



GSE

FAKULTÄT FÜR GEISTES-,  
SOZIAL- UND ERZIEHUNGS-  
WISSENSCHAFTEN

# The impact of international mobility on youth employability in VET

International Conference on Productivity, Investment in Human Capital and the Challenge of Youth Employment. Bergamo, 14-17 December 2010

Léna Krichewsky  
Institute of Vocational Education and HRD  
University of Magdeburg, Germany

## Introduction

“Learning mobility, i.e. transnational mobility for the purpose of acquiring new skills is one of the fundamental ways in which individuals, particularly young people, can strengthen their future employability as well as their personal development.” (European Commission, 2009, p.2)

Mobility



Employability

- To what extent does international mobility increase employability in VET?
- ➔ A multivocal literature review.

## Key concepts

### ■ **Mobility**

- Cross-border
- Temporary
- Learning purpose

### ■ **Employability**

“The combination of factors which enable individuals to progress towards or get into employment, to stay in employment and to progress during career”.

(Cedefop, Glossary, 2009, p.70)

- Their assets in terms of the knowledge, skills and attitudes they possess
- The way they use and deploy these assets
- The way they present them to employers
- The context (personal circumstances and labour market environment) within which they seek work.

## Research questions

- **What is the impact of international mobility on employability in VET according to existing literature?**
  - What specific competences and skills are enhanced through international mobility?
  - What are the needs of the labour market in terms of competences and skills which can be developed through international mobility (e.g. language skills, intercultural competence, professional skills and knowledge related to a foreign country)?
  - What is the impact of international mobility on learners' transition to the labour market and further career?
  
- **Scope of the study**
  - Focus on VET, but higher education included for comparative purposes;
  - Languages of the review: German, English, French;
  - Post-1995 academic literature, evaluation reports, policy documents;

# Literature

Type of publication	Number of publications*
Academic journals, books	15 (5)
Evaluation studies	11 (9)
Policy documents	2 (0)
Others	4 (4)

\*Numbers in brackets ( ) represent the empirical studies.

## Measuring the benefits of mobility:

- **Effect Level 1:** participants' perceptions;
- **Effect Level 2:** participants' learning
  - foreign language competence;
  - professional and academic competences;
  - personality characteristics;
- **Effect Level 3:** career-related outcomes;
- **Effect Level 4:** organization, company, or society-related outcomes.

(Stronkhorst 2005, p.294)

Research method	With control group / controlled variables*	Without control group*
Participants' survey or interview	4 (3)	3 (2)
Expert interview	2 (2)	4 (3)
Output indicators	2 (0)	2 (0)

\* Numbers in brackets ( ) represent studies focused on VET only

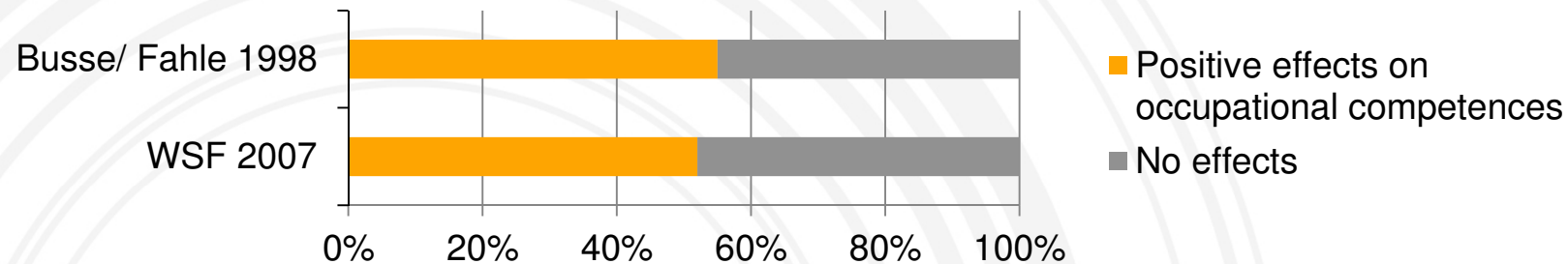
## The effects of mobility on skills and competences (1)

- **The concept of „international competence“**
  - International professional skills: these are branch- or occupation-related skills, knowledge and competences related to an international context, such as knowing about international norms, foreign markets etc.;
  - Foreign language skills;
  - Intercultural competence;
  - Networking skills: these include IT competences as well as social competences for working in (international / virtual) networks.
- **A fifth dimension: personal competence**
- **Looking for contrary evidence and rival interpretations:**
  - Does international mobility really foster the above-mentioned skills and competences?
  - What is perceived as being the benefits of mobility in the eyes of employers?

