

Monika Staab, Regina Egetenmeyer

STUDENTS' REASONS FOR PARTICIPATING IN INTERNATIONAL TEACHING AND LEARNING SETTINGS IN ADULT EDUCATION DEGREE PROGRAMMES

ABSTRACT

Based on the assumption that international perspectives play a rather minor role for adult education students in their studies, this paper researches the reasons for participating in international teaching and learning situations during their studies. The paper draws on data from 22 interviews with graduates of three master's programmes with a focus on adult education at the Universities of Würzburg, Belgrade, and Florence. Based on this data, the reasons for participation include academic, career-related, personal, social, and language-related aspects as well as external circumstances. These reasons indicate starting points for adult education programmes to promote the engagement of their students with international, intercultural, and global perspectives. This can help tailor international teaching and learning settings to students' needs and requirements.

Keywords: *motivation, internationalisation, adult education, international mobility, academic professionalisation*

ZAKAJ SE ŠTUDENTI PROGRAMOV IZOBRAŽEVANJA ODRASLIH ODLOČAJO ZA SO-DELOVANJE PRI POUČEVANJU IN UČENJU V MEDNARODNIH OKVIRIH – POVZETEK

Na podlagi predpostavke, da imajo mednarodne perspektive precej majhno vlogo v študiju študentov programov izobraževanja odraslih, ta prispevek raziskuje, zakaj ti študenti med študijem sodelujejo pri mednarodnem poučevanju in učenju. Članek temelji na analizi 22 intervjujev z diplomanti treh magistrskih programov s poudarkom na izobraževanju odraslih na Univerzi v Würzburgu, Univerzi v Beogradu in Univerzi v Firencah. Rezultati so pokazali, da razlogi za sodelovanje vključujejo izobrazbene, karierne, osebne, družbene in jezikovne vidike, razlog pa so lahko tudi zunanje okoliščine. Rezultati raziskave ponujajo izhodišča za to, kako bi lahko študijski programi na področju izobraževanja odraslih spodbujali angažiranost študentov v mednarodnih, medkulturnih in globalnih okvirih. Z njihovim upoštevanjem bi lahko okvire mednarodnega poučevanja in učenja uspešneje prilagajali potrebam študentov.

Ključne besede: *motivacija, internacionalizacija, izobraževanje odraslih, mednarodna mobilnost, profesionalizacija v akademskem okolju*

Monika Staab, M.A., monistaab@googlemail.com

Regina Egetenmeyer, Prof. Dr., Professorship for Adult and Continuing Education, Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg, regina.egetenmeyer@uni-wuerzburg.de

INTRODUCTION

The Bologna Process, which has its beginnings in the Sorbonne Conference and Declaration of 1998 and the Bologna Declaration of 1999 (European Commission et al., 2020, p. 13), has seen study systems across Europe shift towards bachelor's and master's degrees. This has affected adult education programmes. In line with its objectives, the Bologna Process has led to the harmonisation of European study systems and the creation of a European Higher Education Area. The resulting increase in study system comparability has the potential to create greater international mobility between degree programmes and other aspects of internationalisation (Allemann-Ghionda, 2014, p. 669). This is evident, for example, in the growing number of internationally mobile students in Europe and worldwide (UIS.Stat, 2023). The Erasmus programme, which was established in the 1980s, further contributed to this development in Europe (de Wit & Altbach, 2021, pp. 30–31). However, the internationalisation of higher education does not refer to international mobility alone, but describes the whole process of integrating international, intercultural, or global dimensions into all areas of higher education (de Wit & Hunter, 2015; Knight, 2004, 2008). The term “international” is used here in a broad sense to refer not only to the relationship between two countries, but also to supranational (above the state level) and transnational (below the state level) perspectives (Egetenmeyer, 2022, p. 28). “Intercultural” encompasses the diversity of cultures (Knight, 2008, pp. 21–22), whereby culture refers to a shared knowledge and familiarity that creates a certain degree of normality between people (Rathje, 2006). “Global” in turn refers to the worldwide perspective (Knight, 2008, p. 22).

