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Culinary Internship and the European Mobility Action Plan

Part One

Giddens (2007:15) argues that the European Commission, via the Lisbon Agenda of March 2000, sets out a number of strategic goals for the decade ahead: ‘to become the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion and respect for the environment.’ At the same time as the Lisbon Agenda was agreed, the Nice Council of 2000 endorsed the ‘Mobility Action Plan’ leading to the development of the *‘Education and Training 2010’* strategy (Commission, 2004b). According to a progress report by the EU Commission (EUC) Working Group B (2004a), achieving the goal of becoming the most vibrant knowledge-based economy (sic), requires the reform of five identifiable key skills: ICT, technological culture, foreign language, entrepreneurship and social skills. The Lisbon strategy stressed a commitment to European mobility and to the opening up of education and training. To try and ‘guarantee success’ with the Lisbon strategy, the Stockholm European Council in 2001 agreed future objectives for education and training with the aim of improving quality, access and openness for all within the EU. In the same year, the Barcelona Council emphasised the need for action to ensure the future development and mastery (sic) of key basic skills to become a (so-called) knowledge society such as, improving foreign language learning and forging a spirit of enterprise (EU Commission, 2004a). The Barcelona Council identified the strengthening of links between enterprise and educational bodies and increasing mobility among Europeans as key factors for achieving the Lisbon strategy. Additionally, it was viewed by the European Commission as a system

that encourages cooperation between member states to increase cultural and linguistic competence. In developing this aim slightly further, the Copenhagen Declaration of 2002 provided the impetus for a series of strategies to promote student mobility and employability. Here the emphasis reflected the growing political will of the European Commission to develop a 'knowledge-based society' through the development of common principles that support lifelong learning in Europe. The Copenhagen Declaration stressed the need for mutual exchanges of learning experiences between countries to encourage greater comparability, mutual understanding and trust. The report went on to argue for the need for guiding principles that agree validation of non-formal and informal learning within the European community. Furthermore, it articulated a concept of lifelong learning founded on the need for the individual to take responsibility for his or her own learning, which was based in the wider discourse of its being a mechanism to facilitate a change to increasing employability, flexibility and mobility in the European labour markets.

The Copenhagen Declaration identified the so-called free movement of people as essential to achieving the targets set in the Lisbon Agenda. Following on from the Copenhagen Declaration, major efforts across the EU have directed the development, implementation and financing of a mechanism to encourage and promote the validation of the lifelong learning strategy, such as, the involvement of social partnership between European employers and educational institutes in cases where experiential learning is being assessed. A range of European policy documents emphasise the development of individuals and, in particular, of young people, through the promotion of mobility, exchanges and the recognition of educational periods of time spent in other countries as a way to achieve better cultural integration of Europeans. A key document was the European Commission and Member States Report of 2004 setting out a Quality Charter that addressed the issues of mobility, exchanges and accreditation for

learning. The Charter consists of a common set of principles identified as key instruments to design and facilitate the implementation of all forms of mobility for the purpose of, what it identifies as formal, informal and non-formal learning. The Charter makes reference to the awarding of mobility accreditation either through the European Transfer Credits (ECTS) system for international mobility internship that are an integral part of the students' programme of study, or the issuing of certificates such as '*Europass*,' whereby students undertake a period of European mobility that is not integral to their programme of study.

Meeting the Lisbon Agenda of 2000

It is clear from the 2002 report, that the targets set in the 2000 Lisbon Agenda had not been achieved and that the results fell short of expectation. The objectives set in 2000 to become the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010 were struggling to achieve the target set in the Lisbon Agenda documentation: to double the participation in mobility, generate growth by three per cent and have a European employment average of seventy per cent by 2010 (Giddens, 2007). The launch of the agenda in 2000 was followed by two years of recession and until recently, the best economic performing states paid most notice to the Lisbon Agenda but needed it least (Giddens, 2007). In 2002 the European Commission realised it had shortcomings in becoming a highly competitive knowledge-based economy because the Lisbon strategy did not entail any way of 'measuring' this ambition. However, in 2003, the process of benchmarking was adopted and eight expert working groups were created from 31 European countries, including representation from interested EU and international bodies. These groups were established to support the national implementation of common objectives across Europe: in particular to develop indicators, monitor and measure performance

and report on the progress of objectives set for education and training. The benchmarking process set-up included the exchange of good practice, study visits and peer learning activities throughout European countries, in an attempt to identify models of successful policy practice.