## The effects of mobility on skills and competences (2)

### ■ The benefits of mobility in the eyes of participant

- Effects of mobility are strong on personal competences, but weak on occupational skills and competences:



- Effects depend on several factors, e.g. duration, setting, preparation... they can even be negative under certain circumstances (Stronkhorst 2005)

### ■ The benefits of mobility in the eyes of employers

- Effects on personal and intercultural competences are stronger than on occupational skills and competences.

➔ How do employers value international competences?

## Labour market requirements

- **The need for international skills and competences is increasing**
  - Globalization
  - New forms of work organization
  - Cultural diversity within the companies
- **But companies are not always aware of their future skills needs**
- ➔ What role do international competences play in recruitment processes?

### **Example (Austria, 2005, survey among 2,017 companies):**

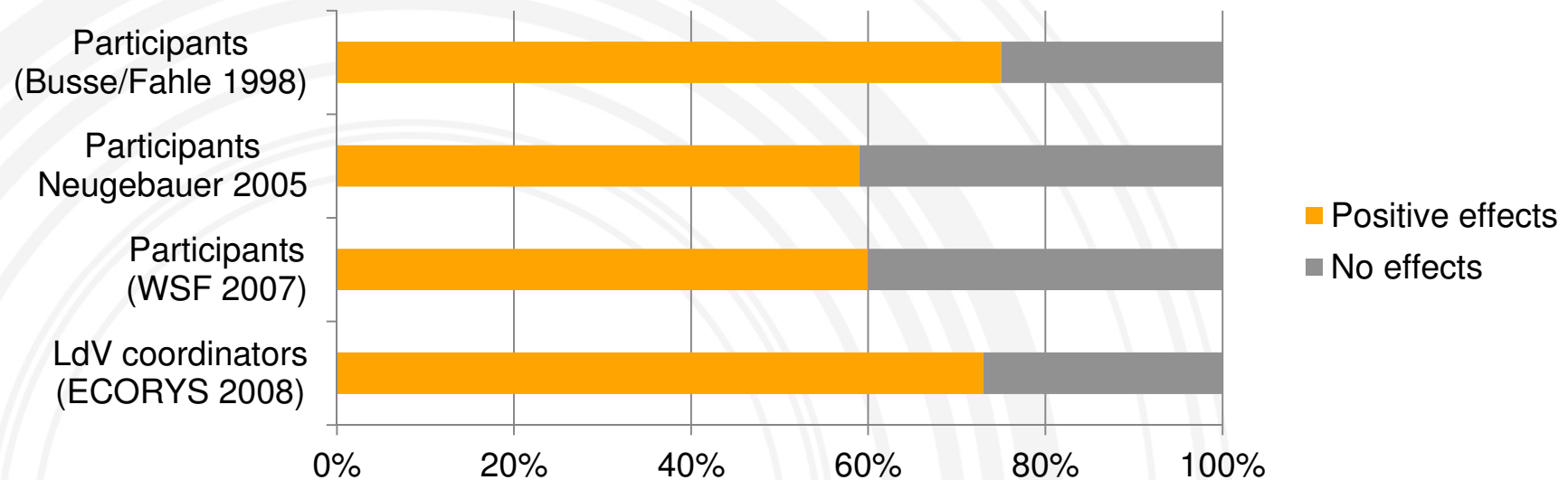
- 86% need foreign language skills, 64% think that they will need them even more in the future
- Foreign language skills plays a role in recruitment processes
  - Always or nearly always: 22%
  - Sometimes: 58%
  - Never: 20%

(Tritscher-Archan 2008, p.181-182)