With regard to adult education programmes, however, it can be assumed that the participation of students in international mobility is rather low. International studies point to lower levels of international student activity in education when it comes to student participation in international mobility (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2021, p. 217). This is despite the fact that numerous studies related to international mobility point to its positive effects on students' academic, career, personal, and linguistic development (e.g., Amendola & Restaino, 2017; Egetenmeyer, 2012; European Commission, 2019; International and Comparative Studies for Students and Practitioners in Adult Education and Lifelong Learning [INTALL], 2021; Özişik, 2017; van Mol, 2014; Woisch & Willige, 2015). Moreover, it can be argued that there is a growing need for adult education practitioners who can meet the demands of an increasingly global and internationally networked field of work. This can be attributed to the target group of adult education becoming more diverse (e.g. due to migration), the growing influence of international and European policies on the structures of adult education, and the development of an international market for continuing education (Egetenmeyer, 2017, pp. 129–131). Consequently, this raises the question as to why the participation rate of students in adult education seems to be rather low. And vice versa: what prompts adult education students to participate in such programmes?

This article analyses the reasons of graduates of three master's programmes with a focus on adult education at three different European universities for their participation in international teaching and learning settings. International teaching and learning settings are understood as organised and planned didactic arrangements (Ludwig, 2012) that integrate international, intercultural, or global perspectives into teaching and learning. In addition to the well-known international mobility programmes (study abroad and internships abroad), there are other forms of cross-border teaching and learning settings, such as seasonal schools, international conferences and workshops abroad, or international joint programmes. Furthermore, degree programmes can incorporate international teaching and learning settings at home, as part of internationalisation at home¹ (Beelen & Jones, 2015; Beelen & Leask, 2011). This can include teaching by international guest lecturers, the presence of international students, the integration of international topics into teaching, internationally oriented certificates, or international conferences or workshops at the home university. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, digitalised forms of teaching and learning are also playing an increasingly important role in international education (Chang & Gomes, 2022). Although the calls for internationalisation at home (Beelen & Jones, 2015; Beelen & Leask, 2011) and internationalisation of curricula² (Brewer & Leask, 2022; Leask, 2015) have received increased attention in higher education policy discourse in recent years (de Wit, 2019), forms of cross-border mobility continue to be the focus of statistics and empirical studies. This article is devoted to the entire spectrum of international teaching and learning settings – both cross-border and at home. The aim is to provide a broader perspective on the reasons for participation in international initiatives in adult education programmes.

To this end, an analytical framework for the study is laid out with reference to motivation and higher education research, and the methodological approach is clarified. The reasons provided in the available data are presented, from which possible starting points for the promotion of international teaching and learning settings for adult education programmes are derived.

RESEARCH ON PARTICIPATION IN INTERNATIONAL TEACHING AND LEARNING SETTINGS

When looking at reasons for participation, the focus is on the question of what motivates students to participate in international teaching and learning settings. In the

1 *Internationalisation at home* concerns the intentional integration of international, intercultural, or global perspectives into the learning environment of students at their home university. The goal is to provide all students with the opportunity to gain international and intercultural experience, regardless of their mobility abroad (Beelen & Jones, 2015; Beelen & Leask, 2011).

2 *Internationalisation of the curriculum* refers to the conscious and sustainable integration of international, intercultural, or global perspectives into the curriculum. It refers both to teaching and learning settings at the home university and to cross-border teaching and learning settings. The term "curriculum" includes the formal curriculum of the programme, the informal curriculum (e.g., additional support services), and the hidden curriculum (e.g., specific literature selection or teaching methods; Brewer & Leask, 2022; Leask, 2015).

psychology of learning, motives are understood as the “relatively stable (dispositional, latent) readiness to be activated to act in certain situations. The activated state in a particular situation is called *motivation*.” (Edelmann & Wittmann, 2019, p. 214, own translation). In other words, motives can explain why a person acts in a certain way. In addition, situational circumstances, in form of incentives, regulate motivation (Edelmann & Wittmann, 2019). The participation of students in international teaching and learning settings can consequently be the result of the interplay of individual motives and situational incentives. Students may participate for their own sake (e.g. curiosity, personal interest = intrinsic motivation) or to strive for certain outcomes or consequences (e.g. knowledge gain = extrinsic motivation). Furthermore, their participation may be triggered more by themselves or externally by other people or factors (Edelmann & Wittmann, 2019, p. 215). By exploring the reasons for participation, the analysis examines both motives and incentives that motivate students to participate in international teaching and learning settings.

