



REVIEW

The International Mobility of Students Apprentices at the Heart of Building a Skills Economy: the Example of the Corsican Territory

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ABSTRACT

At a time of exacerbated globalization, education, and more generally training, is a key factor for our society, at the heart of territories challenged to renew themselves in the face of the emergence around the globe of new centers of economic and demographic gravity, with their own models. Training, and its link with working life, is a real challenge to face, in the near future, the technological, economic, political and environmental revolutions that we are already facing. Beyond what is called sandwich training or continuing vocational training in Higher Education, the current challenge is indeed around lifelong learning, old concept but whose forms always call for an actualization in modernity. At the heart of a small island territory like Corsica, this challenge is all the more crucial to take up as it foreshadows its attractiveness in a context of *glocalisation* [8] now durably anchored. In an ever-changing global environment, with moving landmarks, increasingly complex personal and professional lives, and where everything that seemed well compartmentalized yesterday faces increasing porosity, the purpose of this contribution is to explain that the international mobility of students apprentices, at the heart of the construction of a skills economy, is a major strategic issue for the development and structuring of a small territory such as Corsica.

1. Introduction

Training, and its link with working life, is a real challenge to face, in the coming decades, the technological, economic, political and environmental revolutions that we are already facing.

If it is already difficult to imagine, today, how an initial training could be enough for an individual for his 40 years of career to follow, the speed of evolution of our societies

(ours, but also, even more importantly, those that surround us and thus constitute our environment, or even our ecosystem, at the global level), the digital and energy transitions underway, will only accentuate the obsolescence of this representation of training decoupled from later forms of learning.

The challenge for individuals, the economic world and ultimately the place of our country at the world level, is

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therefore that of the updating of knowledge, of the evolution of know-how, of the renewal of representations, of the understanding of the macroscopic stakes.

In a small island territory such as Corsica, populated by some 330,000 people and in search of structuring a skills economy beneficial to its sustainable development, this issue takes on an even more fundamental priority. After having demonstrated in previous works^[10,11] how the sandwich training system in Higher Education in the Corsican region can be a strategic tool at the center of a territorial policy of human capital growth, today we reflect on the issue of the students apprentices' international mobility as a vector generating a skills economy profitable to the development and attractiveness of an island geographical space such as Corsica.

After recalling the importance of the concept of the students apprentices' international mobility in terms of the growth of skills relating to knowledge, know-how and skills to be, our analysis will show how a pedagogical policy of a CFA is likely to contribute to enhancing the professional integration and employability of the human resources that will structure local businesses.

2. The International Mobility of Students Apprentices: a Dual and Innovative Concept

The internationalization of Higher Education has grown significantly over the past 20 years. UNESCO counted 4.1 million international students in 2013 and estimates that this figure will reach 7.2 million by 2025. In Europe, the universities have included student mobility at the heart of their training programs, strongly supported by all the programs offered by the Erasmus Agency. The clearly stated objective is to contribute to the employability of their graduates *by equipping them with academic and non-academic skills, which immersion in an intercultural environment promotes*^[3].

That being said, as of 2016, a report by the MEP Jean Arthuis had pointed to the obstacles to the students apprentices' international mobility. Indeed, the sandwich training is not harmonised in Europe, as it has been since 2010, with the Bologna process for the *European Higher Education Area*.

To implement this project, we must take into account the practices of 28 different countries. For each Ministry of Higher Education, the practical difficulties would be, in particular, to measure the professional sectors which, abroad, are applicants while simultaneously meeting the national teaching criteria.

In France, if the recent law for *the freedom to choose its professional future* of September 5, 2018 has lifted some legal obstacles to facilitate the students apprentices'

international mobility^[13], the focus set by the Minister of Labour, Muriel Penicaud, to reach 15,000 apprentices in Erasmus pro, may not be a sinecure.

2.1 International mobility Referents Named in the CFAs and an Exemption from Some Company's Obligations Provided for by Law

Until 2018, the few apprentices who benefited from European mobility came from particularly proactive training centers. In concrete terms, mobility is effective when there is a dedicated team. It is essential that mobility be structured around visible and identifiable mobility benchmarks by all stakeholders.

