the nineties (Brown 1992; Collins 1992). It involves sustainable collaborations in which practitioners, stakeholders and researchers collaborate in creating knowledge and understanding through doing research together. PBPR represents knowledge that leads to evidence-informed practice and knowledge-in-use. It takes the nature of practice as a central focus. PBPR does not only recognise the utility of the research for and impact on practice but also its contribution to existing theory are of utmost importance.

### **WHY PRACTICE-BASED AND PRACTITIONER RESEARCH?**

Higher education is challenged in many ways to "serve" the world of work. Training students, who are mainly employed in the local and regional labour market, asks for a tight collaboration between higher education and enterprises. In conducting research, which serves the needs of the labour market, higher education can use practice-based practitioner research as an insight into the practice and hence produce knowledge that can be easily implemented into practice. In order to facilitate the flow of knowledge, higher educational institutions and enterprises should create principles and practices of knowledge co-creation and in doing so enhance the construction of a "Learning Region" (Florida 1995). In a Learning Region, individual and collective expertise and aspects emphasising communality are joined (Tynjälä 2006) and benefits are shared. In addition, Bielaczyc and Collins (1999), and Bereiter (2002), in striving a knowledge-building culture, stress the close collaboration between researchers and teachers. We emphasise this, adding however also the practitioners and students into the research collaboration remembering that teachers can simultaneously act as researchers.

### **METHODS THAT PBPR ADOPTS**

There are different research approaches that focus on PBPR, such as action research (Ponte & Brouwer 2008), design based research (McKenney & Reeves 2012) cross boundary research (Zitter & Hoeve 2012), change labs transformative research (Engeström, 1987) and ecological and transdisciplinary inspired research (ETI) (Jong, Beus, Richardson & Ruijters 2013).

One key element is co-research. That is, practitioners and researchers become prepared to cross boundaries between research and practice in the co-design (Penuel, Coburn & Gallagher, 2013) of knowledge, improvement of practice and products. Another key element is that practitioners are not a monolithic group. They vary greatly in their roles, responsibilities, and perspectives on problems of practice. Their role and practical wisdom is important to use in research as well as the different needs, interests, and skills of other stakeholders in the learning system. A third key element has a more epistemic character. Positivist research is mainly focusing on isolated facts. Knowledge is not isolated or linear. As in nature, past and future are always in the present. As a result, past and future are connected through the present.

The same holds for knowledge. Information becomes knowledge in practice when it is related to all other factors that play a role parallel in the present of the praxis. Connectedness of the research and its research findings, e.g. the understandings itself, are crystalized moments of understanding, artifacts, e.g. connections, transcending knots of relations. Connectedness is one of the key basic tones of ETI-research.

### **ECOLOGICALLY AND TRANSDISCIPLINARILY INSPIRED RESEARCH (ETI) APPROACH IMPROVING PRACTICE RESEARCH**

ETI-research is an approach aiming to add methodological research principles to the standards of positivist research in order to overcome the implicit gap that positivist research generates between research and practice. It is an endeavor to do research in such a way that it contributes directly to the progress of practice. This approach is based on the idea that the theory of education or development of professionals is not only a matter of 'techne' (instrumental knowledge) but also a matter of 'phronesis' (practical wisdom). Positivist research aiming at finding the most effective 'means ends' practice cannot bring us that far so that we are able to improve practice, resulting in a readiness of your students, sons or daughter as adults, of your neighbours and of your colleagues for the 21st century. Because of this gap between educational science (Broekkamp & Hout-Wolters 2006) and practice, it seems that reform-educational-research needs a different though complementary methodological way of thinking and maybe even a different epistemic basis.

Educational theory that is progress-oriented needs research in a 'design mode', rather than only an 'explain mode'. *Ecologically and Transdisciplinarily Inspired Research* approaches entities in relationships with their environment, e.g. other entities, to advance the understanding of these effects in their ecology, i.e. the relations between the phenomena and the diversity in the manifestations. The authors (Jong et al 2013) are inspired and take stock of an 'ecology' and transdisciplinary point of view in thinking through a methodological redirection. It resulted in a manifest of six principles and two basic tunes.

#### **Six ETI-research principles<sup>2</sup>**

At the moment the ETI-research approach consists of six principles and two bases tunes: the six principles concern wisdom, knowing your self (self-knowledge), ecological error, collective development, narrativity and nature. The base tunes are ecology and transdisciplinarity. Principles and base tunes are grounded in the need to transform research in such a way that it really contributes to practice, that builds theory with impact and that supports teachers becoming practice-based researchers. The principles do not replace positivist or practice-based research, but they are another intentional orientation towards the world. Before describing the base tunes we first will shortly typify the six ETI-principles.

