

# Experiential Learning Theory applied to the Degree Profiles of the Arts and Cultural Management Programmes in Europe<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

European Higher Education Area (EHEA) has been in construction for a bit more than a decade. This paper aims to explore this process as well as the communication of cultural and arts management degree programmes through outcome-based education vocabulary as something flagshipped by the EU. It also aims to engage into critical discussions about learning outcomes and experiential learning process. The theoretical framework of the paper is mainly based on constructivist education paradigm and, to a lesser extent, on connectivism; David Kolb's experiential learning cycle and Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy of learning domains are applied in the analysis. 23 degree programmes of ENCATC members are approached through the degree profiles provided on their websites: learning outcomes, profiles of the graduates, and other informative texts. We are questioning the connections between the learning process, learning outcomes and profiles of the graduates, and giving practical suggestions for the programmes administrators to make the information on the degree more clear and holistic, both for the students and for potential employers.

### Keywords:

European Higher  
Education Area  
(EHEA)

Cultural and arts  
management

Learning outcomes

Experiential  
learning

Profiles of the  
graduates

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“AS ONE OF THE MAIN AIMS OF THE BOLOGNA PROCESS, EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA (EHEA) WAS MEANT TO ENSURE MORE COMPARABLE, COMPATIBLE AND COHERENT SYSTEMS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE”

## Introduction

Educational field in Europe is changing fast nowadays. However, the role which could be performed by education in society depends largely on the people working in this field, their capacity to reflect and interrelate with crises and changes, and to implement the results of these reflections into the educational programmes. In such a case, current students and future professionals will possess the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed for working in the changed realities. Higher education institutions (HEIs), as mostly financed and historically trusted by governments and people, are even more responsible before society to take a leading role in their field. This is why it was decided to focus on cultural and arts management higher education or, we can say, degree programmes. In addition, cultural and arts management programmes —since they operate in three different domains - culture, management and education— serve as an interesting example of cross-sector education (Suteu, 2006: 12). ENCATC, as the leading network of cultural administration and training centres in Europe, should be a good starting point for reaching and exploring these degree programmes and their profiles.

As one of the main aims of the Bologna Process, European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was meant to ensure more comparable, compatible and coherent systems of higher education in Europe since its inception in 1999.<sup>2</sup> This should contribute to the mobility of students, as well as of future qualified workforce, thus solving the employment problems and the lack of innovative approaches across Europe. During the past two decades formal higher education in general<sup>3</sup> has become much more student-centred and is encouraged to further do so; EHEA is meant to facilitate that process (Bucharest Communiqué, 2012<sup>4</sup>). Introducing degree profiles, learning outcomes and profiles of the graduates should be one step in

making education even more accessible, responsible, measurable and clear for current and future students. A degree profile describes the specific characteristics of an educational programme or qualification in terms of learning outcomes and competences, following an agreed format (the Bucharest Communiqué, 2012). It normally consists of basic administrative information, programme learning outcomes, core or specific competencies, purpose, employability, education style and other aspects<sup>5</sup>. While the change in higher education cycles and application of a three cycle system<sup>6</sup> meant already serious restructuring for many countries (in many cases shortening the education cycle), the application of degree profiles meant further adjustments.

Learning outcomes in the EHEA setting have been defined as a statement of what a learner is expected to know, understand, or be able to do at the end of the learning process. (Bucharest Communiqué, 2012). It is specifically underlined that learning outcomes should describe the minimum achievement and not the highest or more advanced ones. European Commission states that, from qualifications perspective, learning outcomes result in: better matching of qualifications with labour market expectations, greater openness of education and training systems to recognise (prior) learning achievement, and enhanced flexibility and accountability of education and training systems whilst enabling greater autonomy in defining the routes to attaining outcomes (or in other words learning process). The weakness though may be that this approach is not geared towards the development of explorative and experimental teaching or of training programmes that attempt to produce very diverse learning according to the diversity of learners (European Union, 2011: 7). However, in terms of employability, these social partners, who are not necessarily experts in education and training processes, have a better

<sup>2</sup> EHEA became a reality with the Budapest-Vienna Declaration of March 2010.

<sup>3</sup> This paper particularly focuses on the cultural and arts management level 6 and 7 programmes according to ISCED 2011.

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.ehea.info/Uploads/%281%29/Bucharest%20Communique%202012%281%29.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> The example template of the degree profile developed by Core2 project can be found here: [http://www.google.ee/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=4&ved=0CEgQFjAD&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.core-project.eu%2Fdocuments%2FThe%2520CoRe2%2520Degree%2520Profile%2520Template.docx&ei=r6mbUpSLOISL4ATk5IC4Cg&usq=AFQjCNER5AhYRdgmDym8il6gxiVOv8fW\\_g&sig2=w-qH20E98CkhldCt0-22PQ&bvm=bv.57155469.d.bGE](http://www.google.ee/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&frm=1&source=web&cd=4&ved=0CEgQFjAD&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.core-project.eu%2Fdocuments%2FThe%2520CoRe2%2520Degree%2520Profile%2520Template.docx&ei=r6mbUpSLOISL4ATk5IC4Cg&usq=AFQjCNER5AhYRdgmDym8il6gxiVOv8fW_g&sig2=w-qH20E98CkhldCt0-22PQ&bvm=bv.57155469.d.bGE)

<sup>6</sup> Bachelor, Master, Doctorate.

understanding of what to expect from a graduate when the qualification is expressed in terms of learning outcomes, and employability has been one of the main objectives of the Bologna Process. Hillage and Pollard (1998) work towards a definition of employability as a sum of three abilities: gaining initial employment, maintaining employment, and obtaining new employment if required. It can be assumed that a good part of the graduates of tomorrow will have to create their own jobs rather than to seek for existing ones. In the educators' discussions and official EU documentation it is not easy to find the notion of graduate profile, there is no such term officially in use. Without applying any specific terminology, we will use the more descriptive - profile of the graduate.