Decree No. 2019-1086 of 24 October 2019 laying down various provisions relating to the mobility abroad of apprentices and beneficiaries of professionalisation contracts specifies the procedures for implementing the mobility of students apprentices in or outside the European Union, in particular the content of the contractual relationships between the apprentice or the beneficiary of a professionalisation contract, the employer in France, the employer abroad, the training center in France and the training center abroad.

It also provides that the training organization or center in France shall replace the employer during the period of mobility, as regards the payment of contributions relating to accidents at work and occupational diseases, during the period of long mobility, exempting the company from part of its obligations.

The implementation of European and international mobility projects for students apprentices in CFAs requires the mobilisation of dedicated engineering. This engineering of international mobility, formerly often carried out informally by CFA teaching and/or administrative teams, has in recent years been largely professionalised in view of the specific skills required to carry out this type of project.

Considering this reality and in accordance with Article 24 of the law of 5 September 2018, the CFAs will have to acquire *mobility referents* whose main characteristics of the work performed cover a wide range of activities (administrative and financial management, organisation, construction and facilitation of partnerships, coordination and communication, etc.).

The involvement of management staff and the collective mobilization of teaching and educational teams is a primary condition for the development of students apprentices' long mobility. The organisation of mobility requires cross-competences of a legal, regulatory, pedagogical or organisational nature which must be fully deployed within the CFAs.

In addition to a personal life experience that enhances future employability for the student apprentice, the international mobility scheme is also beneficial for its training host structure.

2.2 An International Experience as Beneficial to the Student Apprentice as to the Host Structure

Much research^[1,4,14] has been carried out on the skills acquired by students during international mobility, whether in study semesters or internships in companies.

The bulk of these surveys are quantitative studies carried out with a large number of students who have completed questionnaires when they return from mobility or when they graduate. Frequently carried out immediately, these *on the spot* assessments were also reinforced by analyses dealing with the medium and long term effects of international experience.

In this complementary perspective, Brassier-Rodrigues^[2] surveyed students, graduates and professionals, about their experience of international mobility at least two years after its realization, to understand and analyse the skills they spontaneously associate with it.

Compétences relatives aux savoir et savoir-faire	Compétences relatives au savoir-être
1. Compétences linguistiques	<i>Compétences liées au développement personnel</i>
2. Savoirs académiques	6. Connaissance de sa propre culture
3. Connaissances techniques	7. Connaissance de la culture d'accueil
4. Méthodes d'apprentissage	8. Empathie, écoute, tolérance, patience
5. Méthodes de travail	9. Curiosité, ouverture d'esprit
	10. Organisation, débrouillardise, rigueur, sens des responsabilités
	11. Adaptation
	12. Gain de confiance, indépendance, ténacité, autonomie
	<i>Compétences relationnelles</i>
	13. Communication interpersonnelle : compétences linguistiques et langagières
	14. Intégration sociale : dans un groupe, constitution de réseaux de contacts, etc.

Source : Brassier- Rodrigues^[2].

In the end, the answers provided by the respondents during the various studies confirm the range of skills acquired in intercultural communication: language, adaptation, empathy, interpersonal communication, social integration and knowledge of the host culture in addition to the adaptability and trust gained from international experience.

In the framework of the sandwich training's scheme, no study has so far demonstrated the potential benefit acquired by the student apprentices' host structure in the context of international mobility built-in integrating the competence frameworks specific to each training course followed. This is precisely the object of our exploratory reflection and its global prospective at the level of the economy of a small island territory similar to Corsica.

Indeed, since September 2018 and in coordination with

the legislative evolution of 5 September 2018, the University CFA in the Corsican region has engaged in a proactive policy aimed at building international mobility pathways for some 400 students apprentices at the University of Corsica, in a dual perspective taking into account simultaneously the student aspirations and the expectations of complementary competences expressed by the host structures (companies, associations and local authorities).