In higher education research, numerous studies have identified various motives and situational incentives that are decisive for participation in international teaching and learning settings. However, the results mainly relate to international mobility (e.g. study abroad, internships abroad). Focusing on the reasons for participation, research highlights personal, academic, social, career-related and language-related aspects (Amendola & Restaino, 2017; de Winter et al., 2021; European Commission, 2019; Lesjak et al., 2015; Marciniak & Winnicki, 2019; Woisch & Willige, 2015). In these studies, motives of enjoyment and experience are mostly in the foreground when it comes to students’ participation in international mobility (Lesjak et al., 2015, p. 861; Marciniak & Winnicki, 2019, p. 102; Woisch & Willige, 2015, p. 71). These can be considered as personal reasons, which also include the desire for personal development (e.g. development of self-confidence; European Commission, 2019, p. 74; Woisch & Willige, 2015, p. 72). In addition, a study by the German Academic Exchange Service, based on a panel of the German Centre for Higher Education and Science Research, found that students are more willing to participate if their families and schools give them a positive impression of international mobility and/or if students have already had experience of international mobility abroad in the form of a school exchange, language study trip, or internship (Heublein et al., 2015, pp. 39–40). A longitudinal panel with students from the USA reinforces the assumption that previous international experiences during studies (here: foreign language study and international virtual exchange) positively influence the decision to study abroad (Lee et al., 2022). Students’ previous international experiences and attitudes towards internationality can thus be seen as further personal reasons.

Academic reasons relate to the enhancement of professional knowledge and skills (Lesjak et al., 2015, p. 854; Woisch & Willige, 2015, p. 72). In this context, German students show a higher willingness to participate in international mobility if they consider their own academic performance to be positive (Heublein et al., 2015, pp. 34–36).

Career-related reasons are linked to career goals and better career opportunities (European Commission, 2019, p. 74; Lesjak et al., 2015, p. 854; Woisch & Willige, 2015, p. 72). In a study on the motivation of German social work students to participate in international activities during their studies, it was shown that the willingness to participate is higher among students who perceive international aspects as important for their occupational field (Petrow, 2013, p. 12). This suggests that students may see greater added value in participating in international experiences in their studies for occupational fields that are considered more internationally oriented. This could partly explain the differences in participation in international mobility by subject and level of study (OECD, 2021, p. 217).

Furthermore, social reasons relate to meeting and interacting with new people (European Commission, 2019, p. 74; Lesjak et al., 2015, p. 854; Marciniak & Winnicki, 2019, p. 102), without primarily seeking to gain advantages in the workplace. Language-related reasons focus, on the other hand, on improving foreign language skills (European Commission, 2019, p. 74; Lesjak et al., 2015, p. 854; Marciniak & Winnicki, 2019, p. 102, Woisch & Willige, 2015, p. 72).

To explore the reasons for participation, it may also be instructive to examine the reasons against participation. It can be assumed that the reasons against participation can conversely also lead to participation. In this context, Bilecen and van Mol (2017, p. 1250) point to disparities in access to (and benefits from) international mobility that can depend on labour market structures, national policy structures, and higher education institutions, as well as individual factors, including gender, age, and socio-economic background. In student surveys on participation in international mobility, family and social aspects, as well as financial and organisational obstacles, are commonly identified as reasons for students' non-participation (de Winter et al., 2021, pp. 517–518; European Commission, 2019, p. 73; Middendorff et al., 2017, pp. 21–22; Woisch & Willige, 2015, pp. 94–95). These findings suggest that external circumstances, such as financial aspects, may also have an influence on participation in international teaching and learning settings.

