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BEYOND MOBILITY: THE ROLE OF COVES IN STRENGTHENING SKILLS THROUGH INTERNATIONALISATION

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TOPICS

ERASMUS+ MOBILITY AND INTERNATIONALISATION

**LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH
QUESTIONS**

CENTRES OF VOCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

FINDINGS

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS



- Recent European evidence highlights a growing concern regarding the decline of basic and transversal competences, raising challenges for education systems, employability and lifelong learning opportunities (OECD, 2023; European Commission, 2024).
- At the same time, internationalisation has become a strategic priority for both higher education and vocational education and training institutions across Europe (European Commission, 2020).
- Erasmus+ mobility programmes have successfully expanded international learning opportunities and contributed to intercultural awareness and personal development (European Commission, 2023).
- However, mobility alone cannot guarantee competence development if learners lack the foundational skills required to fully benefit from international experiences (OECD, 2023).



- Internationalisation is increasingly understood as a process aimed at improving learning outcomes, employability and institutional innovation rather than simply increasing student mobility (Knight, 2004).
- Recent research suggests that mobility should be embedded within broader educational pathways that intentionally support competence development (de Wit & Altbach, 2021).
- The educational value of international experiences depends on the quality of learning design, mentoring and reflection opportunities available to learners (Leask, 2015).
- This perspective shifts attention from participation in mobility activities to the actual competences and capabilities developed through those experiences (Knight, 2004; Leask, 2015).



LITERATURE REVIEW AND RESEARCH GAP



- Existing literature confirms the positive effects of international mobility on intercultural competences, personal growth and employability prospects (European Commission, 2023).
- Nevertheless, evidence remains limited regarding how mobility can systematically contribute to measurable competence development and learning outcomes (Cedefop, 2022).
- Growing attention is being devoted to learning ecosystems capable of connecting education, labour markets and innovation processes through multi-stakeholder collaboration (ETF, 2023).
- Within this debate, Centres of Vocational Excellence emerge as promising environments for strengthening the relationship between internationalisation and skills development.



- This study investigates how Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) can contribute to strengthening skills development through internationalisation processes.
- Particular attention is devoted to the capacity of CoVEs to connect mobility experiences with competence-oriented learning pathways.
- The analysis is based on European policy frameworks, quality assurance approaches and selected examples of CoVE practices and initiatives.
- The study adopts a qualitative and exploratory perspective aimed at identifying mechanisms that support learning, evaluation and continuous improvement.



- CoVEs bring together vocational education providers, higher education institutions, employers, research centres and regional stakeholders within integrated partnerships.
- Their collaborative structure supports innovation, applied learning and responsiveness to evolving labour market needs.
- CoVEs operate as ecosystems rather than individual institutions, promoting cooperation across educational sectors and economic actors.
- This ecosystem approach creates favourable conditions for connecting internationalisation activities with competence development objectives.



- CoVEs can strengthen mobility experiences by explicitly linking learning activities to clearly defined competence outcomes and professional profiles.
- Learning agreements can become pedagogical tools that support intentional learning rather than merely administrative documents.
- Competence frameworks provide a common language for students, institutions and employers involved in mobility pathways.
- As a result, international experiences become more structured, transparent and aligned with educational objectives.



- CoVEs promote learning environments based on applied learning, interdisciplinary collaboration and work-based experiences.
- Mobility activities can be integrated into broader educational pathways rather than being treated as isolated international events.
- Learners have greater opportunities to connect theoretical knowledge with authentic professional challenges and real-world contexts.
- This integration enhances both technical competences and transversal skills such as problem-solving, communication and adaptability.



- CoVEs support systematic monitoring processes involving education providers, employers, learners and other stakeholders.
- Feedback mechanisms allow institutions to assess learning outcomes and evaluate the effectiveness of mobility experiences.
- Evidence collected through monitoring activities can inform future programme design and institutional decision-making.
- Internationalisation therefore becomes part of a continuous cycle of learning, evaluation and improvement.



- The findings suggest that the added value of CoVEs lies not in expanding mobility opportunities but in improving their educational effectiveness.
- Internationalisation becomes more meaningful when embedded within structured learning ecosystems focused on competence development.
- The interaction between education, labour market actors and quality assurance processes strengthens the impact of mobility experiences.
- This approach encourages a shift from mobility as an activity towards mobility as a strategic component of lifelong learning and employability.



CONCLUSIONS



- The decline in basic and transversal skills requires innovative approaches capable of connecting learning, employability and internationalisation.
- Mobility programmes remain valuable opportunities but need stronger pedagogical integration and competence-oriented design.
- Centres of Vocational Excellence offer a promising framework for linking international experiences with measurable learning outcomes.
- The future challenge is not simply increasing participation in mobility but ensuring that mobility contributes effectively to skills development, quality improvement and sustainable employability.



THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION!

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