With more than 2,200 entrepreneurial and institutional partners that have supported the training of nearly 3,500 students apprentices since its creation in 2009^[13], the CFA UNIV and its teaching teams have endeavoured to set up repositories of competences incorporating specific tasks relating to the international mobility of students apprentices.

3. Building a Skills Economy Through the International Mobility of Students Apprentices in Search of a Foundation

In Corsica, the promotion and development of sandwich training as well as the problem of University of Corsica students apprentices' quality of the professional integration, particularly in terms of awareness of entrepreneurship, revealed the strategic challenge of mastering managerial fundamentals at the heart of the development and structuring dynamics of the Corsican territory^[12], thus reinforcing what other authors have demonstrated in a more theoretical framework^[9] or global^[5].

The local island economy is characterized by the absence of large multinational groups that lead and shape the global economy. There is also no mention of medium-sized enterprises, which in many other regions, such as Lombardy, are the spearhead of a dynamic economy. The Corsican economic fabric is mainly made up of very small enterprises, small farmers and producers, craftsmen and traders. The challenge of structuring a specific entrepreneurial ecosystem through an adapted lifelong learning regional policy is therefore of strategic importance with a view to building a sustainable local development plan.

3.1 Students Apprentices' International Mobility at the Center of a Lifelong Training Scheme Beneficial to the Structuring of a Small Island Economy

Corsica is also an example of a territory characterized by an ageing of its working population, which requires a medium-term adjustment of regional training strategies in response to this reality. As a major lever of territorial development and social regulation, the island training system must adapt its offer to the targeted perspective of the adequacy of the employment-training relationship. The sandwich training system, continuing vocational training and, more

generally, the life long training thus constitute the two sides of the same gem at the service of a skill-building scheme, the qualifications and employability of the human resources available and active in a given territory.

In a small island territory characterized by an economic fabric composed of 95% of enterprises with fewer than 10 employees, the CFA UNIV's mission, both anchored and timeless, is to contribute to the promotion University of Corsica students apprentices' professional integration, through the development and adaptation of training strategies fundamental to the emergence and stimulation of qualified human resources' availability and the entrepreneurial logic based on innovative activities with potential high growth^[9].

In this specific context, the structuring of the local economic fabric is largely impacted by the networking of the different actors (CFAs, Corsican region, companies, associations, local authorities, Skills Operators (OPCO), job houses, Consular Chambers) within the framework of a Regional Plan for the Development of Vocational Training and Guidance (CPRDFOP), which set, over the period 2018-2022, objectives clearly focused on responding to the needs of local actors in terms of securing pathways to employment and acquiring new skills proven through student mobility (inter-regional, national and international).

3.2 A Pragmatic and Exploratory Process Students Apprentices' International Mobility at the Initiative of CFA UNIV

In its 2018-2022 four-year establishment contract, the University of Corsica has placed at the heart of its strategic axes the deepening of the sandwich training system's development and the increased internationalization of its training offer. Nevertheless, the current reality reveals heterogeneous situations according to the pedagogical components: while the School of Management and Economy (IAE of Corsica) imposes the international mobility of students (internships) and students apprentices (as part of an apprenticeship and professionalization contract) to graduate from their Masters in Management Sciences (unless the international gap was made before enrollment in a proposed course), the other Institutes or Faculties (IUT, INSPE, Paoli Tech Engineering School, Faculties of Law, Arts and Sciences, Health Department) have opted to offer the opportunity to benefit from an international student mobility only on an optional basis.

This finding does not, for the time being at the University of Corsica, lead to the establishment of a homogeneous general policy on the international mobility of students, which led the CFA UNIV to propose a specific process, pragmatic and exploratory in the field of student

apprenticeship.

Based on the mandatory nature of mobility and its variable duration (8 weeks to 6 months), the competency frameworks of the Master Manager Entrepreneur, Marketing and Human Resources have been redesigned with two objectives:

(1) add pedagogical and operational value to student missions as part of their international mobility;

(2) answer to the strategic perspectives identified by the host structures in international development.

For example, the *Union des Vignerons de l'Île de Beauté (UVIB)*, a cooperative winery that exports 75% of its production, wants to develop a new Terra Corsa brand, with a focus on international markets. With this in mind, it will propose to three students apprentices to set up a PMI.

