

BENEFITS OF EXPERIENTIAL BASED LEARNING: A CASE OF STUDENTS PARTICIPATION IN THE PROJECT “VILLAGES ON MOVE BALTIC”

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Summary

From solid, hands on experience with the challenges of intercultural differences to a significantly changed personal mindset and a new perception of their individual education programmes, a student survey provides new evidence of the advantages of experiential learning. Experiential learning encompasses a variety of out-of-classroom-activities including project based learning, internships, service learning, participation in the research and other student creative work experiences. Kolb’s experiential learning theory (KELT) is comprised of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation.

The aim - to reveal benefits of experiential learning based on student participation in the project “Villages on Move Baltic” (VOMB) tour.

Material and methods. Experiential learning and experience reflection hold a significant role as an educational methodology, and it is a shared value to prepare students for the challenges in a changing world by developing professionals who can think critically and reflectively. As mandatory assignment during the tour, the student collective formulated seven questions, and an analysis of the students’ individual replies to and reflections on these questions forms the basis of this article.

Qualitative research – more specifically a content analysis – was used in this study, that was conducted based upon the replies from participating students from Finland, Latvia, Lithuania and Denmark (N=17).

Except for three from high school level, students re-

presented BA-programmes within health care, physiotherapy, social work, community pedagogy, and innovation & entrepreneurship.

Results. Students expressed their positive attitude on the participation in the Baltic Tour. Students’ reflections highlighted various scenarios of future life and career. The learning potential of the Baltic Tour can be described in three areas. Students, regardless of nationality, expressed a) cohesion of the theory and practice; b) knowledge application in a professional perspective; c) intercultural and international experience. Student reflections revealed that participation in the Baltic Tour influenced personal growth, social competencies development and improvement of cognitive skills. Student reflections on the Baltic Tour itself included appointing more attention to informal communication during the tour and more information and involvement before. In addition, more activities in cross-nation groups and the use of creative team building tools were recommended. Students’ view to criteria for the quality of VOMB-ideas mentioned “Large number of participants“, “Attractive types of physical activities“, “Involving people from all social groups“ and “Ecological approach and security during events“.

Conclusions. Students’ survey based on the project “Villages on Move Baltic” tour highlighted the benefits of participation to personal abilities, key competencies and professional skills improvement.

Introduction

One of the main features of the knowledge society is multidisciplinary and internationalization. Internationalization and multidisciplinary approach has consistently been perceived as one of the most revolutionary developments in higher education from the beginning of the 21st century.

Social and cultural practices of higher education shape teaching and learning practices and recommend a transcultural approach to curriculum development. It is described as a joint activity of different individuals representing various cultures [13].

The learning process is effective when it is not static, and students are actively involved in real situations. These challenges are important for the higher education sector and especially in training future professionals within health care, sports, and management programmes.

Teaching and learning transpires in a variety of cultural and out of classroom landscapes. Experiential learning is a process through which students develop knowledge, skills, and values from direct experiences outside a traditional academic setting. The students being actively involved in the learning process characterize experiential learning. Reflection is a concept based on constructivism and could be described as theory about how people construct their own knowledge and understanding of the world by experiencing and then reflecting upon those experiences [2].

Experiential learning encompasses a variety of out of classroom activities including project based learning, internships, service learning, participation in research and other student creative work experiences. Well organised experiential learning may stimulate academic motivation, promote interdisciplinary learning, cultural awareness, leadership, and other professional, intellectual and personal skills. Experiential learning implies the possibility to learn from natural consequences, mistakes, and successes [4, 9,10, 11].

Kolb's experiential learning theory (KELT) is comprised of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Kolb defines experiential learning as „the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience“. Experiences, including cognitions, environmental factors, and emotions, influence the learning process that Kolb describes as a cycle [5, 6, 12].

A brief description of the stages follows: (i) Concrete experience provides the basis for the learning process. Knowledge is obtained by individuals through adaptability and open mindedness; (ii) Reflective observation - during this stage learning takes place based upon experiences and by articulating why and how they occurred. Students reflect, observe and critically examine their experiences; (iii) Abstract conceptualization relates the observations and reflections made during the reflective observation stage to the theory or subjective concept when students use logic and ideas as opposed to feelings to understand situations and problems; (iv) During the stage of active experimentation, students test the theories to make predictions about reality and then act

on those predictions [1, 5].

This article supports the experiential learning paradigm and presents students' reflections about participation in the project "Villages on Move Baltic" tour.

The main objective of the "Villages on Move Baltic" project is "to promote voluntary activities in sport, together with social inclusion, equal opportunities and awareness of the importance of health enhancing physical activity through increased participation in, and equal access to, sport for all". As the main project idea is to "find different solutions and ways to activate all citizens especially in the rural, remote and isolated areas in Europe", the project focus on rural areas and children, young people, elderly and refugees as core segments is substantiated from social reports about life style changes, lack of facilities, etc. (The project implementation period is 2017-2018.)

The EU focus as well as the project relevance are well documented by research. Main findings from general surveys like the EuroBarometer 472 (2017) are: i) Nearly half of Europeans never exercise or play sports, and the proportion has increased gradually in recent years; ii) In a given week, more than half of Europeans do not do any vigorous physical activity, and around half do not engage in moderate physical activity; iii) 15% of Europeans do not walk for 10 minutes at a time at all in a weekly period, while 12% sit for more than 8.5 hours per day; iv) Formal sport settings are less popular than informal settings such as parks or outdoors, the home or the journey between home and work or school [14].