The participation of students in international teaching and learning settings must consequently be considered against the background of various factors that can hinder participation, but also promote it. Based on previous studies, the reasons can be categorised as academic, career-related, personal, social, and language-related. According to Petrow (2013), it should be noted that several motives usually play a role in the decision to participate in international mobility. Furthermore, it could be assumed that external circumstances also influence the motivation to participate.

It should be noted that the outlined studies focus almost exclusively on international mobility and do not consider the full range of international teaching and learning settings that might be available to students. Furthermore, there is a lack of data on the participation of adult education students. This article aims to provide further information on this.

METHODOLOGY

This article draws on interview data collected as part of a doctoral project. A total of 22 guided interviews with graduates³ of three master's programmes with a focus on adult education at the universities of Würzburg, Belgrade, and Florence are the basis for the analysis. The three research fields were chosen in order to convey a differentiated picture of the research object. For example, in the master's programmes in Würzburg and Florence, adult education is only part of an educational science programme, while the programme in Belgrade focuses exclusively on adult education. In addition, the Universities of Würzburg and Florence have been involved in the Erasmus programme for many years, while the University of Belgrade, located outside the EU, has only been able to participate in the Erasmus programme as a full member since 2019. It was also important that different international teaching and learning settings were offered in the degree programmes in order to cover a wide range of international settings. The degree programmes have also been involved in joint cooperation.

The sample consists of 8 graduates of the master's programme in Würzburg, 8 graduates of the master's programme in Belgrade, and 6 graduates of the master's programme in Florence. An interview guide was used to explore the underlying research interest in a structured way while at the same time allowing for the necessary openness (Friebertshäuser & Langer, 2013, p. 439). The graduates were asked which international teaching and learning settings they had participated in during their master's studies, what their reasons for participating were, what they took away from their participation and how this affects their current career path. The interviews offer a retrospective understanding of the reasons for participation. The interviewees' statements relate to their international experiences prior to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The interviews were conducted almost exclusively by telephone between February 2020 and July 2020. The sample was selected according to predefined criteria, with respondents having completed their master's degree and having participated in international activities during their studies. The interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher with the support of a transcription company, using a uniform transcription system based on Dresing and Pehl (2018). In order to make personal data non-identifiable, the interviews were anonymised by aggregating information (Meyermann & Porzelt, 2014). The graduates signed consent forms for participation and the use of personal data.

The data collected was analysed according to the content-structuring qualitative content analysis method by Kuckartz (2018). This procedure allows qualitative data to be analysed in a systematic and structured way. In the first step, a basic understanding of the data material was gained in an initial data review. This was followed by the formation of formal categories that enable a thematic structuring (Reinhoffer, 2008, p. 131). Based on the

3 Of the 22 interviews, 20 were conducted with graduates of the three master's programmes. Two additional interviews were conducted with students who had yet to complete their master's studies. In the following, all interviewees are referred to as "graduates".

theoretical considerations, the following categories of reasons for participation could be formulated deductively: academic, career-related, personal, social, language-related, and external circumstances. In the next step, these categories were further differentiated in terms of content. The data was analysed in a cross-national way. This analysis allows more generalised assumptions to be drawn about how to promote participation in international teaching and learning settings in adult education programmes. In some cases, however, country-specific or university-specific assumptions were identified. The university of origin of the graduates is noted for traceability in the data cited below.

Limitations in the data analysis are mainly due to linguistic aspects. When conducting the interviews, language barriers on the part of the interviewed graduates from Belgrade and Florence, for whom the interviews were not conducted in their first language, as well as technical faults during the telephone interviews, led to interruptions and difficulties in understanding. For this reason, statements that were not clearly understandable were not taken into account in the data analysis. The statements of the graduates of the master's programme in Würzburg were translated from German into English, which is marked accordingly in the quotations below. In addition, the graduates' reasons for participating in international teaching and learning settings had to be reflected in terms of social desirability, as the interviewer worked as a research assistant in adult education at the University of Würzburg. In this way, the graduates' answers could tend to correspond to external expectations (Bogner & Landrock, 2015, p. 2). Such statements are not included in the analysis.