The first joint interim report from this group of experts pointed to the need for reforms if the Commission was to succeed with the implementation of the Lisbon strategy. The report was adopted by the Commission and the Council in February 2004 and named three areas as decisive in achieving the aspirations of developing a European knowledge-based economy that would become a world-wide quality charter for economic growth (Commission, 2004c). These were identified as, ‘firstly, focusing reform and investment on the key areas for the knowledge society, secondly, making lifelong learning a concrete reality, and thirdly, establishing a Europe of Education and Training’ (Commission, 2006a:8). Drawing on the European Council’s benchmarking progress reports (SEC (2004) 73) and (SEC (2005) 419) that were based on twenty-nine education and training indicators concerning the quality and effectiveness of the educational systems in member states, access to education and training and the opening up of the educational systems as well as other lessons learnt since the launch in 2000, the European Council decided on a fundamental re-launch of the Lisbon Agenda in 2005 (Commission, 2006b). The 2006 reports indicate that, under the benchmarking procedures, progress is being made and that goals set for certain areas such as, the number of graduates opting for maths, science and technology, are being achieved. The Council also noted that in relation to benchmarking, very little progress was achieved in regard to building a knowledge-based society and to social inclusion. According to the European Commission Progress Report (2006a), in 2005 almost six million (15%) of young people aged between 18-24 years had left education prematurely. Reaching the targets set in the Lisbon Agenda of 2000 would require no more

than ten per cent of early school leavers to exit the educational system. Two million more of these young people would have to continue in education and the number of students partaking in lifelong learning mobility programmes (formerly the Erasmus, Socrates and Leonardo da Vinci as separate programmes), now operating under the same strategic approach of lifelong learning, will have to more than double to reach the target of ten per cent of the student population set in 2000. Additionally, the EU would need to double the amount it invests per higher education student by increasing spending to almost €10,000 per student per year to match the level in the USA (Commission, 2006b). According to the 2006 report, the EU suffers from under-investment in ‘human resources’ and especially in higher education. To address these concerns, the Commission proposed the strategic objective of ‘opening up education and training systems to the wider world’ (Commission, 2006:44). The objective made provision for strengthening links between working life, research and society by widening educational systems to ensure international mobility and co-operation.

The Lisbon Agenda also emphasised the need for students and pupils to increase their cultural and linguistic competencies. The key objectives identified consist mainly of developing the ‘spirit of enterprise,’ improving access to foreign language learning and increasing mobility and exchanges by strengthening European co-operation. The Commission also noted a lack of analysis about cultural understanding and intercultural skills and has identified early language acquisition as the precursor to better cultural understanding and increasing mobility within the lifelong learning framework strategy.

On the basis of these reports, one could take the view that the main focus of mobility is the learning of language and integration of cultures, whilst failing to take into account the positive or negative impact mobility might have on the

development of the individual. For example, many of the European Commission's reports demonstrate conceptions of a mobile workforce capable of meeting demands in a changing global economy. The reports emphasise a changing European society and its professed imperative to develop an inclusive, knowledge-based economy, pointing towards European mobility as one model to achieve this goal (Cullen, 2010c). It would be difficult to deny that this socio-cultural approach would benefit the culinary students and the development of individuals, when we consider that the Erasmus mobility lifelong learning strategy provides necessary funding and opportunities for individuals to experience a minimum of twelve weeks working in another European country. It should be noted that culinary students have travelled far afield to gain knowledge and develop skills from celebrated chef experts for many years prior to the Erasmus-funded internship programme in the School of Culinary Arts and Food Technology. However, the Erasmus funding is influencing mobility, via the Higher Educational Authority (HEA) in Ireland, in an attempt to increase the numbers of individuals working in European countries.

The Role of the HEA

The Higher Education Authority (HEA) was established by the Oireachtas in 1971 to act as the agency for the implementation of the national educational and research objectives and directives of the Minister of Education and Science and his/her Department. In 2007, the HEA was mandated to include Erasmus mobility for work placements (internship) as one of its statutory functions. In this context the HEA acts as an intermediary between the Department of Education and Science (DES) and the higher education institutions to implement and monitor the European Commission's mobility programme (HEA, 2006; 2008a; 2008b). The role of the HEA in relation to mobility is to ensure higher education institutions are accountable for the implementation of

internship mobility projects as set out in the European Quality Charter. Whilst also acting as the national agent for the European Erasmus programme, the HEA provides for a significant level of institutional autonomy within this framework. The student and relevant institution decide on the country and on the suitability of the placement 'host organisation' for the internship. The institution also decides on the level of accreditation awarded for the international European internship.