#### *Wisdom*

The fact that everything is connected with one another implicates that research should not only gather data (taking) but also leave insights and empowerment for development (bringing) and change to the practitioners and their praxis. Peterson

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<sup>2</sup> The §'s related to ETI-research are based on and can be more extended read in: Jong, de, F., Beus, de, M., Richardson, R., & Ruijters, M. (2013). Ecologically and Transdisciplinarily Inspired research: Starting Points for Practitioner Research and Sustainable Change, In: T. Zohar Harel (Guest Ed.) Special issue: Sustainability: Multidisciplinary Perspectives. *Journal of organisational transformation & social change*, vol 10, 163-177.  
<http://www.maneyonline.com/doi/abs/10.1179/1477963313Z.0000000008>

and Seligman (2004, p. 106): ".../...(wisdom) is the ability to take stock of life in large terms, in ways that make sense of oneself and others. .../...(wisdom) is the product of knowledge and experience, but more than the accumulation of information. It is the coordination of this information and its deliberate use to improve well-being. It implicates the responsibility to take the opportunity to contribute to the expanding of the well-being of others and yourself (Sternberg, 1990).

### *Knowing yourself (Self-Knowledge)*

The idea of objectively doing research without any influence of the researcher is impossible, especially in the humanities. A researcher is not a being-in-the-world such as an ashtray beside a telephone; in his intentionality of doing, he is oriented towards the phenomena (Ponty 1945). Therefore, self-knowledge helps to know the history of the researchers' cognitive development (formal and informal). It helps to know his conceptions in order to consider them as one source of influencing what he hears, sees and feels. Awareness of explicating this 'Self' is necessary to see the obstacles and limits in and of the research, as well as to interpret results. The research itself and the self of the researcher are interconnected (Maso 2008).

### *Ecological error*

The ecological information of a subject under study is an important source for the interpretation of the phenomena, the individual deviations as well as for the interpretation of the so-called 'error'. 'Error' is seen as important information when interpreting the relationship of the individual to the issue and its specific context. After all, groups are heterogeneous in their character, as is indicated by the deviation of the mean and error. Interpretation of this heterogeneity is as important for understanding the phenomena being studied as the mean as model or regression line as model of the praxis. Aggregated data interpretation should be checked on possible, implicit but distinguishable (sub)populations (Freedman 1999; Schuessler 1999). Consider value diversity, when interpreting a phenomenon instead of stereotyping. Take personal and individual uniqueness into consideration (Robinson 1950). In the ultimate end, education is about developing person's uniqueness (Biesta 2006) in any domain or practice instead of the average. Pay attention to this in the research design and include it in the research report analysis and interpretations of the observed error on the basis of the individual's ecology by meaningfully interpreting within group variance, diversity and uniqueness of subjects. Educational practices are not only a story of means but certainly also of diversity of teacher's and students.

### *Collective development (knowledge creation)*

ETI goes beyond doing research together. It is doing research in such a way that both process and product come into a movement of collective development as a basis for sustainable change of the practice. Thus, the product, each individual as well as the community profit from the collaboration. It is all about knowledge creation (Bereiter 2002; Jong 2006). It is about the willingness to listen and to understand each other and putting your own efforts to be understandable. Research is much more an activity of co-research and knowledge co-creation with the practitioners, e.g. teachers, students, managers etc. It is a process of individual, collective and community learning building and expanding the collective intelligence.

### *Narrativity*

The story of the researcher and the research, and the choices that are made, are too often lost in the violence of academic principles. Both in the exploration of the questions and in doing research and providing insights depth and complexity deserve to be held. Ensure a rich context description of the research in which recognition

plays an important role. It concerns a continuous reflection on the story as a researcher (Boje 2009). Continuous attention is needed for the dialogue about and within the research, as well.

### *Nature*

Ecology without nature is a dry and uninspired metaphor (Krebs 2008). In ETI the knowledge of nature helps to see patterns, systems and mechanisms (Bateson 1972). Experiencing our natural origin inside and outside ourselves opens the mind to explore a different way to give meaning to our experiences. Nature inspires and illustrates in such a way that new insight and ways of thinking come to mind. Being in nature brings quietness and contemplation for reflection. The use of metaphors and analogies from nature make new insights accessible. Being inspired by nature connects nature and culture. Being astonished by life and discovering connectedness and context connects self and nature. Using metaphors and examples of nature makes it all intelligible (Schouten 2005).