REASONS FOR PARTICIPATION

Across the graduates of the three master's programmes, different reasons for participating in teaching and learning settings can be identified. These can be divided into academic, career-related, personal, and language-related reasons as well as external circumstances.

The reasons refer to the graduates' participation in the following international teaching and learning settings: 1. cross-border teaching and learning settings: study abroad (12⁴), internship abroad (3), seasonal school (19), international conferences or workshops abroad (2), assisting in an international teaching and learning setting abroad (1); and 2. international teaching and learning settings at home: teaching of international guest lecturers (9), presence of international students in teaching (4), international topics in teaching (2), internationally oriented certificate (5), international conferences or workshops at the home university (2), internship with international orientation (1), assisting in an international teaching and learning setting at the home university (4).

The international teaching and learning settings may vary in the three master's programmes. The international teaching and learning settings are only partially embedded in the formal curriculum of the programmes. As a result, graduates were largely free to

4 The numbers indicate how many of the 22 graduates report their participation in the international teaching and learning settings.

decide whether and in which international teaching and learning settings they would like to participate (Staab, forthcoming).

Academic reasons

Graduates' participation in international teaching and learning settings is based on reasons related to their studies. It involves the acquisition of academic knowledge. From the data, it appears that one reason is to *learn about different perspectives in education and adult education* through interaction and communication with students and lecturers from other countries. For example, being taught by international guest lecturers provides graduates with new, additional perspectives on the topics covered in their master's programme.

I mean, in the bachelor's degree, which was purely in German, I'll say that we learned a lot about the education system here, about adult education/continuing education, about the different concepts. And I just found it incredibly exciting to see how things work in an international context. (I 1.2, 92–96; University of Würzburg; own translation)⁵

Another identifiable reason for the graduates is to *learn about new topics in education and adult education* by participating in international teaching and learning settings. As one of the graduates describes, she wants to learn about comparative research by participating in a seasonal school dealing with a topic that is not taught at her university (I 3.4; University of Florence).

The graduates' participation in international teaching and learning is also motivated by the desire to *learn about different teaching and learning methods*. By participating in international teaching and learning settings, graduates want to experience what kind of teaching and learning methods are used at other universities and by other lecturers. This enables them to expand their methodological and didactic knowledge: "And yes, to look beyond the horizon and see how they implement methodology and didactics, what are the current measures for learning" (I 1.1, 89–91; University of Würzburg; own translation).

Closely related to this is the desire to *learn about studying education and adult education in another country*. This reason is mentioned in the context of studying abroad in particular. By spending time studying at another university, graduates want to learn and experience how students of the same subject study in another country.

The academic reasons given indicate that graduates hope to acquire additional academic knowledge through their participation. It seems particularly interesting for the graduates to learn more about international perspectives in adult education.

5 The information following the interview quotes refers to the interview identification number, the line number in the interview transcript, the university from which the graduates graduated and whether the interview quotes were translated from their original language into English.

Career-related reasons

Other reasons given by the graduates are related to their career development. The data shows that one reason for graduates to participate in international teaching and learning settings is to *improve their opportunities on the labour market*. They assume that future employers will value their international experience and that this will give them an advantage when looking for a job.

Well, there were two reasons actually. First one, it's an honest reason. I mean, because of the situation in Serbia and everything, I couldn't find a proper job and I wanted to just upskill myself a bit. And I thought that's the good way to do it. (I 2.1, 135-137; University of Belgrade)

As this quote from a Serbian graduate shows, the employment situation in one's own country seems to be related to participation in international teaching and learning settings. Career-related reasons tend to be linked to the national labour market situation.

In connection with participation in international conferences, the reason to *build a professional network* also becomes apparent. Networking with different members of the field of adult education seems to be beneficial to one of the graduates for future collaborations, for example in joint projects (I. 2.8; University of Belgrade).

It is evident from the data that graduates associate their participation in international teaching and learning settings with benefits for their future careers. This may be related to the respective labour market situation in their home countries or to career aspirations.