Adam, like other observers, concludes that it is probably still the case that most European countries are using learning outcomes only to a limited extent and not in a coherent or holistic way (2004: 3). Firstly, we assume that there are several reasons for that and some of them are rooted in the essence of learning outcomes as something "final", ending a supposedly linear learning process while in reality it is hardly ever so. Formal learning is intertwined with non-formal and informal ones, new knowledge is constructed on top of prior one, and students have very different learning strategies and awareness of their own learning process. Secondly, learning outcomes in their formalized way were adopted later (2009) —in some cases almost ten years later— than all of the degree programmes selected for the research were established, thus the obligation to provide learning outcomes came *post-factum* and might have been perceived by the programme administrators as of forced and bureaucratic nature.

This paper does not focus on the perceptions of programme administrators on learning outcomes as such, but the timing factor explained above should be taken in consideration.

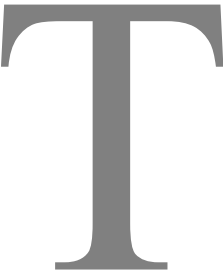
There is a substantive body of literature on the construction and assessment of learning outcomes in degree programmes. Biggs has explored in a number

of his works the quality and assessment of learning outcomes of HEIs (2003, 1993, 1987). Drew (1998) and Marton and Säljö (1976) have explored students' perception on their learning outcomes, while Kennedy (2007) has described the writing and application processes of learning outcomes. Learning outcomes are most often created applying Bloom's taxonomy of learning domains (1956) or its derivatives. This also applies to the generic descriptors (learning outcomes) of each educational cycle according to qualifications frameworks in EHEA (ENIC-NARIC<sup>7</sup>). On the other hand, the move towards learning outcomes

is hardly ever challenged in policy discourses —although there is vigorous debate in academic literature—, but there are concerns that the learning outcomes perspective can easily fail to grow to have an effect on education, training and learning practice. Some stakeholders go further stating that uncritical use and choice of the learning outcomes perspective may prove harmful in that it represents a distraction from other important education policies. Making choices is the fundamental action that is taken by government cultural agencies and our interest – and here for example Schuster (2001) includes artists, art administrators, government personnel, citizens and tax payers – should be in how those choices are to be made.

EHEA in general could be regarded as a possibility for bigger and easier mobility and transfer of knowledge, clear and transparent understanding of quality higher education, and better chances for graduate employability. The role of cultural and arts management education should be at the edge of the developments, pioneering rather than following, critically appraising and sharing best practices and experience of operating in the cross-sector educational setting. Making the

communication of degree programmes in cultural and arts management clearer, more coherent and holistic can be a good step forward. However, the action should always follow reflection and it is questionable whether there has been enough reflection in the cultural and arts management academic as well as professional community on the correlation between

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<sup>7</sup> ENIC-NARIC: European Network of Information Centres in the European Region-National Academic Recognition Information Centres in the European Union. For more information, see <http://www.enic-naric.net/index.aspx?s=n&r=ena&d=qf>

learning outcomes, learning process and profiles of the graduates. We would like to encourage that discussion. Consequently, the following questions are posed for this research: Have the programmes stated their learning outcomes and profiles of the graduates on their websites? Is the experiential learning cycle applied in communicating the learning process and – if so – how? Is Bloom's (or other) taxonomy applied in describing the learning outcomes and – if so – how? What could be the practical ways for the programme administrators<sup>8</sup> to communicate through their degree profiles in a more coherent manner?

## Cultural and arts management – an academic field?

Discussions and disputes have always accompanied the arts and cultural management discipline in the society, since at the very core of such management activity lays extremely subjective and often hardly definable object – artistic or creative work (looking at culture as certain limited creative activity). However one can approach culture also in wider terms – as a system (Meyer-Bisch, 2013), as a process (Robinson, 2000), as a springboard or citizenship (Mercer, 2004) – and such are the wider tendencies not only in academic discussions but also concerning political decisions. The field has constantly evolved towards complexity and the mastery of new skills, competencies as well as attitudes has become important for people operating in it (Suteu, 2006). The employment options as well as the expectations toward the graduates are so varied – depending on their exact position in the field – that it becomes rather hard to interpret them into a set of fixed outcomes.

Back in the 1970s Henry Mintzberg (1973) claimed that the pressure of the managerial environment does not encourage the development of reflective planners, but rather of fast information manipulators and actors. In 2003 Cornuel claims that there is no longer any intellectual contribution that the management schools provide to the private

or public decision makers or simply to society as a whole, summing up the discussion about the lack of truly scientific approach to managerial style disciplines, thus “emptying” them of content. We can also bring to the front here Bourdieu's statement about agents' attitude of action as a choice among all other possibilities, and their inability to see it as just one of possibilities (1999). This is very symptomatic of higher education programmes development in culture and arts management, where there is a constant struggle to raise the employability of the graduates and give them as much qualifications as possible. Sadly, as Suteu argues (2006), these

choices of what gets into the curricula and what kind of learning outcomes are covered, might be quite random, although perceived as only possible choice by those who made it.

Suteu argues further that the cultural management should not limit itself to adopting a certain number of traditional notions of business management training by simply adding sector specific information. The art and culture are so complex by nature that they can hardly be limited into an informative set. The study by Boylan (2000) concluded that there is a dangerous tendency for formal accreditation of arts managers and cultural administrators in Europe.

The specialized academic training in cultural management has created professionally closed groups: librarians, curators, conservationists and so on, but this process cannot be applied to general cultural management. There cannot be a homogenous closed occupational group with the same standardized training from a general perspective. Some researchers even claim that it is difficult and may even be impossible to develop universal training models for apparently similar occupational groups of

cultural administrators and arts managers (Stewart & Galley, 2001).

In order to really build a career profile for those working in cultural management and to add acclaim to their professional status, the required skills have to be capable of being flexible, easily and if necessary quickly redesigned, and retraining must be possible. The academic diploma as well as other kinds of credentials will only be an intermediary step,

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<sup>8</sup> In this paper “programme administrator” is a term used for describing a person responsible for constructing the degree profile. Other terms might be “programme manager”, “leader”, “specialist”, “coordinator”, etc.