### *Basic tune 1: Ecology as connectedness (sinus)*

Connectedness is the first underlying idea to the ETI-approach, the total approach and the essence of each principle. Ecology is not about 'entities' e.g. facts, objective independent objects but about connectedness. Actually, it is the epistemic basis of the ETI-orientation to the world. It is contrasting to the modern Cartesian technical orientation of the current western citizen to see a human being as an information processor of a world, e.g. reality, as a universe of facts (Coolen 2012). According to Naess (1956), reality cannot be understood without interacting with that reality. Entities, moments of insight are not propositions but actions (Tuinen 2012).

Connectedness stands in contrast to a dualistic deterministic separation between the object and the knowing subject. It is the connectedness between theory and practice instead of separating them. It is complementary to the view that everything is knowable, that everything is caused by something. It is complementary to reductionism of reality to quantities of what can be known. It is complementary to the view of a calculated reality as the only knowable reality.

ETI-research acknowledges that every situation is unique in relation to a previous one. Reality is always in a move. Dividing it in objects, fact, propositions etc. is artificial. Reality is a dynamic constantly change of connections. Entities are just temporarily connections, expressions of reciprocal dependency.

Ecosystems are open (living) connections between elements. Reciprocal relations are the essence of living systems, such as in humanities. Interventions can have big consequences for the system (Engeström 1987). Therefore, it is important to know the system in which you intervene. Zooming out in order to oversee the whole and to foretell the expected effects is an important character of this principle and ETI-based research.

Understanding the complex reality goes beyond knowing and understanding entities by interpreting the relations, the connectedness between the different entities and their reciprocal dependencies. It enriches the paradigm of giving meaning, naming, and describing entities (Libbrecht 1995). Relations, especially in humanities, can have a qualitative value so intuition and imagination as a way of thinking comes to play a role in interpreting relations. In the end the drive to understand, the question pops up of what 'is', that connects and what *means* the connection that makes up reality in all its complexity?

Humans are active beings in an interactive relation to their environment; they act towards things on basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things; Meanings arise out of the social interactions with others and society; Meanings are the result of an interpretive processes by a person while dealing with his environment and nature. In a sense, this connects to symbolic interactionism basic premises like (Blumer 1969)

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### ***Basic tune 2: transdisciplinarity***

Our basic statement here is: *Research issues can, by definition, be approached from a multitude of perspectives and disciplines. It is precisely this dialogue and interaction between these perspectives and disciplines we pursue in ETI-research besides an ecological view. Through this dialogue and interaction, new transcending insights arise.*

Overall we can conclude that the implicit system and organic thinking and epistemic base in which knowledge is not approached as stand-alone insights (i.e. truths) but as temporary connected artefacts, helps to improve the practical impact of research and does not obstruct valid and reliable research. On the contrary, it makes valid and reliable research more valuable for practice because it brings research insight 'in-to-use'. It forms a basis for sustainable change of practice because it empowers practice. ETI-research contributes to change of practice in a sustainable way by knowledge production among those participating.

ETI and the other mentioned practice-oriented approaches. Also other approaches such as design-based, practice oriented, cross boundary, transformative, research partnerships etc. might have this aim, orientation.

### **EAPRIL A FORUM FOR PBPR**

EAPRIL, the European Association for Practitioner Research on Improving Learning, has been established in 2006 to answer to the challengers that society, education and working life were facing. Rapid technological changes, immigration, international competition in our societies were among the many developments influencing education. More and more, researchers, teachers and developers in education believe that new ways are needed to understand these developments and finding solutions for them. They believe that 'traditional' or 'fundamental' educational research may not address the complexity of these changes. Furthermore, they feel that new venues are needed for practitioners and researchers to talk to each other. However, research-based practice as well as practice-based research are both equally needed. In other words research that is relevant to practitioners. More specifically, the association promotes practice-based research on learning issues in the context of initial, formal, lifelong and organisational learning with the aim to enhance practice.

In addition, EAPRIL encompasses different contexts (such as schools of various educational levels as well as organisations and corporations across fields, such as engineering, medicine, nursing, business, and teacher education), at different levels (individuals, teams, organisations and networks), and in different stages of life (from kindergarten over students in higher education to workers at the workplace). As a result, EAPRIL is unique in its kind to address this need on a European scale and this for a variety of themes on education and learning. Furthermore, the link between

education in educational institutions and schools and learning on the workplace is extra highlighted in EAPRIL. These two ecologies are interrelated and share more than they are both aware of. EAPRIL aims to stimulate the boundary crossing between these entities.