Personal reasons

Participating in international teaching and learning settings is also motivated by personal reasons. It relates to personal experiences and aspects that are not related to academic or career goals. In terms of graduates' participation in a study abroad or seasonal school, one reason identified in the data is to *take on a personal challenge*. Going abroad is perceived by graduates both as a personal challenge and as an opportunity to grow from this experience.

Furthermore, the reason to *broaden one's perspective* by participating in international teaching and learning settings is evident in the data. This reason is mentioned in particular in relation to experience abroad: "I really wanted to go abroad again [...] I need this change for myself, to get new impressions that I can then process and compare or reflect, question with what I already know, so to speak" (I 1.8, 97-103; University of Würzburg; own translation).

For one graduate, who has work and family commitments in addition to her master's degree, an additional reason for attending a two-week seasonal school can be identified. This is that participating gives her *time off from her daily routine*. The two-week programme, which is combined with a trip to another country, gives the interviewee the opportunity to detach herself from work and family commitments and to concentrate fully on herself and her studies during this time (I 3.3; University of Florence).

The reason to *travel to another country* is illustrated by an interview with another graduate about her participation in a study abroad programme. She expresses a particular interest in getting to know the host country and region and exploring it from a tourist point of view (I 2.5; University of Belgrade).

In the data, it becomes evident that graduates also justify their participation in different teaching and learning settings by wanting to *gain new international experience due to previous school or study-related experiences*. The graduates report that they have already had their first international experiences during school or studies, which was a positive experience for them and made them want to experience more. This is illustrated by the following example:

But with [Professor X from England]. And that was such a great seminar. It was such a great lecturer, who was so passionate about adult education that it aroused my enthusiasm and I realised, 'Oh, okay, there's something new and exciting. I'd like to take a closer look at that.' And so it was that [...] after the seminar [...] the applications for the Winter School started. And I thought to myself, 'I have to do that. I just have to be there.' (I 1.7, 44-51; University of Würzburg; own translation)

Participation in a seminar by an international guest lecturer arouses the graduate's personal interest in gaining further international experience during her studies. It motivated her to attend a seasonal school. Consequently, positive previous international experiences in a school or university context seem to strengthen personal interest in internationality and motivate participation in further international teaching and learning settings.

Furthermore, it can be seen in the data that graduates participate in international teaching and learning settings because they *have an interest in international experiences due to their family background*. This reasoning, however, appears to be more based on an underlying interest in internationality, as one graduate describes below:

Well, I think I am someone who is basically very interested internationally. My parents always made sure that we had some international contacts relatively early on. My mum was a student when we were children and she brought a fellow student with her who was there for an exchange semester from Zimbabwe. So this international contact is something I've always liked. (I 1.7, 439-444; University of Würzburg; own translation)

In the quotation, it becomes clear that international experiences in one's own family can awaken an interest in gaining international experiences in studies later on when these are considered positive. However, it seems that this interest may not be the sole reason for participation, but rather has a reinforcing effect on other reasons.

From the previous sections, it appears that graduates participate in international teaching and learning settings because they associate such participation with opportunities for

their personal development and personal growth. However, the specific reasons may vary from person to person due to different previous experiences, needs, and wants.

Social reasons

Social reasons are mentioned among graduates in relation to their participation in study abroad and seasonal schools. Here, graduates justify their participation with the opportunity to *network with people from other countries*. Getting to know people from different backgrounds is expressed by the graduates as an important motivating factor: "And first of all I participated in international offers to meet and to get to know people from other countries and cultures who like me are studying adult education in order to compare our ideas or our experience" (I 3.3, 51-54; University of Florence).

In this case, no career motives are associated with it, but rather social aspects are standing in the foreground. There is also no explicit reference to gaining academic knowledge through the exchange. Getting to know and sharing experiences with people from other contexts seems to be the central aspect.

Language-related reasons

Language-related reasons are also cited by graduates with regard to their participation in international teaching and learning settings. In the data, the reason to *expand their foreign language skills* is expressed among the graduates. This can relate to acquiring basic knowledge of English or other languages as expressed below:

So first, I decided to do this experience in abroad because first, I didn't speak English. For me, I think that it's really important to know English and you can speak with the other people. [...] And second, also because I wanted to learn a little bit German [...] (I 3.6, 280-290; University of Florence).