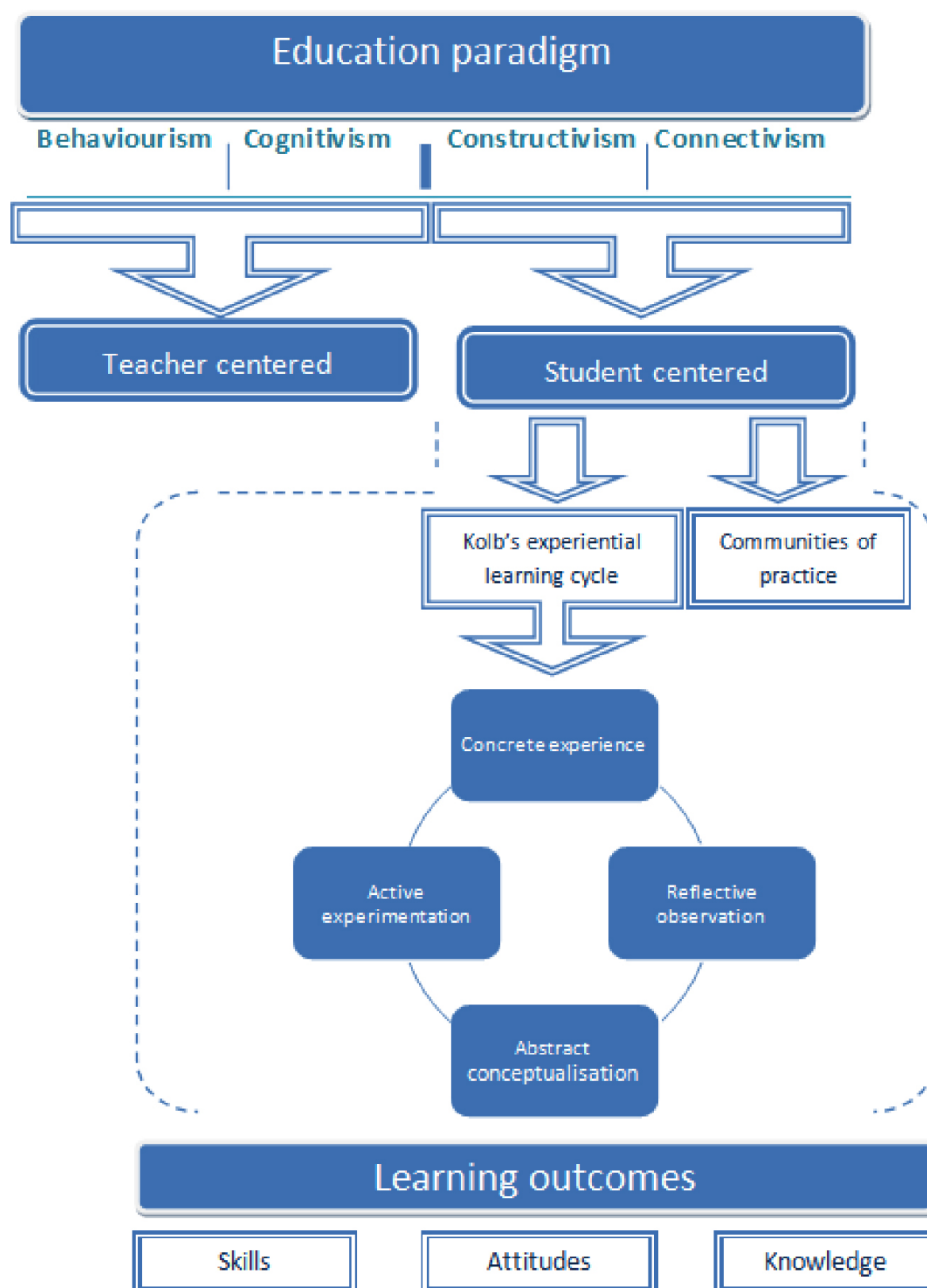


FIGURE 1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE PAPER

*Source: Own elaboration.*

among others, to acquire professional recognition (Suteu, 2006: 48). In this way, being capable and motivated to apply the appropriate learning method to future (working) situations and reflect on it becomes

strategically more important than possessing a set of skills and knowledge in several domains.

As to the instruction methods, we would like to argue that cultural and arts management degree

programmes are closely connected to experiential learning from their very beginning (in the 1980s). The first programmes were established at the very same time as Kolb introduced his experiential learning model (1984) based on Kurt Lewin's work. The people who started the programmes did not always have an academic background and perhaps had never received training themselves, but they stepped in to create a new learning experience based on their professional experience and understanding of the needs of potential cultural and arts managers (Suteu, 2006). They were practitioners with different backgrounds and experience, who understood the need for more holistic training for professionals working in the field (often themselves too), and naturally the logic for creating the degree programmes and designing the learning experience must have had the learner-practitioner as starting point. Although, as it was already argued before, the choices of the topics and subjects comprised in the curricula were probably largely personal, they were also tightly connected to the practical experience and realities of labour market and according situations.

Thus, we have briefly immersed into the contradictory topic of cultural and arts management as an academic discipline and its relationship with business management. Some insights to the Bologna process, European Higher Education Area and the position of experiential learning in it were also introduced. However, in order to proceed with the research, we need to understand the prevailing academic discussions on the experiential learning first.

## **Position of experiential learning in the constructivist education paradigm and implications on learning methodology**

The Bologna Process is strongly putting forward student-centred learning and supporting active learning methodologies in degree programmes, as well as EHEA is focusing on experiential learning theories. On a further level of generalization, experiential learning can be traced back to the constructivist education paradigm. It is beneficial to demonstrate here also the other education paradigms and corresponding practices. The theoretical framework of this paper can be summed up in this schematic representation:

The fathers of constructivism (Lewin, 1935; Dewey, 1986; Vygotsky 1997[1926]; Piaget, 2003 [1947]) saw learning as a selective process in which people give their own meaning to information, continuously interacting with their various environments. Constructivists are much less individualist than behaviourists and much more experience-focused than cognitivists. They picture learning process as focusing on and around actual

experience of a learner. Starting from theories of Lev Vygotsky and Kurt Lewin and continuing to more recent David Kolb and Roger Fry (1975), who were actually co-working on the early developments of experiential learning model, one can notice the importance and role of the learner and his prior experience in the learning process for the constructivists. Gibbs (1992) and Von Glasersfeld (1989), among others, have been exploring the motivation, assessment and responsibility of the learner in the constructivist approach and ways of stimulating these. Furthermore, student-centred learning represents both a mindset and a culture within a given higher education institution and is broadly related to constructivist theories of learning. It is in its turn characterized by innovative methods of teaching which aim to promote learning in communication with teachers and other learners, and which take students seriously as active participants in their own learning, fostering transferable skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking and reflective thinking. In addition different taxonomies in describing the student achievements (or, in other words, learning outcomes) are applied, for example knowledge, attitude, skills or in other words cognitive, affective, psychomotor (Bloom, 1956) as well as multiple intelligences (Gardner & Hatch, 1989). The learning process should also be related to personal learning styles; however, no substantial body of empirical research in academic settings which would prove the reliability of any suggested learning styles inventory exists. That is why the individual learning styles will not be taken in consideration in this paper.

Experiential learning theory and experiential learning model as introduced by David Kolb in 1984 puts emphasis alongside the experience, as well as on reflection and conceptualization of the experiencing and experimenting process. Kolb himself said that "Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (1984). Kolb's model has received certain critical comments from some scholars mainly criticising the simplified representation of learning process in the model, while others like Dewey (1986) claimed that reflective learning processes are highly complex. The model has also been developed and reformed further by different scholars: for example Argyris and Schön (1978) stressed the intellectual capacity of the learner in relation to the model and his/her capabilities of acting in accordance with it from an organizational perspective; Moon (2004) restructured the reflection processes in the model. It is clear that, as the learning outcomes are not designed to describe the whole variety and depth of every learner's acquired knowledge, the experiential learning cycle in its original form will not picture every single learning path. In 1997 a paper was released analysing the experiential learning's relation to the managerial education by Holman, Pavlica and Thorpe, which brought forward the social aspect of reflection processes also missed out in Kolb's model.

Still it was chosen for the theoretical framework of this paper as until now no crucial changes, rather restructurings, have been proposed for it. Moreover, we aim to approach the model in an innovative way, by picturing the learning outcomes into the model or, in other words, into the learning process.

Another paper on the empowerment of students as co-producers of the learning situations was introduced by Lengnick-Hall and Sanders (1997), which already suggested the emergence of communities of practice and a whole new educational paradigm – connectivism. Born in the digital era, it does not only relate to the digital field. Wenger describes communities of practice (in organizations mainly) applying three dimensions: joint enterprise as understood and continually renegotiated by its members; mutual engagement that binds members together into a social entity; the shared repertoire of communal resources that members have developed over time (1998). As the name suggests, new learning theory asserts that “we derive our competence from forming connections. The critical factor is the nature of the connections that we make or the order that create from the chaos that is, i.e. forming connections between specialized communities” (Siemens, 2004). Connectivism develops further the idea of experience as a basic unit in student-centred education and stresses the possibilities of learning from other people’s experiences. In this way communities of practice are part of active learning methods. There is nothing radically innovative in this idea, except that without active learning methods applied in higher education setting, the learners would not have the possibility to explore the variety of experiences during their formal studies and, more importantly, create future professional networks.

Having discussed and demonstrated the Bologna and EHEA construction processes in relation to the development of cultural and arts management higher education and presented a theoretical framework for the current paper, we would like to move forward and introduce the research methodology chosen and the research process conducted, as well as the results gathered.

## Constructing the research – through ENCATC membership

The idea for this research was generated from the construction of EHEA and promotion of student-centred outcome-based approach to education in general. We wanted to explore the effects of these processes on cultural and arts management programmes and, if necessary, make relevant suggestions for their more holistic communication. Four research questions were posed: Have the programmes stated their learning outcomes and

profiles of the graduates on their websites? Is the experiential learning cycle applied in communicating the learning process and – if so – how? Is Bloom’s (or other) taxonomy applied in describing the learning outcomes and – if so – how? What are the instruments and methods based on the experiential learning theories which could enable programme administrators<sup>9</sup> to communicate through their degree profiles in a more coherent manner?

In the empirical part the programme information was accessed through the degree profiles available on the websites, considered to be also an important initial information source for the students. Altogether 23 degree profiles from 16 countries were approached, all representing cultural or arts management higher education programmes, ENCATC members.<sup>10</sup> The research was constructed using qualitative research methodology, namely content-analysis of deductive nature. Content analysis was chosen (Berelson, 1952; Bryman, 2008; Flick, 2008) as a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of manifest content of communications. Content analysis is considered to be a research tool focused on the actual content and internal features of media. The coded results are usually used to make inferences about the messages within the text(s), the writer(s), the audience, and even the culture and time of which these are a part. Qualitative content analysis was also chosen because it is embedded in a model of communication and the aim of this research was to explore the communication of degree programmes through their learning outcomes, profiles of the graduates and other informative texts. It must be said here that in this research the author did not have the possibility to interview the students and explore their perception on stated learning outcomes, which could be a next topic to investigate. Nevertheless, this more conceptual discussion and study are considered as an inevitable initial step.

Although qualitative methodology is often questioned for its objectivity, qualitative content analysis is considered to be a rule guided method. The central analytical units in this particular case (the codes) were developed based on Kolb’s experiential learning model (concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, active experimentation). The results obtained in applying the codes to the degree profiles were also structured using knowledge, skills and attitudes taxonomy by Bloom. Several examples were chosen to support the analytical argumentation and a scheme (Figure 2) was created to better present the results. The scheme thus represents the learning outcomes (knowledge, skills, and attitudes) positioned on the four parts of the experiential learning cycle, bringing together the learning process and its outcomes. The attitudes are positioned centrally – as crossing all the four parts of the circle while knowledge and skills

<sup>9</sup> See footnote nr. 8 in this article.

<sup>10</sup> The full list of programmes researched with their websites’ links is provided in an appendice.



