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The EMAE-Project

Developing and Implementing a multinational
Master's Programme in Adult Education

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Abstract

Regina Egetenmeyer, Susanne Lattke (2007): The EMAE-Project - Developing and Implementing a multinational Master's Programme in Adult Education

In 2004, seven European universities embarked on a project to develop a European Master's Programme in Adult Education (EMAE). The German Institute for Adult Education followed the project closely as an external evaluator. The consortium developed a curriculum consisting of a common core (70 ECTS) and of university specific courses (50 ECTS). The idea is to offer the whole programme in most of the participating universities. Both the content and the delivery modes of the programme are characterised by a strong European dimension. The article describes the core curriculum, its structure and topics as well as the teaching formats which offer students a range of international and intercultural learning possibilities.

A big challenge is the implementation and accreditation of a common programme in different universities and different national contexts. The article illustrates the strategies adopted by the partner consortium to meet this challenge and describes the pilot implementation which started in winter 2006. The paper concludes by pointing out the main results of the evaluation of the curriculum development and implementation activities.

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The EMAE-Project

Developing and Implementing a multinational Master's Programme in Adult Education¹

1. Background

The Bologna Declaration (1999) marked the beginning of the Europe-wide implementation of a common three-cycle structure of university degree programmes. This implies that in adult education, just as in any other academic discipline, new degree programmes need to be developed, according to the Bologna framework. While the Bologna Process aims in the first place at the structural level only, it has also stimulated the discussion across countries on content and learning aims. And it has led to the development of common transnational curricula and programmes. The EMAE-project which is to be presented here is one example of such a transnational curriculum. EMAE stands for "European Master in Adult Education". Universities from seven countries (the EMAE-Network) started in 2004 to develop a joint study programme for the second Bologna cycle. The aim of the project is to have the joint study programme implemented in each of the partner universities.

The EMAE-Network is a group of eight universities and one German research institution². Prof. Dr. Dr. Ekkehard Nussli von Rein from the University Duisburg-Essen/Germany and the German Institute for Adult Education initiated the project together with the following partners:

- Danish University of Education in Copenhagen/Denmark,
- West University of Timisoara/Romania,
- University of Florence/Italy,
- University of Barcelona/Spain,
- University of Helsinki/Finland,
- University of Kaiserslautern/Germany,
- University of Ostrava/Czech Republic,
- University of Duisburg-Essen (project coordination),
- German Institute for Adult Education (project evaluation).

¹ This article is partly based on an article which was published in the conference-reader of the 11th Standing Conference on the History of Adult Education (Egetenmeyer 2006).

² You can find more information about the project at the homepage of the project <http://www.emae-network.org>

The project is co-funded by SOCRATES, ERASMUS and runs for three years until September 2007.

The development of a common European Master in Adult Education has specific challenges. These are related to the very different cultural traditions and structures of adult education in the European countries. Currently a European research group is exploring the implications of these differences for the professional development of adult educators in Europe. A first stock-taking has shown the big differences which exist between the countries in the field of adult education (Nuisl 2005: 47-56):

The structure of adult education is very complex in each European country. This complexity is rising, if you compare the adult education systems in Europe. Until now, there is no discussion about professional development of all adult educators. Normally these discussions are just looking to a specific group. The kind of employment in adult education is very different and adult educators are working in different fields. Nuisl (2005: 55) resumes that there is no common debate about competence profiles of adult educators.

This is the situation in which the EMAE-Network set out to develop a transnational Master's Programme in adult education. In the following we will first explain the aims of the programme and then go on to describe the programme structure, the core curriculum and the delivery and teaching modes. The paper then outlines the situation regarding the accreditation and implementation of the European Master in Adult Education in the EMAE-Network and concludes by pointing out the specific challenges of this European project.

2. European Competences for Adult Educators

The idea of the EMAE-Network was to develop a common curriculum which should be implemented in each participating university of the network. For the development of the curriculum the network pursues the following aims (EMAE-Network 2006):

- "identify through a European discussion process the core competencies that are needed by professional adult education staff in Europe today;
- develop on this basis a qualification of transnational relevance that reflects both traditional and newly emerging qualification needs, and that includes a 'competence for Europe' as a particularly important aspect;
- use synergies and benefit from a wide range of experience and best practice in the various countries to develop and implement a high-quality degree programme."

At the beginning of the project the network identified the skills and competencies which each partner considered necessary for an adult educator in their own cultural context. In addition the network discussed the skills and competencies needed by adult educators to act in a European context. On this basis a curriculum was agreed upon which integrated the perspectives of all partners and had a special focus on the European dimension of adult education. The European competence that students of the EMAE-Programme should develop comprises in particular the following aspects:

- awareness of different national approaches
- knowledge of EU policy
- intercultural skills
- English language skills

3. The Master's Programme

3.1 The Programme Structure

The EMAE-Network decided to develop a Master's Programme of 120 ECTS, since this size resulted to be the most interesting for most partner universities. The curriculum has two main parts: 70 ECTS are covered by the common Core Curriculum; 50 ECTS are made up by individual offers from each university. The Core Curriculum was jointly developed by the network. The responsibility for the development of the individual offers lies with each university, but the Network has to decide on the acceptance of each individual offer as a part of the EMAE-Programme.