Research shows a big difference between EU countries in physical activity. Views on opportunities for physical activities are most positive in the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and Germany, and least positive in Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia and Italy [8, 14].

Key priorities of EU member States and the Commission should be „Sport and society, focusing on social inclusion, coaches, media, environment, health, education and sport diplomacy“ [14].

The "Villages on Move Baltic" Baltic Tour served as a case of multiple learning experiences for the participating students. Where both the four activity days, one in each country, and the daily evaluation and planning process in a cross cultural environment certainly meant several full learning cycles, the absence of a full cycle for the Baltic Tour itself as well as the overall VOMB project will be taken into account.

From solid hands on experience with the challenges of intercultural differences to a significantly changed personal mindset and a new perception of their individual education programmes, the analysis based on the student survey provides new evidence of the advantages of experiential learning.

The Baltic Tour participants were 21 students from nine EU countries, 10 teachers and staff from the five partner academies. Participants met in Lithuania and travelled from May 11th to 18th 2018 by bus through Latvia, Estonia and Finland organizing activities and participating in physical events and professional visits in the four countries. Tour participants were on the road for eight days, driving 2300 km and participated in four physical events, seven professional visits and thousands of people were reached.

The aim of this article is to analyze results of experiential learning from students' participation in the project "Villages on Move Baltic" Baltic Tour.

Material and methods

Whereas the integration of the Baltic Tour in the study programmes before and after the tour was individual and with some variation, the survey, where all students after the Tour should answer specific questions, was planned and implemented in a survey, identical for all participating students and based on written replies to a semi-structured questionnaire in writing with seven questions demanding each student's individual reflections on their personal learning outcome.

To each of the five academies in the VOMB project, experiential learning and experience reflection play a significant role as an educational methodology, and it is a shared value to prepare students for the challenges in a changing world by developing critically and reflectively thinking professionals.

As a mandatory assignment during the tour, the student collective formulated seven questions, and an analysis of the students' individual replies to and reflections on these questions form the basis of this article. During the Baltic Tour, the learning process was assisted by daily evaluation and planning sessions planned by the Danish students. Every day after activities, all participants joined, students formed cross-nation groups, discussed the day and presented group conclusions to each other and the project team. The questions for the semi-structured questionnaire challenged the differences in learning cultures in the project team. The habitual approach of the majority of teachers would have been a teacher controlled design of the questions, but a more student involving method, advocated by Denmark, was chosen, and during one of the long bus rides, students again in cross-nation groups were asked to formulate in each group five questions, representing the major learning options provided by the Baltic Tour. The same evening the groups presented the outcome at a joint session. All questions from each group were collected in writing, and after a mild editing process carried out by the two authors. The seven questions below

were presented and approved by the project team. After the Tour, the questions were sent by mail to all participating students allowing a three week deadline for replies.

Qualitative research – content analysis – was used in this study. A qualitative approach allows the researchers to gain insight into the attitudes and experiences of participants. Content analysis is potentially one of the most important research techniques in the social sciences. Content analysis views data as representations of texts, images and expressions that are created to be seen, read, interpreted and acted on for their meanings. Content analysis is considered a family of research techniques for making systematic, credible, valid inferences from the different forms of communications [3, 7].

Content analysis has been used to study the following aspects:

1. Starting with yourself – as participant in Baltic Tour – will the project influence your behavior?
2. Reflect about how counting events, number of events participants, and how many heard about VOMB are relevant "Key performance indicators" for VOMB?
3. In relation to your study programme, what is the learning potential of integrating the Baltic Tour into your studies and your learning outcomes?
4. What did you learn from Baltic Tour about integrating people from different cultural backgrounds, speaking different languages?
5. Where would you suggest changes for similar situations in the future?
6. If you should create VOMB-criteria for the quality of an idea or an event, what would be your proposal?
7. If EU asked you how you would spend 1 million Euro every year to improve physical activity in everyday life, what would be your 3 best ideas?

The study was conducted based upon the replies from participating students. Seventeen students, three from Finland, three Latvia, five Lithuania, and six from Denmark replied. Except for three from high school, students represented bachelor degree programmes within health care, social work, community pedagogy, and innovation & entrepreneurship. The six Danish students were from Slovakia (two students), Bulgaria, Poland, Romania, and Denmark.

Results

All students expressed a positive attitude on the participation in the Baltic Tour. Students were asked to assess their learning outcome of their experience. They revealed examples related to their application in their personal and professional lives (Table 1).

It is remarkable that the students' opinions were united

and not differentiated by the countries. Students' reflections highlighted the various scenarios of the future life and career. They also express having improved their organizational skills. This can be illustrated by one student's words: "We learned how to share our duties and it caused more effective work". Students have gained experience in organizing and implementing various forms of physical activities in specific areas such as municipality, kindergarten or schools.

Baltic Tour allowed students to form an opinion associated with the social return on investment. This approach is particularly relevant to the EU policy. Students saw the link between strengthening physical activity with health costs: "I do believe that continued work on the VOMB methods, trip and workshops towards the target groups would lower the social health cost in EU".