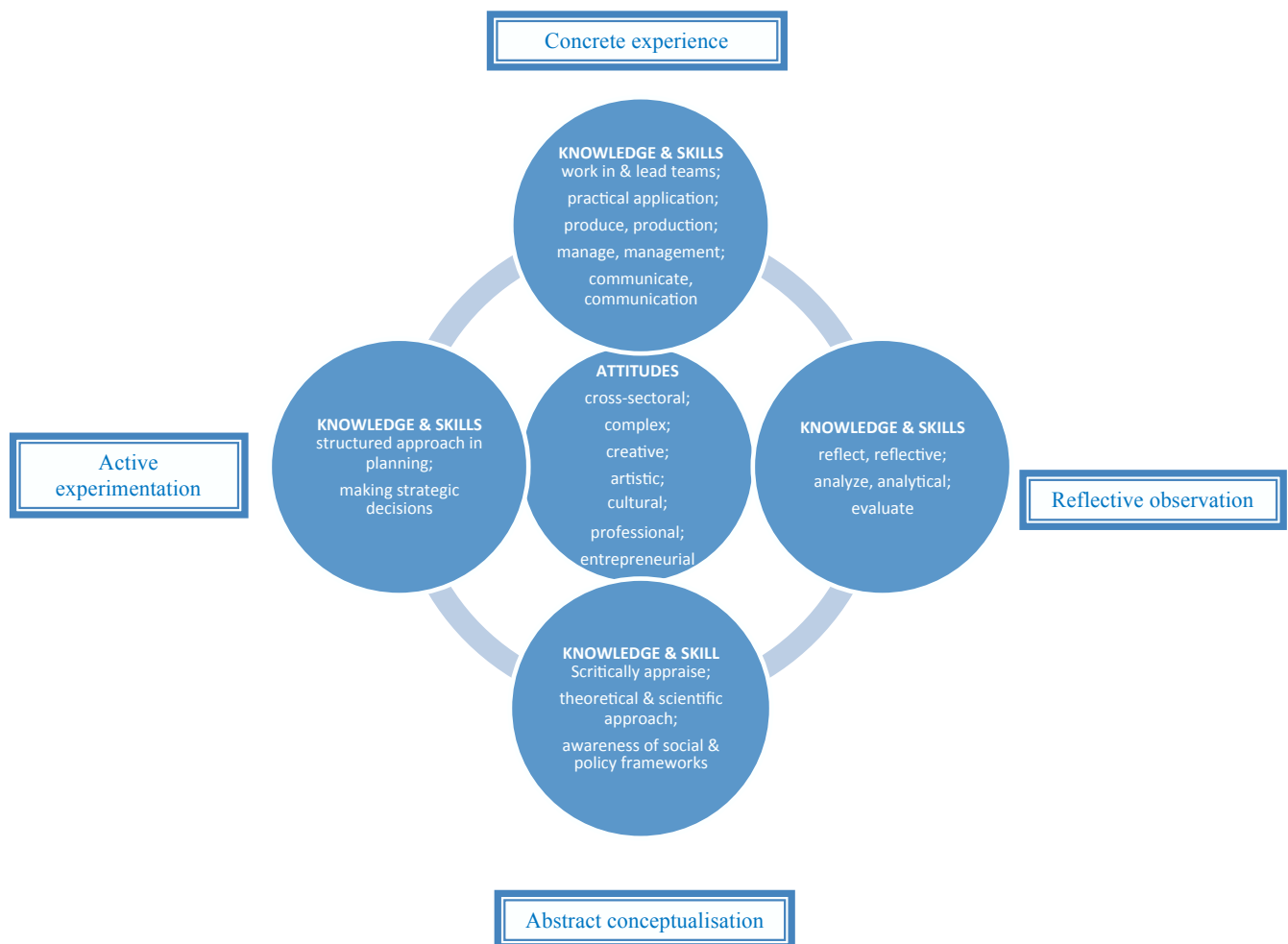


FIGURE 2. SCHEMATIC REPRESENTATION OF EMPIRICAL RESEARCH RESULTS

*Source: Own elaboration.*

are positioned on the four parts of the model. The analytical procedure followed a methodologically controlled application of the category to the material (Mayring, 2000). To control the quality of the content analysis process publications by Weber (1990), Coffey and Atkinson (1996), and Silverman (2001) were explored.

### Communication of the selected cultural and arts management degree programmes through their degree profiles

As it was mentioned before, a degree profile of an educational programme describes the specific characteristics of an educational programme or qualification in terms of learning outcomes and competences, following an agreed format (the Bucharest Communiqué, 2012). We will not focus

specifically on the visual representation of the data on programmes' pages nor on the logic of the pages, nevertheless we admit that this is an important matter worth investigation.

First and foremost, learning outcomes were presented (in one or another form) on the sites of all degree programmes in research. On very general level one can notice that most of the programmes under research aim for an approach which would cover the whole spectrum of Kolb's experiential learning cycle (concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, active experimentation) and according knowledge, skills and attitudes. However, they don't communicate the learning process in a way following the four parts of the experiential learning cycle nor apply Bloom's taxonomy to the learning outcomes. It is visible that less focus is on the active experimentation part, while concrete experience is clearly predominant. Additionally, speaking about the language and terminology, the learning outcomes were worded in complex manner and there were still



different terms (or none at all) used by the degree programmes in the sense of learning outcomes, for example: learning objectives or aims, programme content, core competencies, skills, etc. Some of the outcomes were worded quite specifically and others more generally; however, each programme usually applied similar style to all of its learning outcomes. Also, due to the complex nature of cultural and arts management as academic discipline, there was still no common understanding as to which department do the programmes belong to. The reality ranged from Arts and Humanities, to Communication or Business. We can assume that these differences come from historic reasons and traditions in local higher education practices, however this is not the topic of current research.