## Impact on employability (1)

- **Participants' view on the effects of mobility on employability**



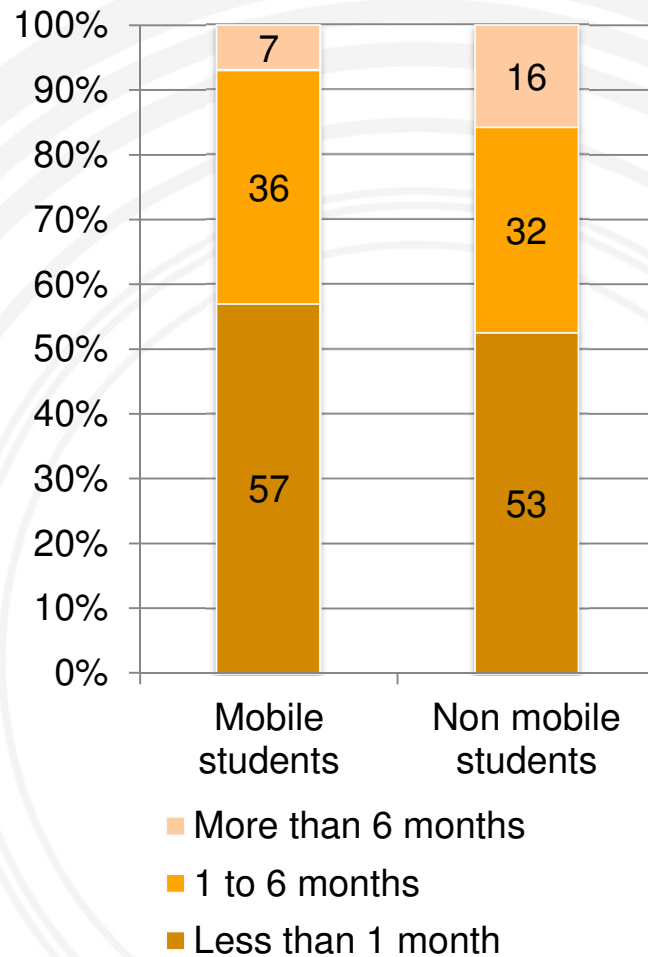
- **Output indicators**

Di Vito/Pichon (2003): Mobile students in HE experience a slightly shorter education-to-work transition and less unemployment.

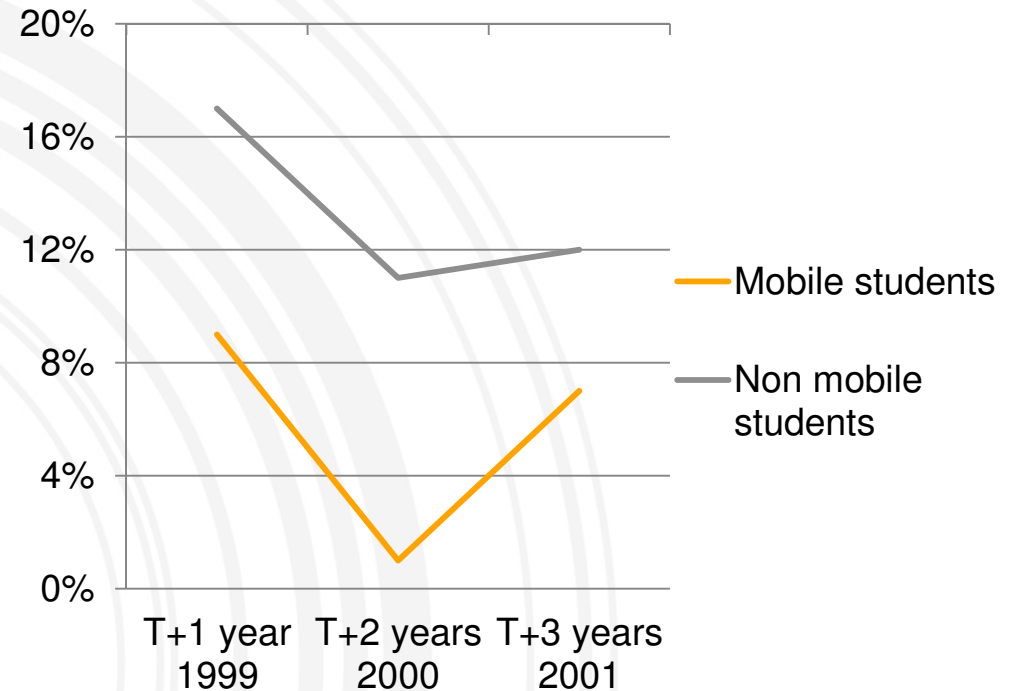
→ **Positive effects might be overestimated, as mobile students belong to those with a better average employability all other things being equal.**