Students representing different countries openly spoke about the Baltic Tour from the physical and social point of view: "...<I did find new ways of being active >...", "...<Just because we "look fit" it doesn't mean that we are >...", "Is not only about the size and shapes of our bodies", "...<Got a lot of good examples and activities that I will use when organizing family gatherings and birthdays>...".

Students express having improved knowledge and skills in working with various social groups ("...<This project changed how I interact with different groups of people >...").

Students became acquainted with the professional and social integration of disabled people in Latvia. This illustrates this Danish student's words: "That farm is the perfect place for people with disabilities that can feel useful by helping around the farm and at the same time to receive the treatment they deserve" (Table 1).

Students were asked to evaluate "Key performance indicators" (KPI) for the events and competitions based on the project "Villages on Move Baltic" (Table 2). KPI is a type of performance measurement that helps monitor how an organization or department is performing. In the case of "Villages on Move Baltic" and Baltic Tour, by measuring to which extent project objectives are fulfilled.

The indicators offered by the students reflect the organizational and content features of the events. KPI 1 - Participants of the events. This indicator reveals students' thoughts: "...<Counting event participants is as useful as counting the events that were attended >...". Counting participants would allow for better planning and organization of events next time. Another important criterion is the age group of participants: "What age group participate in the events. It shows the project's widespread through the number of events it was integrated".

Students gave a lot of attention to attractiveness of the events from the content and organization approach (KPI

Table 1. Baltic tour influence on students' behavior

Categories	Authentic examples
APPLYING EXPERIENCE TO PROFESSIONAL WORK	„We learned how to share our duties and it caused more effective work“ (DK). „VOMB gave us some good ideas what we could do in our municipality for example orientation happening“ (FI). „The first I will do is to organize similar event in kindergarden, involving highschool pupils in leading the activities“ (LV).
POTENTIAL FOR A POSITIVE SOCIAL RETURN ON INVESTMENT	„I do believe that continued work on the VOMB methods, trip and workshops towards the target groups would lower the social health cost in EU“ (DK). „VOMB can be a catalysator for new thinking and the establishment of more local events because of the inspiration that VOMB gives“ (DK). „I realize how social events work and how you can make people happier and healthier by your actions“ (DK). „The places we were visiting like the farm in Latvia for the disable people that through writing European projects they got funding to build greenhouses to have own products, as well as they are making notebooks for schools and the money that they receive they invest in the next project they have“ (DK).
PERSONAL BENEFIT FROM THE PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL POINT OF VIEW	„I did find new ways of being active“ (FI). „Already one week of the project made me make an active lifestyle to a habit“ (LT). „My physical activity level was not affected by participating in this project only because I was already pretty active, but what actually changed is even more valuable for me as an individual and as a physical therapist to be“ (LT). „Just because we "look fit" it doesn't mean that we are. Is not only about the size and shapes of our bodies“ (DK). „Got a lot of good examples and activities that I will use when organizing family gatherings and birthdays“ (LV).
IMPROVING THE KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS WORKING WITH VARIOUS SOCIAL GROUPS	„That farm is the perfect place for people with disabilities that can feel useful by helping around the farm and at the same time to receive the treatment they deserve“ (DK). „This VOMB project had shown for me how different specialties students or teachers can work on same target and try to reach best no metter that“ (LT). „This project changed how I interact with different groups of people whilst trying to increase their interest in physical activity“ (LT). „It does not matter if a person is disabled or even speaks a different language that I can't understand. If we want to get as many people actively participating in all kinds of activities, it is our duty to create possibilities for all kinds of people to do that even if doing that means that we have to put in extra effort“ (LT).

2). Students presume there are very important factors as creativity, flexibility, and specific activities targeted relevant age segments.

Innovative students' attitude to using social media (KPI 3) helps to understand how many people were actually interested in this event. *"Comparing number of views, likes and shares before event and right after or in close future can show how many people were actually interested in organization and their mission"*. It is interesting to note that these ideas were expressed by students living and studying in Denmark.

KPI 4 concerns specific effects of the VOMB project on lifestyle changes. This is illustrated by students' reflections: *"...< How many of them were influenced by the project to be more active and become healthier>..."*, *"...< If it helped people, and motivated them to do a change in their life >..."* (Table 2).

The most important feature was to determine how the Baltic Tour influenced students' learning outcomes (Table 3).

Learning potential of Baltic Tour may be described in three areas. Students, regardless of nationality, expressed a) cohesion of the theory and practice; b) knowledge application in professional perspective; c) intercultural and international experience (Table 3).

Category "Cohesion of the theory and practice" shows

these examples *"<...VOMB is a great practical example...>"*, *"<... A great time measuring people's blood pressure, oxygen saturation in blood and pulse ...>"*. It is important to note that for the Danish students the Baltic Tour was part of an elective subject related to social innovation and entrepreneurship. That explains why Danish students' assessment of the Baltic Tour also include a positive assessment of their elective course. Student benefits are illustrated by one student's comment: *"Especially my new knowledge about Social Return on Investment and Social Entrepreneurship. In the same time, I feel like I have given a contribution to VOMB by creating my report about measurements and SROI and using theory from my study"*.