Looking at David Kolb's experiential learning model and experiential learning as such as it was explored in the theoretical framework of the study, it concentrates on the experience of the learner and on the reflection process which surrounds it. In other words, in order for the learning outcomes to fully reflect experiential learning process (and for the researcher to be able to trace it), one needs to connect the description of the learning process itself with the learning outcomes. This was not the case for the majority of the degree programmes and that is why the learning outcomes and learning process were brought together into one scheme, so that the connection between process and outcomes could become more visible. It will be further explored, but let us just point out here that some examples of the learning process (distinct methods) were often described in the introductory informative texts<sup>11</sup> about the programmes and it occurred that these normally quite short texts are generally an important communication tool for the programmes. Some of the programmes demonstrate very holistic approach to those, so that even without reading the learning outcomes separately, one can more or less understand the uniqueness and focus of the programme:

The Sibelius Academy Master's Degree Programme in Arts Management offers a wide variety of skills necessary for the growing culture industry. Mastering economy, communication, research, and analytical thinking gives students the tools necessary for working in demanding expert and leadership positions and as an entrepreneur. Visiting lecturers, who form an active link and mirror to the world of work, contribute to the learning experience. Sibelius Academy organizes arts management tuition in Helsinki (Arts

Management, in English) and in Kuopio (taidehallinto, in Finnish). Fluent English is a prerequisite for successful Arts Management studies in Helsinki, where the focus is on the management of arts organizations. In Kuopio, the emphasis is on cultural business activities. The teaching contents reflect a balanced mix of arts fields, including dance, music, and theatre as well as, for example, museums. The students also represent several art forms and disciplines. (University of the Arts Helsinki Sibelius Academy, Master's degree in Arts Management, "About us").

It was decided in the introductory chapter of this paper to use the more descriptive term "profile of the graduate", since the term "graduate profile", initially considered, was not represented in EU nor in academic terminology. The research showed that educational programmes also used the terms "competencies" and "qualifications" in the same sense; Suteu also employed "professional profile" (2006). Employability profile was found in the UK terminology and research papers (Yorke, 2006 [2004]). However, since many programmes did not have a more descriptive representation of their suggested profiles of the graduates, but rather had lists of possible jobs, the coding approach could not be applied to them. Thus, more attention was dedicated to the learning outcomes rather than to the profiles of the graduates in the empirical part.

## Attitudes as the key part of learning outcomes

As the drawing of the research results demonstrates, the notions used most frequently (codes) to express the attitudes acquired by the graduate of the cultural and arts management programmes under research were:

- Cross-sector.
- Complex.
- Creative.
- Artistic.
- Cultural.
- Professional.
- Entrepreneurial.

Although we admit the limitations of this research – the selection of programmes, possible problems in the coding process –, still we consider these as an important insight into the values and aims of the cultural and arts management

<sup>11</sup> Usually those texts were titled "About the programme," or just "MA/BA in cultural/arts management" and described shortly the main aims, USP, organization of studies and cultural-creative sector in general.

training in Europe. We can notice that 3 out of 7 words are connected to the artistic and cultural field and creativity, proving that the awareness of this field, its mechanisms and characteristics are considered as very important. We can thus support what Suteu (2006) said about the business skills simply being supported by the sector specific knowledge as not sufficient for cultural and arts managers. The degree profiles (learning outcomes, profiles of the graduates and other informative texts) demonstrate us clearly that learning cultural and arts management goes beyond this simplistic approach. They also show that entrepreneurial attitude is considered important, also in those programmes, which focus strongly on academic or research development of the students. It enables the students to be flexible in their choices and create new job opportunities for themselves. It might be also the reason why most of the cultural and arts management programmes under research did not have profiles of the graduates outlined separately – not wanting to limit the job possibilities of the graduates to a certain fixed list. However, as we will further explore, the programmes had some interesting approaches to presenting the profiles of the graduates or employability-related information in general. Nevertheless, it would be beneficial in the next phase to have interviews with the programme administrators to make sure what kind of indicators and logical path were applied when writing the profiles, as well as additional analysis of countries' qualifications frameworks to understand whether the profiles are professionally adequate. In addition to the interviews with the students about their perception on the profiles of the graduates, these would be next steps in research.

Another comment in this chapter about the term "professional" – which was one of the results of the research – seems relevant: the professionalism of the graduates was considered important. Although there is no clear definition of "professional" provided by the programmes (and it might be different for different participant countries of EHEA), it would be beneficial to initiate a discussion on the topic of professionalism in arts and cultural management within ENCATC. Similarly to what was said about the entrepreneurial attitude in relation to very different domains of cultural and arts management (ranging from academic work to production), "professional" was also used for very different activities and to all four domains of Kolb's cycle. Professional networks both as a learning method and learning outcome, for example, were mentioned on several occasions, reminding us of the connectivism and communities of practice (Siemens, 2004; Wenger, 1998).

The cornerstones of the degree programme are close co-operation with players on the cultural scene, open and informed discussions, practical studies in cultural enterprises, entrepreneurship and practical work in the form of projects that are also internationally orientated, in order to provide you as a student with the broadest perspective possible and a contact network for the future work. (ARCADA UAS, Bachelor's degree programme in Cultural Management, introductory text).

"Cross-sector" and "complex" were also the widely used terms, which is logical if we take in consideration what was said about the arts and cultural management field in general. We might say that the attitudes as part of the learning outcomes are the hardest part to measure and yet there is a general expectation in the instruction literature for the programme managers that the learning outcomes should be measurable.<sup>12</sup> The complexity of the learning outcomes themselves adds to these difficulties:

Masters Culture Management will be able to detect, analyse and offer creative solutions to complex problems of culture management from within an open, critical attitude, in a scientific manner and from within an interdisciplinary conceptual framework. (University of Antwerp, Master's degree programme in Culture Management, Programme learning outcome 3).

## Learning outcomes in experiential learning cycle – concrete experience

Moving on to the four parts of Kolb's experiential learning cycle and corresponding knowledge and skills as part of learning outcomes, we got the following notions as a result of the research:

- Work in or lead teams.
- Practical application.
- Produce, production.
- Manage, management.
- Communicate, communication.

All these notions were connected to the actual experience of the learner in the process of

<sup>12</sup> Which actually should distinguish them from competencies.

studies. Most often learning methods used for attaining those were internships or placements of different kinds, as well as mentored practical projects. Concrete experience was as important in knowledge and skills terms as cultural and artistic was in terms of attitudes. As it was already said before, the introductory texts about the programmes contained a lot of useful information which helped in differentiating one programme's focus and special characteristics from another:

In contrast to other university level programs in Arts Management, the Department of Arts Management at DAMU is directly linked to variety of artistic study programs at the school and includes a hands-on practice. It has a professional anchor in the school, particularly through the DISK theatre, where student productions are presented year-round. (DAMU, Master's degree programme in Arts Management, information about the programme).