This structure allows focussing the European context as well as each national context. It recognizes that adult education is a discipline which is deeply connected with national and cultural traditions in each country and allows for country specific specialisations. At the same time it reflects what the partners consider as core topics and competence areas in adult education in Europe (see also Pätzold/Bruns: 2006).

The EMAE-Programme provides a qualification for students, who would like to work in the field of adult education and learning in European contexts³. This means that the students will be qualified for working in European institutions as well as in institutions outside their home country. For this they must be able to interact professionally with their European colleagues and clients or customers. EMAE graduates will work in all fields which focus on the support and facilitation of adult's learning. Possible careers would be as a researcher, administrator, counsellor, instructor, programme planner, or manager of adult education institutions.

Students will acquire the relevant knowledge and skills for this in the EMAE-Programme. A specific focus lies on European topics, comparative and international research as well as on intercultural skills, but the national perspective is considered as equally important. Only through the study of one national perspective students will have a basis for comparison and for the reflection of different point of views (see Webler 2002: 19).

Students will thus be qualified for the labour market in their home countries and will in addition become aware and able to use Europe as a labour market for adult educators.

To enter the EMAE-Programme, students must hold a degree of the first circle (e.g. Bachelor degree). Additionally they must have some experience in education. This experience may come from different sources, for example through a first degree in education as well as through relevant work experience in education.

After successful completion of the programme, EMAE students will receive a second cycle degree of their home universities. Additionally, they will receive a diploma supplement from the network which documents that this study programme fulfils the standards of the EMAE-Network.

The EMAE-Network is currently working towards establishing a double or joint degree. But this will be realised only in the next years.

³ The whole description of the EMAE-Programme is available at http://www.ema-network.org:8080/structure/document_view

3.2 The Core Curriculum

The Core Curriculum covers slightly more than half of the programme. It comprises four main sections:

- Core fields of Adult Education in Europe
- Research in Adult Education in Europe
- Transnational Project Work
- Master Thesis

EMAЕ – Core Curriculum (70 ECTS)								
Core fields	Theoretical Framework	Learning and Teaching	Research	Management/ Marketing	Policy	Economy		
Study units	Essentials of Adult and Continuing Education in Europe 3 ECTS	European Teaching Theories 3 ECTS	Fields and Trends 2 ECTS	Management of AE 3 ECTS	Policy of Demand 3 ECTS	Adult Learning and Consumption of Educational Goods 3 ECTS	Trans-national Project	T H E S I S
	Theories of Adult Education 2 ECTS	Competence and Competence Development 2 ECTS	Research Methods 3 ECTS	Needs Analysis & Programme planning 2 ECTS	European Strategies of LLL 2 ECTS	State and Market in Lifelong Learning in the European Context 2 ECTS		

Figure 1: Core Curriculum

Core Fields of Adult Education in Europe

This part covers those aspects of the field that have been identified by the whole EMAE-Network as core competence areas of adult educators.

In Core Field ‘Theoretical Framework’ students will get an overview of the field of adult education in Europe and its different structures. They will also get an introduction to theoretical approaches.

Core Field ‘Learning and Teaching’ focuses on the theories of learning and teaching of adults. According to the aspect of competence development, students will gain competencies to analyse and plan learning situations in different contexts.

Within Core Field ‘Management and Marketing’ topics like management, marketing, and strategies of adult education institutions will be dealt with. Here students will gain competencies regarding the combination of economic and pedagogic perspectives.

Core Field ‘Policy’ focuses on different political contexts in which adult education is situated. Beside European policy, students will look at the policies in different European countries.

Core Field 'Economy' deals with the relationship between adult education and economy. In a knowledge-based society such as Europe this aspect will assume increasing importance.

Research in Adult Education in Europe

In this part, students will get an overview of fields and trends in research in adult education in Europe. Afterwards they will develop a research design for their own research project. This research design will be used for the Master Thesis.

Transnational Project Work

In this part, students will deepen one part of the Core Fields. In international groups students will work together online. They will design, plan, manage and evaluate a transnational project work. Students who spend a semester abroad may also do an individual project or they can do a traineeship in a relevant institution of the partner country.

Master Thesis

For the Master Thesis students will carry out a research project with a European dimension. This can be a comparative research or a study on a European topic. It can be written in a national European language and must include an English abstract.