The Erasmus mobility framework allows internships to be developed in a way that best suits the educational programmes in institutions, but sets out a minimum period of twelve weeks for the European internship (HEA, Strategic Plan, 2008). Erasmus internship mobility, under the auspices of the HEA, is a new but growing phenomenon and ensures that higher education institutes (HEI) give recognition to informal learning. The home institution must provide evidence in the form of a signed final report indicating that students received either (ECTS) and the amount of credits, or the 'Europass award' for their European internship. Informal learning is defined by the OECD Country Background Report of July 2007: 'Informal learning refers to experiential learning, often unintentional, that takes place through life and work experience' (p.3). The format, structure and implementation of the mobility internships must be in line with those developed by the European Commission guidelines. The HEA (as the agent and advisor to the DES), also calls for the compilation of statistical data on student participation, expenditure, destinations and arrangements, and ensures that the practice is in line with the EU Commission requirements as set out in *The Quality Charter for Mobility*. The implementation of the Erasmus internship structure within the quality framework requires a communication flow between educational institutes and HEA which acts as the national agent for higher education in Ireland, starting at

level six HETAC on the National Framework of Qualifications for the purpose of implementing Erasmus placements for the EU.

DIT relationship with the HEA

The DIT is part of the Irish higher (or in OECD terminology, tertiary) education sector, composed of universities, institutes of technology, teacher training colleges for which the HEA acts as the national agency on behalf of the Department of Education and Science. DIT received statutory recognition, as a single, multi-campus educational establishment, with effect from 1st January 1993. The Institute has full degree-awarding powers and has approximately 20,000 students of whom 12,000 are full-time. The Dublin Institute of Technology is governed by the Institutes of Technology Act of 2006. The 2006 Act incorporated all Institutes of Technology under the governance of the HEA and required a structure composed of a Governing Body (a Chairperson, 18 members and a President) (HEA, 2006; 2008a; 2008b). In 2007, the HEA was mandated to include Erasmus internship mobility for the purpose of work placement (internship) into its duties as national agency for higher education in Ireland. In turn the HEA mandated DIT, as a higher educational provider, to oversee the implementation of Erasmus internship mobility. The DIT instructed their International Office to implement the HEA directives in relation to Erasmus mobility for the purpose of internship work placements. Figure 1 shows the relationships between the European Commission, Irish Government, Department of Education and Science, HEA and the DIT in terms of Mobility.