Furthermore, this reason may also be linked to the desire to improve English skills in the field of adult education, e.g. with regard to specialist terminology (I 2.8; University of Belgrade). However, language-related reasons seem to be rather less pronounced among the interviewed master's programme graduates.

External circumstances

In addition to the reasons mentioned above, graduates name external circumstances as reasons for their participation in international teaching and learning settings. Their participation is thus stimulated by external persons or factors. One reason can be identified in the fact that graduates *feel attracted by the structural arrangement of the settings*. For example, one graduate says that she wanted to participate in a seasonal school because the format, which included excursions and non-curricular activities in addition to lectures, appealed to her (I 1.5; University of Würzburg). The time component also plays a role, especially when it comes to study abroad and seasonal school. Graduates choose to participate in these international teaching and learning settings because they allow them to

go abroad for only a few weeks to a few months and do not require a stay abroad of six months or longer. This seems easier to reconcile with other commitments and is less of an obstacle (I 1.4, I 3.2; University of Würzburg). In addition, the subject-specific relevance of the study abroad (I 2.4; University of Belgrade) as well as the financial support (I 2.5; University of Belgrade) are further aspects for the graduates. It is also perceived as positive that information is provided by the university to support the organisation of study abroad (I 1.4; University of Würzburg).

In addition, it can be seen in the data that graduates justify their participation by saying that they *feel obliged to take part*. However, this reason was only given by graduates of the master's programme in Würzburg. The graduates refer to participation in seminars by international guest lecturers and a seasonal school, which earn credits in their studies. The graduates participate because they perceive the offers as an integral part of their curriculum (I 1.4, I 1.6, I 1.7; University of Würzburg). This seems to be related to the fact that their participation can be accredited in their studies.

Another identifiable reason is that graduates are *encouraged to participate by the academic unit*.⁶ This is done by advertising the opportunity or by approaching the graduates directly.

I just got a call from a professor and she said, 'You can apply for winter school if you want.' I said, 'Yes, what's that?' She said, 'It's really good, some lectures, and you will be two weeks in Germany' I said, 'Yes, okay. Why not?' 'And everything is paid for you,' and I said, 'Yes, okay. Why not?' (I 2.1, 293-297; University of Belgrade)

As described in the example above, the graduate is motivated to participate in the seasonal school by a professor in her master's programme. The graduate was informed about this opportunity and invited to participate.

Likewise, it is evident in the data that graduates can *be encouraged to participate by exchanging experiences with students*. This is illustrated by the following quote.

I also talked to some people who had already been there the year before or in spring, and then I went in summer. And I listened to their experiences, what it was like, and they were able to recommend it to me, which is why I finally decided to go there. (I 1.4, 89-93; University of Würzburg; own translation)

The exchange with former mobile students can encourage graduates to take part in international teaching and learning offers, as in this case with regard to studying abroad. The exchange seems to give them reassurance and remove any remaining doubts.

⁶ The umbrella term "academic unit" is used to refer to a department, school, chair, or professorship. It means a unit within a faculty that is active in teaching and/or research in a specific subject area.

The preceding remarks clearly show that external circumstances can contribute to motivating graduates to participate in international teaching and learning settings.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The graduates give reasons for their participation in international teaching and learning settings related to academic studies, career, and language as well as social and personal aspects, and external circumstances. This is in line with the findings of previous studies, which mostly refer to international mobility across disciplines (Amendola & Restaino, 2017; de Winter et al., 2021; European Commission, 2019; Lesjak et al., 2015; Marciniak & Winnicki, 2019; Woisch & Willige, 2015). With reference to the identified reasons, possible starting points can be derived for adult education programmes to promote the engagement of their students with international, intercultural, and global perspectives.