3.3 Teaching Modes: Experiencing European Diversity

The EMAE-Network agreed that competence development should be facilitated not only through the study content but also through the ways of teaching and studying. A big part of the curriculum is taught in English. So the students have the possibility to choose for themselves, in which of the participating university they would like to study.

The network developed various ways to enable students to gain international and intercultural experience during their studies. One of these are the online seminars of the part Core Fields. For each Core Field course one university of the EMAE-Network is responsible. The courses are offered as online seminars and the teaching language is English. Every online course is open to students from the whole EMAE-Network so that international student groups are formed. So the students do a kind of virtual mobility and can get intercultural learning experience.

Another way is teacher exchange: Researchers and teachers from the EMAE universities visit the partner universities and teach there as guest professors. For the coming years it is furthermore planned to organise international summer camps. Finally, students are strongly advised to spend at least one full semester at another partner university. So we can resume the teaching modes promoting the experience of European diversity as follows:

- online seminars and lectures delivered from a variety of universities,
- internationally mixed student groups in online courses,
- international summer camps,
- student exchange,
- visiting professors.

Through these ways of teaching and learning, the EMAE gives students the opportunity to get to know different demands and values in various European countries. Students will get intercultural learning experience and can develop their intercultural competencies.

4. Accreditation and Implementation of the EMAE

Every university of the EMAE-Network has the task to develop its own university specific curriculum within the above described conditions. So the detailed study plan varies from university to university.

In winter 2006 the EMAE started in two universities:

The West University of Timisoara has started an accredited study programme with around 12 students. The university has developed new courses for their individual offer, because there is no other programme with which they can link the EMAE.

At the University of Duisburg-Essen the EMAE-Curriculum was linked with the national Master in Adult Education. We call this model 'Y-Model'. Students will first complete a Bachelor programme in Education. Afterwards they can do a Master in Adult Education. Here they have the possibility to choose between two variations: Master in Adult Education or Master in European Adult Education. These two variations have one part in common (the stem of the "Y"), and each variations has its specific parts (the two branches of the "Y").

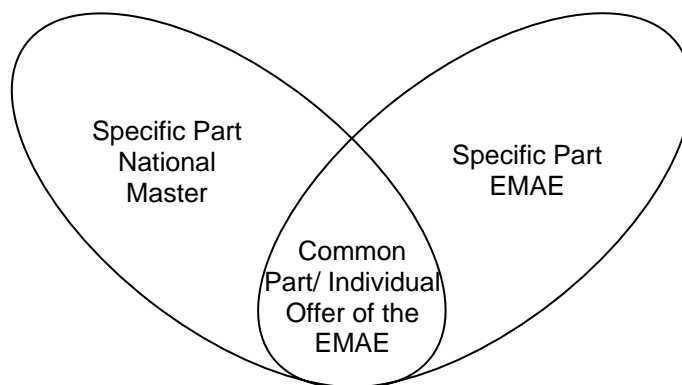


Figure 2: Connection between the national Master and the European Master

Thus, the EMAE-Programme at the University of Duisburg-Essen is intensively connected with the national Master. Students have the possibility to study national themes as well as European themes. The pilot implementation of the EMAE courses started at the university of Duisburg-Essen in winter 2006. In the meantime, the accreditation process has been completed, so that the full EMAE will start as an accredited Master's Programme in winter 2007.

The accreditation and implementation process in the other partner universities is at various stages. All partner universities took part in the pilot implementation starting from winter 2006 by contributing online courses to the network, by offering EMAE courses on campus at their own university, by sending and receiving guest professors from the EMAE-Network, by sending students to the online courses offered by the other universities. The accreditation procedures have been started at the national levels. The next universities to start the full EMAE-Programme will most likely be the University of Ostrava and the University of Florence who are planning the start for winter 2007.

4.1 EMAE Pilot Implementation: winter semester 2006/07

In winter 2006/07 the pilot implementation of the EMAE-Programme started in the network with both online courses and on campus courses:

- The courses “European Teaching Theories”, “Competence and Competence Development” and “Fields and Trends in Research in Adult Education” were offered as interactive online offers. In these courses students worked together in international teams on the topics. Beside students of the EMAE-programme, students from other educational study programmes from the University of Kaiserslautern/Germany and the University of Duisburg-Essen/Germany have also taken part in the courses.
- Furthermore, the course “Essentials in Adult and Continuing Education in Europe“ was offered as an international course of lectures which was available also online. Every two weeks a European expert gave a lecture at the University of Duisburg-Essen. This lecture was streamed live into the Internet and was open to a wider student and expert audience. Students from everywhere could send in questions to the lecturer via email and could discuss on the lecture in chat-rooms. Around 100 users took part in this offer.
- Other courses of the Core Curriculum were offered as on campus courses at the West University of Timisoara and at the University of Duisburg-Essen. They were offered on the one hand by local teachers and on the other hand by visiting professors.