Category "Knowledge application in professional perspective" allows to evaluate the benefits of Baltic Tour from a professional perspective: for example *"...< how a business could also operate in a social way>..."*, *"...< that physical activity is very beneficial for a person's health>..."* *"...< I can use this project ideas in my country>..."* *"...< through writing European projects >..."*.

Participation in the Baltic Tour provided an opportunity to acquire intercultural and international experience as *"...< opportunity to understand different approach to mission >..."*, *"...< expand minds how to find an answer for different people >..."*, *"...< how social entrepreneurship is working in*

Table 2. Suggested "key performance indicators" for the VOMB project according to the students

Categories	Authentic examples
KPI 1 COUNTING EVENT PARTICIPANTS	<p><i>"Counting event participants is as useful as counting the events that were attended" (LT).</i></p> <p><i>"One of the strongest indicators may be concerning the numbers of participants – the number of people that joined events and were part of the created program and activities" (DK).</i></p> <p><i>"What age group participate in the events. It shows the project's widespread through the number of events it was integrated" (LT).</i></p> <p><i>"Tracking number of participants among events can help be really helpful during planning next year edition of VOMB" (DK).</i></p>
KPI 2 ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE EVENTS FROM THE CONTENT AND ORGANIZATION APPROACH	<p><i>"Creativity, flexibility and possibility to change tasks based on the target group" (LV).</i></p> <p><i>"The huge variety of activities we offered. There were many games for the kids" (DK).</i></p> <p><i>"People could go and check their hearth rate and body fat" (DK).</i></p> <p><i>"Style of the event. In some places people were well dressed, so a lot of activities didn't work as people were not ready for physical activities" (LV).</i></p> <p><i>"You need to start doing the activity by yourself and public possibly will get more interested and will want to get involved" (LV).</i></p>
KPI 3 USING SOCIAL MEDIA	<p><i>"Another way to track of VOMB impact can be measuring difference in their social media range" (DK).</i></p> <p><i>"The organizers could take advantage of mobile phones and use mobile apps" (DK).</i></p> <p><i>"Comparing number of views, likes and shares before event and right after or in close future can show how many people were actually interested in organization and their mission" (DK).</i></p>
KPI 4 EVALUATING IF THE IDEAS OF THE PROJECT CHANGES THEIR LIFE	<p><i>"How many of them were influenced by the project to be more active and become healthier (LT).</i></p> <p><i>"Individual peoples have took some joy of movement, which is motivating them to try some new activities and get those to part of they evereday life" (FI).</i></p> <p><i>"If it helped people, and motivated them to do a change in their life. We showed that physical activity can be also fun, it doesn't mean that you have to go to fitness or run, you can find and motivate also with a creative way" (DK).</i></p> <p><i>"It will be easier to examine the results as at least we know how many people we have possibly influenced" (FI).</i></p>

Table 3. Learning potential of Baltic Tour into the studies and learning outcomes

Categories	Authentic examples
COHESION OF THE THEORY AND PRACTICE	<p>„VOMB is a great practical example that can show realization of entrepreneurship goals in closest environment“ (DK).</p> <p>„Especially my new knowledge about Social Return on Investment and social Entrepreneurship. In the same time, I feel like I have given a contribution to VOMB by creating my report about measurements and SROI and using theory from my study“ (DK).</p> <p>„I study nursing so it was a great opportunity to use my theoretical knowledge in a practical way. I had a great time measuring people's blood pressure, oxygen saturation in blood and pulse. Many people were amazed and really interested in these measurements and I know that my abilities became better“ (LT).</p>
KNOWLEDGE APPLICATION IN PROFESSIONAL PERSPECTIVE	<p>„Relevant to my study was the fact that we learned how a business could also operate in a social way and how this could have a positive influence on both the business and the society“ (DK).</p> <p>„The project shows in practice that physical activity is very beneficial for a person's health. That is very interesting, as this was many times emphasizes in the lectures and theoretical material“ (LT).</p> <p>„In my studies, multicultural actions are always beneficial. Also my future work with youth will benefit from knowledge I got, like about new ways to be active and health related knowledge“ (FI).</p> <p>„I'm physical therapist, I can use this project ideas in my country. For example "Free outside exercise in city garden" or something like that“ (LT).</p> <p>„The places we were visiting like the farm in Latvia for the disable people that through writing European projects they got funding to build greenhouses to have own products, as well as they are making notebooks for schools and the money that they receive they invest in the next project they have“ (DK).</p> <p>„We have great activities which is useful in counselling my target groups. Example with peoples who is outcasted, can use those methods to them whiches obligeing them to some social situations“ (FI).</p>
INTERCULTURAL AND INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE	<p>„Moreover, all the planned actions took place in different countries what create another opportunity to understand different approach to mission and vision realization from more international perspective based on our nationalities and our differences in our learning processes“ (DK).</p> <p>„In my studies I will integrating a communication between different cultures and studing programmes, its expend you minds how to find an answer for different people“ (LT).</p> <p>„I also got more connections in different countries“ (FI).</p> <p>„It was interesting to see, how social entrepreneurship is working in practice in different countries“ (DK).</p> <p>„The project also promotes cooperation between universities and their various study programmes, which is a good start for further international researches“ (LT).</p>

practice in different countries >...“.