The *Cuir Center* franchise, specialized in the sale of high-end sofas and furniture, wants to create a Mediterranean cluster and submits to two students apprentices international mobility at the European head office of the *Roche Bobois* group in Italy in order to decline this strategy by major HR issues, set general and specific objectives by site/population/department...

The extension of a pragmatic and exploratory international mobility process for students apprentices to enhance the professional integration and employability of human resources is now an essential prerogative of the CFA UNIV. The structuring, development and attractiveness of a small island territorial economy inherent to its development in particular, and more generally to those of training centers, are an underlying issue.

4. Conclusion

At a time when the economy of knowledge and skills is conveyed as THE solution to an endemic crisis, the CFAUNIV strives to contribute, in particular, to the construction of a consolidated and sustainable structure of the socio-economic fabric through the optimised management of a reinforced training/information system, supervision and individualized follow-up of the University of Corsica students apprentices' vocational guidance.

If the main issue of the law on *freedom to choose one's professional future* is the nature of the competences placed at the center of each citizen's individual training project, but also considered as the cornerstone of the appropriate response to the hiring needs of companies, there is no guarantee that the refocusing of the lifelong training system will ensure the bet of trust in the actors, companies, employees and social partners with a view to removing the obstacles to the hiring of companies and making the notion of skills a key issue at the heart of both individual and collective professional projects^[13].

Even though the national vocational branches will co-construct vocational training diplomas with the State in order to better meet the skills needs of enterprises, it remains that the links, until then concrete, between the regions and the CFAs will run the risk of distortion at the expense of developing the skills needed by local businesses.

From then on, it will belong to the regional CFAs, as developer agents of diploma and qualification courses in symbiosis with the expectations expressed by a local economic fabric, to develop a necessary capacity for innovation in the pedagogical engineering of the actions carried out allowing both the growth of the students' qualification and the conversion or conversion of the professional paths to the benefit of a small island territory in search of attractiveness.

This is the whole issue of the emergence of a new model of lifelong training system, a guarantee of the evolution and securing of professional paths, to which the CFA UNIV will seek to contribute by the evolution of its activity dynamics. There is no doubt that the operationality of the students apprentices' international mobility, which each participant in training calls for, will be the cornerstone, particularly in the context of a specific local economy and identity like Corsica.

Notes

- i. In this case, the Corsica-region University-sponsored Placements & Apprenticeships Service [CFA UNIV]
- ii. <http://www.uis.unesco.org/education/>
- iii. *Erasmus pro: lifting the barriers to the mobility of apprentices in Europe, Report by Jean Arthuis, MEP, Ministry of Labour, French Republic, January 2018.*
- iv. Erasmus +, an international springboard for apprentices:
<https://www.letudiant.fr/educpros/actualite/erasmus-tremplin-international-apprentis.html>
- v. JORF n°0250 of 26 October 2019 text n° 13.
- vi. JORF n°0026 of 31 January 2020 texts n° 34 et n° 35.
- vii.

Knowledge and know-how skills	Skills to be
1. Language skills 2. Academic knowledge 3. Technical knowledge 4. Learning methods 5. Working methods	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Personal development skills</i></p> 6. Knowledge of one's own culture 7. Knowledge of the host culture 8. Empathy, listening, tolerance, patience 9. Curiosity, open-mindedness 10. Organization, resourcefulness, rigour, accountabilities 11. Adaptation 12. Gain confidence, independence, tenacity, autonomy <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Relationship skills</i></p> 13. Interpersonal communication: language and language skills 14. Social integration: in a group, networking of contacts..

viii. Cf. La circulaire n°2019-030 du 10 Avril 2019. (Circular no.2019-030 of 10 April 2019)

ix. International Marketing Plan . *Thanks to 2 months of international mobility in the Maghreb and 3 months in Southeast Asia* said Eric Pinelli, UVIB's Executive and Financial Director.

x. According to Jean Pierre Battistelli, Manager of the Cuir Center franchise in Corsica.

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