As shown in the data, participation in international teaching and learning settings can be associated with an academic interest and added value. Learning about new perspectives and content in adult education that can enrich previous studies seems appealing. Through participation, graduates wish to broaden their experience and knowledge in the field of adult education. Furthermore, there is an expectation that participation will contribute to their personal development and to the development of their foreign language skills. Consequently, it may be relevant to make adult education students more aware of the opportunities for their professional and personal development that come with participation in international teaching and learning settings. This can highlight the added value of participation, even if it requires additional time and financial resources that may stand in the way of participation, as in the case of international mobility (European Commission, 2019, p. 73; Middendorff et al., 2017, pp. 21–22; Woisch & Willige, 2015, pp. 94–95).

At the same time, participation can also be associated with career advantages. In this context, the situation on the local labour market could be an additional factor in students' participation in international teaching and learning settings if they expect it to give them advantages over their fellow students. According to Petrow's (2013) study, however, one could assume that career-related reasons only become relevant if students perceive the field of adult education as internationally connected and international experiences as being relevant in their work. At the same time, participation in international teaching and learning settings can support this perception by drawing attention to international perspectives and international networks in adult education. Such experiences may encourage participation in further international teaching and learning settings, as is also evident from the data. Previous international experiences in school, university and family settings can trigger an interest in international experiences that contributes to a willingness to participate. This points to the potential of international teaching and learning settings at home (e.g. international guest lecturers or international students in teaching, international topics in teaching) which allow students to come into contact with international perspectives during their regular studies, without going abroad. This can awaken their

interest in taking part in further, additional initiatives, such as study abroad or seasonal school. This connection is also pointed out in previous studies (Heublein et al., 2015, pp. 39–40; Lee et al., 2022, p. 217).

The data also shows that the structural arrangement of the settings has an influence on the level of participation. From the graduates' perspective, the appealing structure of the international teaching and learning settings, as well as the subject-specific relevance, play a role. Financial, time or organisational aspects are also mentioned in relation to participation. This suggests that an appealing format tailored to the students and their needs is an important prerequisite for promoting participation among adult education students in international teaching and learning settings. For example, offering a seasonal school, which usually lasts between one and three weeks, can be particularly interesting for students who would otherwise not be able to go abroad for an extended period of time due to family or work commitments. International teaching and learning settings at home can be another way of providing students with international, intercultural, or global perspectives without a large financial or time commitment.

In addition, the graduates of the master's programmes were encouraged by professors and staff to participate in selected international teaching and learning situations. According to Egetenmeyer (2010), it is precisely this support from the academic staff that is an important factor, whereby she refers to the application for study abroad. A direct approach through information events and consultations seems to have a supportive effect, as this may reduce uncertainties and doubts among students. In this context, the exchange of experiences with other students also appears to be important, as shown in the data. Similarly, Egetenmeyer (2010) highlights the support provided by the involvement of former internationally mobile students in the application process for study abroad. Social exchange also serves as a motive for participation. Given the variety of international teaching and learning settings, one could conclude from these findings that organisational support and interpersonal exchanges can be essential to student participation in international teaching and learning settings. This requires the creation of opportunities where students can actively share their international and intercultural experiences with their fellow students in order to spark an interest in international, intercultural, and global perspectives. This can also include building social networks with students at universities abroad. Similarly, there is a need for organisational structures that promote the inclusion of international, intercultural, and global perspectives in the curriculum.

Finally, it can be concluded that the reasons for participating in international teaching and learning situations can vary greatly between individuals. In addition to the desire to develop professionally, personally, and in terms of language, participation can be related to social aspects, career prospects, prior international experience, the arrangement of the settings, and external support. This suggests providing different opportunities to increase adult education students' motivation to participate in international teaching and learning settings. In this context, it seems important to establish support structures that can address doubts and uncertainties among students and draw attention to the importance

of international teaching and learning settings for students' development. Further studies examining students' non-participation in international teaching and learning settings could provide further insights and reveal weaknesses in existing organisational structures. Similarly, large-scale quantitative studies could provide a clearer picture of the level of participation as well as the distribution across international teaching and learning settings. Since the data refers to the time before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, it might also be useful to take a closer look at virtual offerings of international teaching and learning settings. Virtual forms are not considered in the present study.

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