Developing intercultural competencies can happen both formally – in the classrooms - and through the curriculum. Another way – informal – is involving students in international projects. Students participating in the Baltic Tour were from institutions in five different countries and from nine different nationalities. With such exposure to difference, students have had the opportunity to learn from others. Students' reflections revealed benefit of Baltic Tour from cultural perspectives (Table 4).

Students' reflections revealed how the Baltic Tour influenced personal growth, social competencies development and improvement of cognitive skills (Table 4). Personal growth and social competencies development is described by categories related with “Body language understanding”, “Team building through joint activities“, “Deeper cognition of other cultures“.

Category “Body language understanding” shows one of the student's thoughts „I learned that body language is great tool and we used it a lot while facilitating“.

An example...“< great to be in national teams and do activities >...“, “...< sport is very common and integrative thing between different cultures >...demonstrates “Team

building through joint activities“.

Baltic Tour made an impact based on “Problem solving skills improvement” (“...< Different cultural backgrounds bring new ideas and different points of view to the same problem >...“, “...< we were so different but connect by working to solve the same issues or problems >...“, „...< we learn how to approach people with different way of thinking >...“).

The importance of English language skills is also demonstrated in the students' reflections. Poor English language may disturb cooperation and collaboration “The Danish group was handling it easier, because we were already international, but with the other groups the English language was an issue“, “We learned how many troubles language can close“ (Table 4).

Students formulated a question about how to improve similar initiatives in the future (Table 5).

Table 5 shows students suggestions to appoint more attention to informal communication during Baltic Tour: “...< we need find more freetime for converstations in evenings >...“, “...< everyone after the day work was over and people were free to talk more informally >...“, “...< there would be more free time that this time was limited because of change

Table 4. Benefit of Baltic Tour from cultural perspectives

Categories	Authentic examples
BODY LANGUAGE UNDERSTANDING	<p>„I learned about using body language to get through the language barrier“ (FI).</p> <p>„I learned that body language is great tool and we used it a lot while facilitating“ (DK).</p> <p>„When we taken an eye contact, giving little smiles and showing examples to the peoples, everyone ventured to try our activities. We have get a lot of laughing and funny moments with peoples and I think that was the most important thing on the Baltic Tour“ (FI).</p>
PROBLEM- SOLVING SKILLS IMPROVEMENT	<p>„Different cultural backgrounds bring new ideas and different points of view to the same problem, which help finding more and creative solutions“ (LT).</p> <p>„I learned that it is always a good idea to start with a low threshold kind of activities. And always to have a backup plan.“ (FI).</p> <p>„I meet amazing people that were so different but connect by working to solve the same issues or problems“ (DK).</p> <p>„That’s normal and makes everything even more interesting because we learn how to approach people with different way of thinking“ (LT).</p>
TEAM BUILDING THROUGH JOINT ACTIVITIES	<p>„It’s was nice experence to be here and meet friendly people from other countries. It was great to be in national teams and do activities“ (LT).</p> <p>„Sitting by the one table and uniting representatives form different counties worked well“ (LV).</p> <p>„The first days most of the people involved in the project were shy and did not interact with the other groups that much, but in the last two days we really got together, and I had the feeling that we became one big group“ (DK).</p> <p>„We noticed that sport is very common and integrative thing between different cultures“ (FI).</p>
DEEPER COGNITION OF OTHER CULTURES	<p>„Now I know about others countries food, hobbies and etc.“ (LT).</p> <p>„As an overall personally I learn a lot about the others culture and countries“ (DK).</p> <p>„It was really fun during our free evenings, learning about each others culture, learning new languages and just having fun“ (LT).</p> <p>„For me, as a member of the Danish team, the most visible was difference in planning our actions, activities and solving problems that pop out during tour. Students from other nationalities were consulting every step with their teachers, when we were pushed to find out the best solution on our own“ (DK).</p>
INEQUALITIES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS	<p>„So it is very important to make sure that participants speak English to make this project more productive and beneficial for everybody“ (LT).</p> <p>„The Danish group was handling it easier, because we were already international, but with the other groups the English language was an issue“ (DK).</p> <p>„Especially our group was good at including others because we did not have a language barrier when we already spoke English.“ (DK).</p> <p>„We learned how many troubles language can close. Firstly, some of the participants weren’t speaking in English what created barrier in our integration“ (DK).</p>

of places >...“.

Also students expressions associated with longer preparation for the tour “...< Briefing for all the Baltic Tour participants before the tour. Something like an email or skype call to all >...“ “...< Make sure that all participants will get the same information on a time >...“

Students recommend more activities in the cross-nation groups and the use of creative team building tools: “...< Would be nice to have an introduction party at the beginning>...“ “...< If we were mixed more, we would be forced to communicate with the different groups from different countries>...“ “...< creat groups wich different country students >...“.

Some students wrote about implementation of more physical activities: “...< instead of driving 4-5 km to town, there needed to be walking to Assikala >...“ “...< To have couple of conrete questions for whose to find an aswers already at the beginning of the tours >...“ “...< More funny activities, like runing >...“

Student participation in Baltic Tour allowed them to suggest criteria for the quality of VOMB-related ideas or events (Table 6).

Student proposals for criteria for the quality of VOMB-idea or event could be described as “Large number of participants“, “Attractive types of physical activities“, “Involving people from all social groups“ and “Ecological approach and security during events“.