Members of EAPRIL are e.g. academic and practitioner researchers, teachers, educators, professional trainers, educational technologists, curriculum developers, educational policy makers, staff developers, learning consultants, people involved in organisational change, HR managers or representatives, corporate learning directors, academics in the field of professional learning, etc. According to EAPRIL's vision, these members are equally important players in the process of constructing and creating and sharing knowledge in developing new practices and theory. They are members in the multi- and transdisciplinary research process as problem-definers, researchers, data gatherers, interpreters, and implementers. Overall, EAPRIL is a community for academics and practitioners that aim at the progression of practice by approaches such as design-based, practice-oriented, cross boundary, transformative, and research partnerships. Being an international organisation, it aims to bridge practice and research and to cross the boundaries between educational and working life

Similar to Erasmus, EAPRIL contributes as an international network to the professionalisation and empowerment of education, learning and development in business. By its means, EAPRIL offers an excellent platform and community to communicate and disseminate research results, outcomes, developed practices and products and other activities, e.g. of ERASMUS projects, that make a difference for practice. Each year projects are submitted and nominated for the 'Best Practitioner Research Award'. All of them truly represent examples of the collaboration between teachers, researchers and students (see [www.EAPRIL.org](http://www.EAPRIL.org))

### **EAPRIL CONFERENCE AND ITS ACTIVITIES**

To address the aforementioned needs EAPRIL is organising an annual conference in the last week of November. Its programme is focused on education & learning and learning & development in organisations. Furthermore, various activities were launched over the past years to increase learning and networking opportunities for members during the conference, e.g. school visits in order to get to know more about European school cultures, thematic activities, Speed dating activities, Corporate Learning cases studies, a dynamic EAPRIL E-platform for presentations and discussion, and a lot more. In addition, EAPRIL is organised into two special divisions, which can be seen as two complementary and interconnected communities: Education & Learning (formal education), and, Learning & Development (Post-formal/professional/organisational learning in companies). With these two complementary and interconnected communities, EAPRIL achieves the connection of two ecologies of learning and development in its association.

Furthermore, EAPRIL provides in thematic sub platforms, so-called Clouds, which works during, and in-between conferences. These clouds have a specific conference programme, although specialised open for all members. Each year, EAPRIL awards the Best Research and Practice Project Award to a true practice-based research project. Amongst others, the collective and shared development of researchers and practitioners involved in the project should be highly stressed. Finally, the options are currently explored to start an open access journal for practitioner-research.

### CONCLUSION

The practice-oriented, incorporated and sometimes explicit research activities in ERASMUS projects, which result in support for progression of the education and learning practice, are important to disseminate over Europe. In the steady growth of EAPRIL members and conference participants EAPRIL is a unique international European platform and community to catalyse such a dissemination. By means of this platform, research, education, learning and working-life are able to meet each other. Consequently, EAPRIL hopes to keep on inspiring and contributing to the international world of Practitioner-based Research.

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# GO INTERNATIONAL - A MODULE TO MOVE EUROPE

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### ABSTRACT

*Mobility-programmes are important pedagogical instruments to support and enhance plurilingual and intercultural education. However, mobility periods alone cannot guarantee better intercultural and foreign language skills. The module “Go International” was designed to prepare Outgoing students before their study-abroad period, guide Incoming students during their stay in Austria and support them in their reflection after returning from studying in another country. The module “Go International” with its four courses (European classroom, Cultural Awareness, EU, Trends in ICP) aims at improving learning results and fostering the academic exchange of students from different countries.*

### WHY DEVELOP THE MODULE “GO INTERNATIONAL” AND WHAT IS SPECIFIC ABOUT THE MODULE

The Pädagogische Hochschule Tirol (PHT) is one of 12 pedagogical universities in Austria. It offers courses leading to a Bachelor Degree in Education and Teaching Qualifications in the following subject areas: Primary, Lower Secondary, Special Needs Education, VET, including teachers for Workshops, Home Economics and Nutrition Education, Information and Communication Pedagogy. There are currently approximately 1,000 students on initial teacher education courses. The institute for CPD offers both in-service training sessions and post-graduate courses for 12,000 teachers.

Since the beginning the PHT has participated in the ERASMUS-Programme and the International Office has carried out many projects (e.g. study-visits, ERASMUS-Intensive-Programmes, COMENIUS-courses, conferences ...).