5. Evaluation of the project

The whole project process, from the curriculum development phase to the pilot implementation started in winter 2006 and the ongoing efforts to accredit the full programme throughout the partner network and to develop a Joint Degree in the long perspective has been closely followed by the German Institute of Adult Education as an observer and external evaluator.

All phases of the project presented their specific challenges. Some of these were rather foreseeable and obvious in principle but could be discerned in detail only during the course of the project. Other developments were more unexpected. The most salient factors are here briefly resumed.

Curriculum development

- A broad agreement on the core topical fields of the common curriculum was relatively easily reached. This is an indication that there are similar views all over Europe on the key and core competences needed by professional adult education staff, even if the concrete work contexts and structures differ between countries or sectors⁴. The main challenge however appeared when it came to the detailed planning of common structures and formats.
- In all partner countries there are different traditions, cultures and expectations regarding study programmes in adult education. To realize a study programme which fits to this situation proved to be a lengthy process which required lots of compromises on all sides. The problems start with aspects that may appear rather simple like for

⁴ This can also be seen in the fact that the curriculum developed by the TEACH project proved to be quite compatible with the one developed by the EMAE project. The TEACH partnership involved partners from mainly Eastern Europe. It developed curricula for study programmes in adult education at Bachelor's, Master's and PhD level. www.teach.pl

example the question of the size of the modules: Some universities are used to rather small-scale modules of 1-3 ECTS with fairly precisely defined study contents. Other universities use broad modules of 15 ECTS which set only the broad topic and the specific competences and skills to be acquired by the students. It is quite challenging to bring together the different philosophies. Finally, these differences are mostly not merely a philosophical question but are also reflected in the national or university specific regulations. As a consequence they also have a serious impact on the issue of mutual recognition of the degree.

Pilot Implementation (Online courses)

- The concept of online courses with international student groups and the concept of the online lecture series were much appreciated by the students and met – as a really innovative offer – with great interest also in the wider public. The practical realization of these courses within a multinational network proved to be a rather big challenge and many problems of different kinds had to be coped with.
- The organisational challenges regarding the coordination of the delivery in a multinational network are considerable. This starts from the different teaching and vacation periods in the partner universities. The time slot where all partner universities have their teaching periods is very narrow. The parallel offer of several online courses during this slot overtaxes part-time students who have to work besides their study. The managing of the teaching resources (Which online course can be offered in which semester by which university/teacher? How many local tutors are needed in addition to support the students and are they available at the right time?) poses further challenges.
- Another factor is the language. The EMAE core curriculum is taught in English only. This means that the students have to have appropriate English skills before they start the programme. During the pilot phase it appeared that the English skills of the students were not always such as had been expected by the network. For the future it will be necessary to find solutions to this problem, either by revising the course concepts or by developing additional language training offers for students. This language factor is not limited to students on the other hands. Not all teachers at the partner universities feel comfortable with teaching in English so that ways need to be found to motivate, support and train also this group.
- Furthermore, the IT-skills and IT-equipment of the students were not always as had been assumed by the network. To take full advantage of the international online lecture, in particular, students had to dispose of a rather high level technical equipment (e.g. for the video streaming). Moreover, they also need a certain level of IT-skills to handle upcoming problems, even if technical advice is provided from the course organisers.

Accreditation

- As mentioned above the different national regulations make it extremely difficult to have one common programme accredited in different countries. With a certain extent of flexibility and using compromises this problem can be handled. However the next step, namely to achieve the mutual legal recognition of the degrees awarded by each university, is much more difficult, since national regulations are not always prepared to tolerate compromises. The mutual recognition is the precondition for establishing a true “Joint Degree” in a multinational network which is the final aim of the EMAE project (see also Bechtel; Lattke 2006). The experience of the project has shown that an enormous amount of time and legal expertise is needed to deal with this issue. It will

therefore not be possible to reach this big long-term aim during the period of the EMAE project. It appeared rather necessary to adopt a step-by-step approach in the network starting from the conclusion of bi-lateral agreements in the partnership. In addition there is also a need for accompanying lobby work to influence policy makers so that the legal conditions for Joint Degrees will be improved at the national levels.

6. Conclusion

The development of the European Master in Adult Education can be seen as a programme which brings discussions about adult education in the several European countries nearer to each other. The students will have the possibility to get in contact with topics and students of other European countries from the beginning of their studies. It also opens the possibility for the experts in the EMAE-network to discuss and develop together several topics with a European perspective. For the future, the EMAE-network plans to integrate universities from additional European countries in the partnership. These partners may fulfil different roles in the network according to their national conditions and possibilities. But all partners will refer to the common European Master's programme. Through this the realization of a European Higher Education Area will be promoted also in the field of Adult Education, and the EMAE study programme will receive an even wider "European view".

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