The first criteria “Large number of participants“ can be illustrated by the following students answers “...< more participants during event create bigger possibility to reach more people >...“ “...< How many involved and effected >...“ “...< how many people try prepared activities could be one of the criteria >...“.

According to student participants “ Attractive types of physical activities“ imply “...< indoor the physical activity is more limited than outdoor >...“ “...< Each event should introduce debate and innovation >...“ “...< Physical activity can be very funny>...“.

“Involving people from all social groups“ cover proposals such as “...< suitable for all ages >...“ “...< might target different groups of people >...“ “...< spotted, like refugees, elders and children>...“.

Students expressed a global approach associated with

Table 5. Baltic Tour – students' view to improvement options

Categories	Authentic examples
MORE TIME FOR INFORMAL COMMUNICATION	<p>„Concerning the tour, I would not do it in such a tight schedule. I think many people would have needed a day off here and there“ (FI).</p> <p>„First to get better communication between groups we need find more freetime for converstations in evenings“ (LT).</p> <p>„We were always in a rush and we visited so many places where we wanted to participate and be active, but there was just no time“ (DK).</p> <p>„Give more time for students to conversation in evening, not about project“ (LT).</p> <p>„I feel that the greatest progress in terms of including everyone after the day work was over and people were free to talk more informally“ (DK).</p> <p>„Besides the formal communication there should be personal one, so it could be possible if there would be more free time that this time was limited because of change of places“ (LV).</p> <p>„We had a more relaxed evening to do that only on the last night when we already had to say our goodbyes and we wish we had it in the beginning of the trip“ (LT).</p>
MORE ATTENTION TO PREPARATION AND INFORMATION	<p>„I think it would be good to have pictures or something from the places the activities are held in. It would have been easier to plan activities that would require space etc. <...> Briefing for all the Baltic Tour participants before the tour. Something like an email or skype call to all“ (FI).</p> <p>„To have official "what will happen" sessions every evening organized by leader“ (LV).</p> <p>„Information about where exactly we are going and to who are we going to present the games. As I said already our games did not fit in well in all the events simply because we did not know the target groups“ (DK).</p> <p>„Make sure that all participants will get the same information on a time, information about the program and activities we were part of, more knowledge about the project, its goal and meaning“ (FI)</p>
STRENGTHENING THE INTERACTION BETWEEN PROJECT PARTICIPANTS	<p>„Would be nice to have an introduction party at the beginning. All participants would get to know each other and whole time together would possibly proceed in a much easier fashion“ (DK).</p> <p>„Try to find option creat groups wich different country students“ (LT).</p> <p>„If we were mixed more, we would be forced to communicate with the different groups from different countries and this could lead to more ideas and better socialization (DK).</p> <p>„Participants should know get to know each other at least a bit before the events <...> Maybe one of the groups can plan not long but just 1 or 2 hours long integrating workshop with some simple, team building activities“ (DK).</p>
MORE ACTIVE AND BASED ON EXPERIENCE PARTICIPATION	<p>„For example in Finland, instead of driving 4-5km to town, there needed to be walking to Assikala“ (LV).</p> <p>„Participants don't need to be sport experts, but should be able to move and not just talk about active lifestyle, but to live one - healthy eating, moving etc.“ (LV).</p> <p>„To have couple of concrete questions for whose to find an answers already at the beginning of the tours, that each participant has his/her own task to do during the events and visits“ (LV).</p> <p>„More funny activities, like runing in Latvia“ (LT).</p>

ecology and security during events: “...<Ecology is really important >...“ “...< Quality criteria can also be regarding potential injuries >...“, “...< Make security instructions >...“ (Table 6).

We also asked students “If EU asked you how you would spend one million Euro every year to improve physical activity in everyday life, what would be your three best ideas?”. The practical assignment for the students was based on experience in participating in Baltic Tour and allowed them to use creativity, imagination and critical tinking skills (Table 7).

Students' suggestions were related to the set of forms and assumptions for physical activity.

A) Attractive types of physical activities.

„I would hold these guided activities in places like playgrounds and parks. Parents and young people could find an activity that interests them“ (FI).

„Groups of people that have same interest regarding one or another sport, this way the participant will not feel lonely and the physical activity will be more funny and desirable“ (DK).

„People should be able to choose from a variety of activities: group jogging or biking, dancing different kind of dance styles, yoga activities and so on“ (LT).

„To create children and youth centre in the community – eco thinking, sport activities, kindergarden with active lifestyle etc.“ (LV).

„The VOMB project was based on real experience and showing activities in practice“ (DK).

„For example, if people run 5 km everyday, reward them with some kind of prize“ (LT).

„Municipalities could collect differents sport equipments to a sort of van or some like that what peoples will can example rent to use. I mean something like a sport wagon that we have had in the Baltic Tour“ (FI).

B) Inspiration for education.

„Give money for famous sports club that they read lectures for people, how is important to be active“ (LT).