Some years ago we were confronted with the situation that it seemed to be difficult to integrate ERASMUS incoming students into regular courses for in-house students. This was related to the structure of the PHT, where the same group of students often attends most of the courses together. On the other hand, a small number of ERASMUS Outgoing students cancelled their mobility shortly before they went abroad or shortly after arrival. This was related to the fact that they were not well enough prepared for the mobility. In addition to this, highly motivated students came back to the PHT after successful mobility periods with new impulses from studying

and teaching, but there was no framework for reflecting, using and disseminating their experiences.

Our key questions were: How to bring ERASMUS Incomings and Outgoings together? How to avoid the (in)famous “ERASMUS bubble”? How to develop the students intercultural and language competences during their stay? How to integrate non-formal learning? Creating the module was a step towards improving the integration of ERASMUS Incomings and to better guide students before, during and after their mobility period.

### **THE CONCEPT OF “GO INTERNATIONAL”**

It is a well-known principle that future teachers will be more likely to integrate in their teaching what they have experienced during their own education. Therefore, in order to provide an adequate environment for sustainable intercultural and plurilingual learning before, during and/or after mobility we adapted and created the concept of “Go International” based on “PluriMobil” (<http://plurimobil.ecml.at>), a CoE project coordinated by the ECML. (Ein Blick über den Tellerrand 2012: 51 ff.)

The target group for the module “Go International” are ERASMUS Incomings and Outgoings across all semesters and study programmes. A group size of 25 students with a balance between Incomings and future and former Outgoings proved ideal. Every Friday afternoon this group has courses on four subjects: Intercultural learning, The European Classroom, European Union (Institutions/educational policy) and Using ICT for mobility.

The course language is English, but one aim is to use all the languages of the students at least in some phases in discussions, teamwork and presentations. *“Teachers have a key role to play in language education. It is each and every teacher, as much as it is each and every learner, school administrator and any other person present on the school site, that contributes to the mosaic of languages and cultural wealth in a school.”* (Camilleri Grima 2007:57)

The workload of all the courses is uploaded on an E-Portfolio, which every student learns to design individually. On this E-Portfolio students also integrate a reflection about their motivation to study abroad, their study destination, what they have learned, how they assess their personal and professional development and a summary of experiences during their ERASMUS stay. As one of our Incomings in summer term 2014 put it:

*“Overall I believe I have learned a great deal from this module, both personally and professionally. I have learned a lot from each strand that has made me more aware of my surroundings and the need to constantly develop professionally for the benefit of my pupils. Culturally speaking I believe it is vital to educate children as soon as possible about different cultures, preferably before the onset and awareness of stereotypes. Learning about the role and responsibility of the EU also*

*highlighted the fact that there is now a law making body that exists to create laws for all of Europe and how important it is that we educate our pupils regarding this. I also value the resources that are available online. The European Classroom showed me similarities and differences in each school system and highlighted the need for a shared future for European education. Finally with the saturation of technology in Primary Schools back home (...) trends showed me practical ways to include technology in the classroom. It was also useful for finding out about different websites that can be used and the benefits of having a technology saturated classroom.”*  
(Chris)

The students can also use the portfolio later to keep in touch with their fellow students and to present their work, their academic and personal development during their ERASMUS study period to others.

### **AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

Our aim was to facilitate the exchange between students, to increase their knowledge about Europe, to provide a framework for broadening intercultural competence and to reflect on the question how ERASMUS contributed to personal development.

Gaining insights into common features and differences in European cultures and schools is also the basis for understanding and appreciating the value of one's own educational systems. It is a hands-on way to raise awareness for the value of different perspectives in every stage of a mobility. Furthermore, for future Outgoings it is a preparation for classroom experience in a different country, while Incomings and returning Outgoings get a possibility to reflect on and share experiences among fellow students.