Artistic or creative production as a separate learning module was a specific focus of some programmes but was mentioned as one of the learning outcomes or part of the profiles of the graduates in most cases. Thus we can say that, even if the educational programme does not have creative production as one of the main modules, it still considers it as an important activity. Quite naturally, management was mentioned very often and although it is hard to position management on just one of the four parts of the learning cycle, it was decided to situate it with the "concrete experience" as a learning activity, admitting though that management as a learning outcome is much more complex and demands for different learning activities. It is actually in a way a summary of all knowledge, skills and attitudes that the cultural and arts management programmes aim for. The example from the profile of the graduates below serves also as a good introduction to the last research result gained in this chapter – communication:

The principal job opportunities for those completing the program are:

- Manager or administrator of cultural services, facilities and projects;

- Cultural mediator;
- Manager of cultural companies and industries;
- Programmer and promoter of social and cultural activities;
- Manager of festivals or cultural events;
- Public relations and cultural sponsorship. (South-West University "Neofit Rilski", Master's degree in Cultural Management and Visual Communications, 4 semesters programme).

We can see here both the positions of a manager and of a mediator, which is an interesting term reflecting the position of cultural and arts managers' work in between the artistic or cultural and management fields. Mediator, in our opinion,

is a job related in many ways to communication between different people and sectors and it was mentioned in one or another way in most of the programmes under research. Communication is part of management as well production or mediation. The claim should be made here that by providing learning methods and situations which support the development of communication skills and practising communication contributes to the experiential learning cycle in a way that makes up for some of its critics, discussed in the theoretical chapter. Communication adds a social and interpersonal aspect to the model and in this way could also contribute to the general academic discussion on experiential learning cycle and its application in the degree programmes.

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## Learning outcomes in experiential learning cycle – reflective observation

Next we would look at the reflective observation and research results which were positioned in this part of the experiential learning cycle:

- Reflective, reflect.
- Analytical, analyze.
- Evaluate.

As it was already explored in the first chapters of this paper, reflective and analytical skills are important on all levels of learning and professional activity, even more in such a complex

field as arts and cultural management. We can also distinguish here the reflection and analysis on one's own learning process as well other people, activities and topics. In student-centred education, taking the responsibility for one's own learning becomes key and students become colleagues in constructing the educational process, as well as they should become colleagues in constructing their own learning outcomes. We can see that some programmes already implement this kind of advanced approach:

#### Tailor-made programme

Before entering the MA-AM programme, you are asked to describe your learning goals and your ambitions for starting out in the professional field. You will be encouraged to set realistic goals that take into account the requirements of the area of arts management you are interested in. The projects you will take part in will be tailored to your ambitions. In this master's course, extra attention is paid to expanding your awareness, experience, skills and knowledge about your chosen field. (HKU University of the Arts Utrecht, Master's degree in Arts Management, introductory text).

Evaluation implies also activities that can be directed towards oneself – self-evaluation or evaluation of one's own learning process –, as well as evaluating other people, activities and phenomena. Evaluation as well as reflection and analysis are the learning outcomes which connect very clearly the knowledge and the skills, since they cannot be realized in an effective and holistic manner without mastering relevant skills and having basic knowledge in different domains (or domains under evaluation, analysis and reflection). The learning outcomes related to the reflective observation of the experiential learning cycle can be considered representative of the cultural and arts management education provided. An academic master thesis as the final assessment method also implies – alongside other important skills and knowledge – a vast amount of reflection and analysis of theories, academic discussions and empirical information, connecting all of these in turn

with the researcher's own background, ideas and contribution to the field. In this research, master level programmes normally had a thesis project as their final assessment. Bachelor programmes did not necessarily have a research work, but rather a practical or final project that students were obliged to carry out and analyse. Similarly, research and research methodology-related subjects were more present in the master (postgraduate) level programmes.

#### Learning outcomes in experiential learning cycle – abstract conceptualization

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Following are the results gained in the research of the learning outcomes positioned in the abstract conceptualization part of the Kolb's experiential learning cycle:

- Critically appraise.
- Theoretical and scientific approach.
- Awareness of social and policy frameworks.

In the experiential learning cycle the section of abstract conceptualization is most related to concepts, theories, knowledge of the field and different related sectors (for example fundraising, marketing or visual arts, film etc.). Thus, in a way it helps us in differentiating between the focus of the programmes. Although most of the programmes promised to teach basic theories and concepts related to the cultural and/or arts management field, only few were more focused and elaborated. In this particular research we found programmes

focused on fashion management (e.g. University of Antwerp) and theatre management (e.g. DAMU), but also programmes with a stronger focus on cultural policy (e.g. University of Arts in Belgrade, Goldsmiths University of London, or City University of London) or leadership (e.g. University of the Arts Helsinki Sibelius Academy) were spotted. This list is not exhaustive, but it can give us some examples of specific focus of the programmes judging by the topics in their learning outcomes relating to the abstract conceptualization part.

It can be difficult though for the reader to differentiate between knowledge and skills mentioned in the learning outcomes as well profiles of the graduates, especially when they are very wide. Something which could help all the degree

programmes in general is applying a structure or a taxonomy (for example Bloom's [1956]) for the grouping of the different learning outcomes. This was unfortunately not the case for all degree programmes; nevertheless, most of them had some kind of structure (even if not coherent), but only few were more explicit and elaborated. One concrete example of the structured programme learning outcomes:

Graduates:

- will possess advanced business knowledge, i.e. economics, organisation, accounting, strategy and marketing;
  - will have basic knowledge of public, private and administrative law and in particular the law of the arts and cultural heritage;
  - will have an overall understanding of the sectors of cultural heritage (museums), cultural activities (music, theatre, performing arts), cultural industries (cinema, music industry, publishing, etc) and organizations operating in these areas;
  - will be knowledgeable in sociology, communications, art history, music and urban planning.
- (Università di Bologna, Master's degree programme in Innovation and Organization of Culture and the Arts, expected learning outcomes: knowledge and understanding ability).