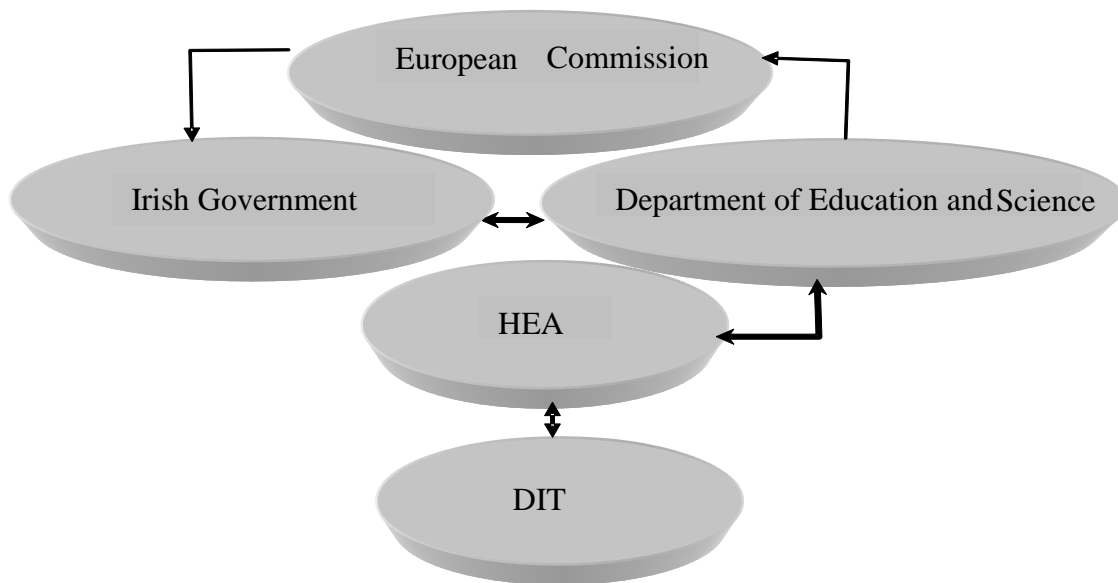


Figure 1 Mobility Policy Relationship Flows

1.1 The Role and Relationships

One of the key objectives of the Erasmus Mobility Lifelong Learning Programme, as set out in the EU Commission's Call for Proposals 2008-2010, is to improve the quality and increase the volume of student and teaching staff mobility throughout Europe. This requires a doubling of the number of individual participants to at least three million by 2012 and represents a significant challenge to all of the participating Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). In the context of DIT, the successful achievement of this objective is dependent on collaboration between schools' academic coordinators, faculty administration offices, the DIT's European International Placement Officer and the HEA. With this in mind, the following sections outline the roles, as identified by DIT, for the administration of the Erasmus Mobility for internship work placements. Erasmus is funded by the European Commission and managed in Ireland by the HEA. Funding is allocated annually, based on applications submitted each March. Funds which are not used by DIT must be

returned to the HEA. The International Placement Officer manages the Erasmus internship mobility budget and submits regular financial reports to the HEA. Funding provided for internship mobility must be used for student grants to supplement their travel and living costs while abroad in the EU. Management funding is also provided for visits to students, contract translation (if needed) and other managerial expenses necessary to run the mobility projects, see Table 1, Duties of the DIT International Placement Officer and academic internship co-ordinators.

Table 1 Duties of DIT International Office and Academic Internship Co-ordinators.

Role of the International Placement Officer (ESO)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disseminate information and monitor the progress of mobility internship applications • Promote the Erasmus mobility programme to undergraduate students • Make presentations to student cohorts • Create and distribute an Erasmus mobility newsletter and maintain contact between coordinators • Erasmus website • Process applications for mobility Internship projects. • Liaise with Mobility co-ordinators in the School to organise pre-departure meetings for outgoing Erasmus internship students • Manage Erasmus mobility grant applications and allocations. • Maintain records for the HEA
Role: Academic International Internship Mobility Co-ordinators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange sessions to prepare students for internship. • Liaise with the Faculty Placement Officer and where necessary, with the International Placement Officer (IPO) to obtain additional information • Provide the IPO with information regarding the number of Students going on mobility • Promote mobility in the School to maximise the number of students going on European internship • Assist the students in finding suitable work-placements • Assist students to obtain J1 visa for internships outside Europe • Track the progress of students before and during the internship • Monitor the students and mark their final internship report • Liaise with the host organisation to assist students in obtaining the placement • Submit an interim and final report to the International Office • Provide the IPO with details of outgoing students • Act as a point of contact for internship students and partners in relation to academic queries

(Source: Developed for this paper).

Conclusion

I have attempted to provide an overview of current approaches and relationships between the European Commission and the HEA. It is clear to me from the review reports that a complex relationship exists between the European Commission, the HEA, and educational institutions. For example, the process of funding internships changed in 2007. The change affected how the DIT operated Erasmus, whereas the process of running the internship from the students' point of view remained the same within the School of Culinary Arts and Food Technology. I have also examined the process used to deal with the mechanics of mobility (which is part of the European Commission's lifelong learning strategy), from an economic standpoint and attempted to provide a conceptual image of the strategic plan to develop Europe into a knowledge base economy from a bureaucratic approach. However, the bureaucratic nature of the European Commission reports fail to take into account the nuances associated with mobility as an educational process. This operational approach to creating better cultural awareness between European member states raises a number of important questions in relation to the pedagogy of praxis through mobility from a philosophical, psychological and sociological aspect. I am arguing that mobility has a dual-aspect, but before these can be articulated I needed to acquire a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of students engaged in experiential learning via international internship. I believe that during internship students embrace the change but also experience emotional transitions that can contribute to a change in their self-identity: however, these transitions have yet to be explored. Giddens (2006) argues that when an individual develops trust they also face the possibility of loss. The sense of loss identified by Giddens has many facets that can be related to the possible feeling of losing the support of a

caretaker (mother, father, sister, brother or partner) during internship. I am arguing that, in order to develop an understanding of international culinary internships and the nuances associated with student internship in a another country, it is important to explore first what could be termed ‘culinary life.’ In the part two I examine the historical practice of chefs traveling the world in order to work and gain experience from celebrated colleagues. I stress that mobility was and still is, a common observable characteristic of the culinary industry. Thus, I attempt to demonstrate that the concept of learning culinary skills in another country is not new to the European Erasmus mobility scheme.

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