### **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

Expected learning outcomes differ from each course within the module, but the following common learning outcomes were observed for the whole module:

- Enhancement of linguistic and intercultural competences in the context of the European Future Teacher
- Enhancement of observation competences
- Getting to know and value new perspectives
- Insights into the differences and the common aims of European educational systems
- Getting to know and to value one's own and other educational systems
- Intercultural learning: acquiring knowledge of cultures through targeted concern with own and other culture
- Critical reflection on regional identity and one's own approach to stereotypes
- Enhancement of intercultural competences
- Critical reflection of personal attitudes/behaviour

- Demonstration of knowledge and understanding through presentations and discussions

### EXAMPLES OF THE MODULE “GO INTERNATIONAL”

*“Approaching ‘other’ ways of life, and those who practise them, with tolerance and respect can be seen as steps in the direction of interculturality, and both tolerance and respect are necessary prerequisites for effective intercultural dialogue to take place. The term ‘intercultural dialogue’ itself refers to an open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups from different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds and heritage. Such dialogue is based on mutual understanding, openness and a genuine respect for and appreciation of diversity, equal human dignity and equal human rights.”*  
(Byram et al. 2009: 10)

As intercultural awareness is crucial to the work of teachers, the course “Cultural Awareness” starts with a reflexion about one’s own culture. The students are asked in advance to bring items from their home countries, which symbolize “home” for them. In the beginning of the course they present and discuss the different items. This is followed by some ice-breaking activities in which also plurilingual elements are involved. Besides getting an insight into the different cultures of the students they learn how to say some sentences (greeting, introducing) in all the different languages the students speak. This introductory phase proved to be important for the module because the value of each culture and language is in the focus of the activity. The following activities and tasks will always be compiled by a mixed-country group. Using different languages and helping students that struggle with some tasks by translating and explaining is strongly encouraged. Even if the main language of the course is English, students should always be aware of language issues and deal with them, as it can also occur in their professional life as teachers. They should be aware that all languages are enriching and important.

During the course “Cultural Awareness” students will compile interviews about regional identity with persons from different countries and with different backgrounds to gain an insight into people’s own views on their culture. They will analyse the interviews and compare the results with those of other students.

Contemporary art pieces such as “Entropa” by David Černý are used to critically reflect on stereotypes and discuss the impact stereotypical thinking still has on people’s behaviour. (Habit 2011: 10) Also tools offered by the Council of Europe such as the “Autobiography of intercultural encounters” are used to enhance the student’s skills in analysing in depths intercultural encounters.  
([http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/autobiography/default\\_en.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/autobiography/default_en.asp))

The Module “Go International” is also an integrated part of the internationalisation process of the Pädagogische Hochschule Tirol. In the course “Cultural Awareness” one task is to organize an “International Brunch” with specialties from each of the students countries. This has become an international event to which students who

would like to go abroad and staff from the PHT are invited too. Often this event is organized as the final activity of the International Week, which has been organized once a year since 2012 at the PHT. Students, teachers and staff from different countries come together in this informal event and discuss future mobility and project possibilities. Also the course “European Classroom” is linked to the International Week. Teachers from partner universities who attend the week share their knowledge in different workshops and discuss changes in teacher education with students of the module and the future of teacher education in Europe.

The course “EU - The European Union”, another course of the module “Go International”, aims at the broader framework of ERASMUS mobilities. Learning about the history, structure and processes of the European Union is linked with current events (such as the European Parliament Election 2014) and brought to life with lectures and discussions with EU-politicians or experts. Many topics which are dealt with on a European level (aftermath of the financial crisis, youth unemployment, citizenship, ...) affect all students in their everyday life and will stay relevant for them as future teachers. Plurilingualism and multiculturalism are now becoming a reality again, national borders are questioned and re-negotiated. This is not a new phenomenon but embedded in a historical and multinational context. As Emanuel Alfranseder, President of the Erasmus Students Network points out:

*“The European Union (...) has once more underlined the most central reason for mobility in the long term creating lasting peace. The Euro crisis has shown that Europe has come a long way, but nationalism is still quick to re-emerge. We cannot become complacent in our efforts to create mutual understanding and peace in Europe. I cannot imagine a better way for people to experience different cultures first-hand than through mobility.”*

(Alfranseder 2013: 181)

### CONCLUSIONS

Since the start of the module “Go International” in 2010 the course has functioned as a core element of the ERASMUS programme at the PH Tirol. Other EU-activities of the PH Tirol, such as the International Week or events and discussions about the future of teacher education in Europe with guests from Comenius and ERASMUS projects, are linked to the module.

Some challenges still remain. Bringing the group together is a new task with every new semester. Finding a common level of language skills, adapting to different learning cultures, forms of teaching and learning, how to ensure sustainable and long-term understanding – these questions are challenging not only for students but also for teachers. But it has been proven to be important and successful to provide a clear and recognized structure within the educational programme of the institution. Creating a setting for formal and non-formal learning in a heterogeneous group is an effective step to prevent an “ERASMUS-bubble”. It increases the connexion to the students’ everyday life, personally and professionally, and leads to more persistent, long-lasting learning effects.

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