We would also like to point out that being aware of social and policy frameworks is in its turn connected to creating and working with professional networks, which was described in the chapter examining attitudes in the learning outcomes. Often programmes mentioned practitioners and experts as guest-lectures and this as learning method also helps in developing corresponding networks (for example guests from ministries develop policy networks and awareness) as well as provides students with information from the first source. It is also beneficial for developing communities of practice in the classroom, sharing experiences (also with experts of the field) and reflecting on those experiences, which might not be the learner's own ones.

Below there is another relevant example in this regard:

Seminars are a vital space for working with leading professionals, managers, artists and specialist from a variety of fields. Students keep a pulse on current cultural activity through regular participation at professional conferences/seminars organized by a wide-range of active cultural institutions. (DAMU, Master's degree programme in Arts Management, information about the programme).

## Learning outcomes in experiential learning cycle – active experimentation

Last but not least, below we present the results of the research focused on the active experimentation part of the experiential learning cycle:

- Structured approach in planning.
- Making strategic decisions.

As it was already said before, active experimentation is the least represented part in the programmes in this research. We admit that in order to claim it as a major weakness of cultural and arts management programmes, we would need to have interviews both with the programme administrators and students, as well as even with graduates, so we are not claiming that. Nonetheless, this looks symptomatic to the author, especially because of her background of working with one cultural management programme. It seems though that, judging by what David Kolb meant with the active experimentation or testing out the concepts and ideas created by the reflection on one's concrete experience, this phase could be really profitable for the students to find their field of interest and professional application. It could also be really beneficial for the reader (for example future student or employer) to be able to find more information on the learning outcomes related to this part of the cycle, so it could be very valuable in terms of employability. At the moment lists of the graduate jobs seem to be a popular way of representing the profiles of the graduates or employability. Practically speaking, many programmes used lists of possible (or already acquired) jobs as profiles of their graduates, some were specific (for example public relations specialist, director of business department) and some more general (cultural mediator or regional cultural manager). In addition, most stated in one or another form that the job opportunities are plentiful, which links back to what Suteu said about the programmes trying to provide as much choice for the graduates as possible (2006). Technically speaking some less conventional presentation ways were implied: graduate quotes or interviews (e.g. Université Pierre-Mendès-France, City University London, University of Warwick, or Università Bocconi), separate websites of the graduates (e.g. Institut für Kulturmanagement Ludwigsburg), portfolio of graduates (e.g. University of the Arts Helsinki Sibelius Academy, Goldsmiths University of London).

Below is one typical example of presenting the profiles of the graduates as lists:

- Manager, specialist or administrator in the framework of public, civic or business services, teams and projects;
- Planner/producer of cultural events (in the arts and humanities, festivals, heritage, tourism, etc);
- Regional cultural manager;

- Planner/promoter of intercultural dynamics and socio-cultural activities;
  - Researcher in cultural management and cultural policies.
- (Universitat de Barcelona, Master's degree in Cultural Management and Policies.)

It seems that active experimentation part of Kolb's model would need closer attention on the side of programme administrators; the learning outcomes and profiles of the graduates in relation to that should be addressed critically. Also, programme administrators would need to revisit their learning processes in relation to this part of the experiential learning cycle and consider if more learning activities would be needed in the degree programmes.

Finally, it can be said that cultural and arts management programmes definitely serve as an interesting example in terms of learning outcomes and profiles of the graduates, relying on the experiential learning theory and hopefully bringing learning outcomes into the scheme of learning process. The reflections and examples presented are expected to serve as a subject for further thought and critical assessment of programmes by their administrators.

## Conclusion

Educational field in Europe is changing and we – as cultural and arts management programme administrators, lecturers, practitioners – need to stay at the edge of the changes and be pro-rather than reactive. We need to equip our graduates with skills, knowledge and most importantly attitudes which would give them freedom in finding employment or creating a new one. It is our responsibility to use appropriate and effective learning methods, which would be in accordance with official regulation, yet allow for all the learners to find their learning path. Cultural and arts management programmes in Europe could thus become the initiators of critical discussions, best practices and innovation in the higher education field.

This paper was written with the idea to explore how the process of becoming EHEA has influenced the cultural and arts management degree programmes in Europe, with the intention to focus on their degree profile information as an important communication tool for their prospective students and other stakeholders. The theoretical framework

was based on the constructivist paradigm and focused on the student-centred approach to learning process and experiential learning model by David Kolb (1984). Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy of learning domains (1956) was also applied in the analysis. The choice of such theoretical approach stemmed both from the outcome-based education principles introduced in terms of the Bologna Process together with EHEA, as well as from the importance of experiential learning process in cultural and arts management education as such. The four research questions formulated focused on the learning outcomes, profiles of the graduates and learning process of the programmes selected.

Further, ENCATC was selected as a representative research base of cultural and arts

management educational programmes in Europe. The qualitative content analysis of the degree profiles of the 23 chosen programmes showed that they have demonstrated learning outcomes as well profiles of the graduates on their websites, as well as outlined parts of the learning process in their informative texts. However, the connection between these three parts was not evident and it was decided to use an innovative approach to experiential learning cycle by Kolb in merging the learning outcomes with the learning process. This gave interesting results and helped in making clear some of the key issues in programme communication. Firstly, it was noticed that profiles of the graduates are much less clearly present than learning outcomes. Secondly, the focus of the learning outcomes is strongly on the concrete experience in the experiential learning cycle and active experimentation is somewhat less present.

Additionally, communities of practice (Wenger, 1998; Siemens, 2004) emerged as a learning method for different learning outcomes. All four parts of the model allowed for interesting reflection in general and provided input for next steps of research – involving programme administrators, students and graduates into reflection on the learning process and outcomes using interviews.

All in all it can be said that significant efforts are made by the cultural and arts management programmes in Europe to comply with EHEA and they can be encouraged to share their experiences and critically reflect on these processes, as well as to engage their students and graduates in these reflection processes.

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