„I agree that the inspiration to move is getting in young age. We should offer a good quality possibilities to play and move for kids on between lessons and after school. It will grown their basic skills of movement what will help continue active lifestyle in older

Table 6. Students view to criteria for the quality of VOMB related ideas or events

Categories	Authentic examples
LARGE NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS	<p>„Number of visitors – more participants during event create bigger possibility to reach more people or just interesting them enough what it is about“ (DK).</p> <p>„If the idea/event will be advertised or shown to the bigger public in some kind of way. It is important that this organization would be seen more, recognized more and maybe it could get more sponsors“ (LT).</p> <p>„Considering fact that VOMB is logically trying to reach out to as many people in visited countries as possible, how many people try prepared activities could be one of the criteria“ (DK).</p> <p>„How many involved and effected and how much of individual involvement will be required (how much work an individual will have to practically do himself)“ (LT).</p>
ATTRACTIVE TYPES OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES	<p>„Physical activity can be very funny, just need to be creative“ (LT).</p> <p>„The event should be related or give opportunity to have physical activity, because if is an event indoor the physical activity is more limited than outdoor“ (DK).</p> <p>„Each event should introduce debate and innovation <...> VOMB events should be a catalyst for the desire for exercise“ (DK).</p> <p>„When whole family is doing things together, it's going to be strengthen their connective in the family and they have possibility to spend more time together. Especially it's important to the kids. They can get good examples from their parents and their older siblings“ (FI).</p>
INVOLVING PEOPLE FROM ALL SOCIAL GROUPS	<p>„If it is suitable for all ages. It really matters if kids or old people can join the events. Many different activities should happen so no age group would be disappointed“ (LT).</p> <p>„We had festivals and some activities in other countries with all kind people - age, culture and etc.“ (LT).</p> <p>„To make sure the event will be open, and the participants are from all the categories that we spotted, like refugees, elders and children“ (LT).</p> <p>„VOMB has to be sure that their activities support their mission because some events might target different groups of people“ (DK).</p>
ECOLOGICAL APPROACH AND SECURITY DURING EVENTS	<p>„Ecology is really important and VOMB could be a great example of that“ (LT).</p> <p>„Quality criteria can also be regarding potential injuries“ (DK).</p> <p>„Make security instructions and it will be good to have persons that can give first aid in of emergency. We are not always saved from the emergencies, that's why is better to have someone that can help out if the situation requires“ (DK).</p>

age“ (FI).

„To create the school with active part (at the moment all sport schools are about professional not daily sport activities), including also healthy lifestyle and HEPA as part of education. Possible creation of guidelines for schools and teachers in national level based on the experiences and practical cases“ (LV).

„To provide small sports gadgets (balls, dumb-bells), to participants of this kind of events and give short lessons or group training sessions on how to use them correctly at home“ (LT).

„Ensuring the availability of the infrastructure and motivation of the volunteering“ (LV).

„The trainers should be of different nationalities so that the offer could be run in several countries in Europe“ (DK).

C) Reduced expenses or no payment.

„First, I would like to help children and young people be active by making sports activities cheaper <...> By making them cheaper, it could be the start for and active life for some kids“ (FI).

„More free of charge activity's/ clubs that promote physical activity and are available throughout the year“ (LT).

„Build more sport facilities where kids and elderly can exercise for free“ (DK).

„Government give money for basketball, football or other sports clubs, that they organize free kids camps, because kids wants to be like they in future“ (LT).

„More advertisements on free events that promote physical activity and a healthy lifestyle, as these kinds of projects/events often have a limited lodged“ (LT).

D) Promotion of digitalization.

Table 7. The best ideas to improve physical activity in everyday life

A	ATTRACTIVE TYPES OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES	PROMOTION OF DIGITALIZATION	D
B	INSPIRATION FOR EDUCATION	COHESION OF SCIENCE AND PRACTICE	E
C	REDUCED EXPENSES OR NO PAYMENT	COOPERATION AND INTERNALISATION	F

„Digitalization of the access to the activities, including creation of digital technologies for getting active (tasks connected with needs), places for activities“ (LV).

„The best example for inspiration is Pokémon GO. A statement by the CEO from the team behind the app tells us that the game in just two months allowed people worldwide to walk 4.6 billion miles (that is more that the distance from the Sun to the planet Neptune!)(DK).

„I will be create some kind of application to smartpohones where peoples can check differents possibilities to move in their own cities. On that application i will collect my own hometown movement changes examples gyms, swimming baths and sport halls. That application will include every basic information from different places like opening hours, price lists and locations. It will be very easy way to check above things. It will be easy place to get know new changes to move too“ (FI).

„A useful idea may be to use a mobile app.<...>After that, promoting healthy lifestyles heavily on social media, especially through Google AdWords would be a good step“ (DK).

E) Cohesion of science and practice.

„Another part would be responsible for going hand in hand with newest science findings and applying it in associations work model. It's the "Research" department. Depends on how the funding would be distributed between parts of the unit, this department could either research and interpret scientific articles or partly fund scientific researches / research labs to investigate ideas of interest" (LT).

F) Cooperation and internalisation.

„Each country would have its own unit with all of the departments needed. Each department would cooperate with its unit and the departments of the same name in other countries to ensure newest and most useful information trades throughout the whole association" (LT).

Conclusions

1. Findings highlighted that participation in the Baltic Tour has benefited students' professional skills and competencies and also had impact on personal attitude and behaviour. Participation in the VOMB project empowered students to develop professional skills and competencies - idea development, creativity, involving community members, communication, language, intercultural understanding. At the end of the tour the language barrier was described as considerably lower than at the beginning. Students felt positive effects to personal attitude and behaviour, such as improving physical habits to be more active themselves and how to activate others. Students obtained a new perception of what is possible and how they interact with and have a stronger power in influencing others.