## Impact on employability (2)

Time needed to find first job



Unemployment rate



Di Vito /Pichon 2003:

- HE students in the French region of Rhône-Alpes
- Comparison between two similar groups (socio-economic background, qualifications, gender, age)

## Conclusions

- **A proven relationship, but no simple and direct causal link between international mobility and employability in VET**
  - No „hard“ evidence in the case of VET up to now;
  - Influence of socio-economic factors prior to mobility
- **Further research needs**
  - Who takes part to mobility, and why?
  - How do the forms and duration of mobility influence the benefits in terms of competences and satisfaction of participants?
  - What role does international experience play in recruitment processes?
- **Methodology issues**
  - Lack of indicator-based research on long-term effects of mobility with control groups
  - Need also for qualitative research, e.g. on recruitment and job-seeking strategies
  - Specific challenges of cross-country comparisons

## Literature

- Busse, Gerd; Fahle, Klaus (1998): *Lernen durch Mobilität. Untersuchung zu längerfristigen Auslandsaufenthalten von Auszubildenden und jungen Berufstätigen im Auftrag des CEDEFOP*. Köln: Carl Duisberg Gesellschaft e.V.
- Cedefop (2008): *Terminology of European education and training policy. A selection of 100 key terms*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.
- Di Vito, Priscille; Pichon, Laure-Anne (2003): *Séjour d'études à l'étranger et Insertion professionnelle*. Étude n° 2003-01. OURIP.
- ECORYS (2008): *Final Evaluation of the Leonardo da Vinci II Programme. Final Report*. Rotterdam.
- European Commission (2009): *Green Paper. Promoting the learning mobility of young people*.
- Neugebauer, Uwe (2005): *Evaluation der bilateralen Austauschprogramme in der beruflichen Bildung zwischen Deutschland und Frankreich, den Niederlanden und Großbritannien. Kurzfassung der Studie im Auftrag des Bundesministeriums für Bildung und Forschung*. Köln: Univation.
- Stronkhorst, Robert (2005): Learning Outcomes of International Mobility at Two Dutch Institutions of Higher Education. In: *Journal of Studies in International Education*, Vol. 9, N° 4, p. 292–315.
- Tritscher-Archan, Sabine (Ed.): *Fremdsprachen für die Wirtschaft. Analysen, Zahlen, Fakten*. Wien: Institut für Bildungsforschung der Wirtschaft (IBW-Forschungsbericht, 143)
- WSF Wirtschafts- und Sozialforschung (2007): *Analyse der Wirkungen von LEONARDO DA VINCI Mobilitätsmaßnahmen auf junge Auszubildende, Arbeitnehmerinnen und Arbeitnehmer sowie der Einfluss sozioökonomischer Faktoren. Untersuchung im Auftrag der Europäischen Kommission Generaldirektion Bildung und Kultur*. Kerpen.



GSE

FAKULTÄT FÜR GEISTES-,  
SOZIAL- UND ERZIEHUNGS-  
WISSENSCHAFTEN

**Thank you for your attention!**

Léna Krichewsky, M.A.  
Otto-von-Guericke-Universität Magdeburg  
Institut für Berufs- und Betriebspädagogik  
[www.ibbp.uni-magdeburg.de](http://www.ibbp.uni-magdeburg.de)  
Tel: (0049) (0)3 91 – 67 1 65 04  
Fax: (0049) (0)3 91 - 671 65 50  
Mail: [lena.krichewsky@ovgu.de](mailto:lena.krichewsky@ovgu.de)