2. Villages on Move in general and the Baltic Tour was evaluated by the students as an unusually relevant and efficient practical case. Several replies indicated that the practical challenges developed both professional competencies and personal skills such as critical thinking and transcultural communication; as well, the Baltic Tour turned out to be an eyeopener to not only important aspects within the profession – but also to integrated theory and practice.

3. In general students recommended more detailed information before hand and the very tight schedule was questioned with a specific desire for more time to work together in cross-national groups, both formally and informally. On the other hand, students are unanimously positive about being part of the Baltic Tour.

4. The choice of events on the Baltic Tour was made out of necessity. Students questioned some events as being less targeted to the VOMB core segments and concluded that the individual events could be chosen or developed further – with criteria such as: "Large number of participants", "Attractive types of physical activities", "Involving people from all social groups" and "Ecological approach and security during events".

5. The best ideas to improve physical activity in everyday life according to the students' reflections are: attractive types of physical activities, inspiration for education, reduced expenses or no payment, promotion of digitalization, cohesion of science and practice, cooperation and internalisation.

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**PATIRTINIO MOKYMOŠI NAUDA:
STUDENTŲ DALYVAVIMO PROJEKTE „VILLAGES
ONMOVE BALTIC“ ATVEJIS**

V. Piščalkienė, H.I. Lottrup

Raktažodžiai: “Villages on Move Baltic” (VOMB), fizinis aktyvumas, patirtinis mokymasis.

Santrauka

Šiame straipsnyje pristatomos studentų, dalyvavusių VOMB projekto Baltijos šalių ture, patirtys. Patirtinio mokymosi pagrindinis bruožas – mokymosi aplinkų įvairovė, kuri dažniausiai kuriama už mokymosi institucijos ribų organizuojant kūrybinio pobūdžio veiklas ir studentus įtraukiant į projektus ar tyriminę veiklą. Kolbo patirtinio mokymosi teorija nusako pagrindinius patirtinio mokymosi etapus, tokius kaip konkreti patirtis, reflektyvus stebė-

jimas, abstrahavimas ir konceptualizavimas, ir galiausiai aktyvus patirčių pritaikymas, kitaip sakant eksperimentavimas.

Stripsnio tikslas – atskleisti patirtinio mokymosi naudą dalyvaujant projekte „Villages on Move Baltic“ studentų požiūriu.

Tyrimo medžiaga ir metodai. Patirtinio mokymosi paradigma ir studentų, dalyvavusių VOMB projekte, refleksijomis buvo grindžiama tyrimo metodologija. Studentai aktyviai įsitraukė į tyrimo metodologijos kūrimą, dirbdami grupėse diskutavo, kokie 7 svarbiausi klausimai leistų įvertinti šio projekto rezultatyvumą edukaciniu ir tolimesnio projekto tobulinimo požiūriu. Straipsnio autoriai šiuos klausimus išanalizavo, susistemino ir pateikė studentų individualiam reflektavimui. Studentai raštu pateikė savo refleksijas, pagal struktūruotą apklausos formą raštu. Tyrimo duomenų analizės metodas - turinio analizė. 17 studentų, dalyvavusių VOMB projekto Baltijos šalių ture, atstovavo Lietuvai, Latvijai, Danijai, Suomijai. Studentai iš Estijos (3) dalyvavo tik pirmame etape, kuomet diskutuojant studentų grupėse buvo rengiami pirminiai klausimai. Studentai atstovavo sveikatos mokslų, socialinio darbo, pedagogikos, vadybos ir ekonomikos studijų kryptims.

Rezultatai. Visų šalių studentai išsakė pozityvų požiūrį į dalyvavimą VOMB projekto Baltijos šalių ture, kuris vyko aplankant renginius, organizuojamus Lietuvoje, Latvijoje, Estijoje, Suomijoje. Studentai įžvelgia naudą šiais aspektais: a) galimybė teorines žinias pritaikyti praktiškai, o tai leidžia siekti teorijos ir praktikos vienovės; b) įgytų žinių panaudojimas būsimoje profesinėje veikloje; c) įgyta tarptautinė patirtis ir patobulintos ar įgytos tarpkultūrinės kompetencijos. Dalyvavimas šiame projekte taip pat naudingas asmenybinio ir socialinio požiūriu. Ateityje organizuojant panašaus pobūdžio veiklas derėtų atsižvelgti į studentų pageidavimus, tokius kaip – daugiau laiko skirti neformaliai bendravimui projekto metu bei anksčiau ir daugiau suteikti informacijos, susijusios su renginiais, į kuriuos bus vykstama.

Studentai siūlo šiuos fizinį aktyvumą skatinančių renginių kokybės vertinimo kriterijus: “Didelis dalyvių skaičius”, “Patrauklios fizinio aktyvumo formos”, “Įvairių socialinių žmonių grupių įtraukimas”, “Dėmesys ekologiniu požiūriu”, “Dėmesys dalyvių saugumui”.

Išvada. Studentų dalyvavimas VOMB projekto Baltijos šalių ture leido jiems tobulinti bendrąsias kompetencijas ir siekti asmeninio ir profesinio tobulėjimo.

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