

POPULATION AGEING IN EUROPE

Description of MEP-IP project outcomes based on student participants
experiences

Multidisciplinary European Programme (MEP)

Faith Kilpeläinen & George Tambila

Bachelor's Thesis
Bachelor of Health Care
Registered Nurse AMK

2014

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank all students who accepted to be interviewed in order to accomplish the goal of this research. We are thankful and grateful for receiving professional guidance and academic advice from our supervisors Anja Mikkola and Seppo Kilpiäinen in accomplishing this work, your endless support made our work possible. We express our gratitude to all members involved in the MEP project and special thanks to all the teachers and staff at the Health Care Unit of Lapland University of Applied Sciences.

School of Health Care and Social Services
Degree programme in nursing

Authors	Faith Kilpeläinen & George Tambila	Year	2014
Commissioned by	Anja Mikkola & Seppo Kilpiäinen		
Subject of thesis	Population Ageing in Europe: Description of MEP-IP outcomes based on students experiences		
Number of pages	61		

The purpose of the research was to describe the outcomes of the Multidisciplinary European Programme -Intensive Programme (MEP-IP) based on student participants experiences. This programme was implemented in three different countries; Lille, France 2011, Leiria, Portugal 2012 and Joensuu, Finland 2013. MEP-IP was a 14 days intensive educational project where students and teachers from seven European countries participated and worked together in order to discuss ageing issues from different aspects. Main theme discussed during MEP-IP projects was ageing in Europe from an intercultural context and pluridisciplinary perspective.

The theoretical background for this research comes from the Multidisciplinary European Programme and ageing in Europe. This research aimed at producing an evaluating tool for MEP project outcomes based on student participants experiences as well as to provide resource material for students who have interest in the topic of ageing. The research task was; to find out what are the outcomes of MEP-IP projects based on student's experiences?

Ageing in Europe is becoming one of the greatest social and economic challenges of the 21st century. According to WHO, it is estimated that by the year 2025 about one third of Europe population will be aged 60 or over with a particularly rapid increase in the number of oldest-old citizens (WHO, 2002).

This research is conducted using a qualitative method and the analysis was done by means of content analysis with inductive approach and data was collected by theme interviews from student participants (n=9).

The key results of this research are in four main categories; Active ageing and solidarity, personal development, problem based learning and networking.

Key words: Active ageing and solidarity, MEP, Problem-based learning, Population, Europe, Networking.

Sosiaali- ja terveysala
Hoitotyön koulutusohjelma, sairaanhoitaja

Tekijät	Faith Kilpeläinen & George Tambila	Vuosi	2014
Toimeksiantaja	Anja Mikkola & Seppo Kilpiäinen		
Työn nimi	Väestön ikääntyminen Euroopassa: MEP-IP ohjelman tulosten pohjalta		
Sivu- ja liitemäärä	61		

Tämän opinnäytetyön tavoitteena on kuvailla Multidisciplinary European Programme – Intensive Programme (MEP-IP)– nimisen ohjelman tuloksia oppilaiden kokemuksiin pohjautuen. Ohjelma toteutettiin kolmessa maassa eri vuosina, Ranskassa (Lille) 2011, Portugalissa (Leiria) 2012 ja Suomessa (Joensuu) 2013. MEP-IP oli 14 päivää kestänyt intensiivinen koulutusohjelma, johon osallistui opettajia ja oppilaita seitsemästä Euroopan maasta. He työskentelivät yhdessä ja keskustelivat ikääntymiseen liittyvistä teemoista eri näkökulmista. Koulutusohjelman pääaiheena oli ikääntyminen Euroopassa kansainvälisessä kontekstissa ja monitieteisestä näkökulmasta.

Tutkimuksen teoreettinen tausta tulee MEP-IP–ohjelmasta ja ikääntymisestä Euroopassa. Tämä opinnäytetyö pyrkii tuottamaan koulutusohjelmalle arviointityökalun, joka pohjautuu oppilaiden kokemuksiin. Lisäksi opinnäytetyö pyrkii tuottamaan materiaalia ikääntymisestä ja yksinäisyydestä aiheesta kiinnostuneille oppilaille. Tehtävänä oli selvittää, mitä oppilaat pitivät MEP-IP–ohjelman tärkeimpinä tuloksina?

Ikääntymisestä on tulossa yksi Euroopan suurimmista sosiaalisista ja taloudellisista haasteista 2000-luvulla. WHO:n arvioin mukaan vuonna 2025 jopa kolmannes Euroopan väestöstä tulee olemaan 60-vuotiaita tai sitä vanhempia. Erityisesti vanhimmista vanhempien kansalaisten määrä tulee kasvamaan nopeasti (WHO 2002).

Tämä opinnäytetyö toteutettiin käyttämällä laadullista tutkimusmenetelmää ja aineiston analysointiin käytettiin sisältöanalyysiä ja induktiivista lähestymistapaa. Aineisto kerättiin koulutusohjelmaan osallistuneille oppilaille suoritettujen temaattisten haastatteluiden avulla.

Tutkimuksen tulokset on jaettu neljään kategoriaan; aktiivinen ikääntyminen ja yksinäisyys, henkilökohtainen kehitys, ongelmakeskeinen oppiminen ja verkostoituminen.

CONTENT

1 INTRODUCTION	6
2 MULTIDISCIPLINARY EUROPEAN PROGRAMME (MEP).....	8
3 AGEING IN EUROPE.....	12
4 DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH	20
4.1 Purpose and aim of the research	20
4.2 Data collection	22
4.3 Data Analysis	24
4.4 Advancement of research.....	25
5 RESULTS	27
5.1 Active ageing and solidarity	28
5.2 Personal development.....	33
5.3 Networking	38
5.4 Problem based learning	42
6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION	47
7 CONCLUSION.....	49
8 DISCUSSION.....	52
REFERENCES	54
ATTACHMENTS.....	58

1 INTRODUCTION

Europe today is facing many challenges that are brought about by ageing population. It has been projected that by the year 2025 about one third of Europe's population will be aged 60 or over with a particularly rapid increase in the number of ageing citizens (WHO, 2002.). The main contributing factors to this phenomenon are thought to be a lower fertility rates and longer life-spans (Hayward & Zhang 2001). The European combination of an ageing population and widespread early retirement for example strains the social security system capacity to maintain today's standard of living for future generations of ageing people. To cope with these and other challenges, such as the growing long-term care needs, it is important to achieve a better understanding of the complex linkages between economic, health and social factors that determine the quality of life of the ageing population.

The EU has been actively involved with campaigns to boost discussions that are geared towards finding ways of coping with this phenomenon. In this pursuit the EU has funded various institutions and organizations that are involved directly or indirectly in addressing this issue. The MEP-IP project on which our research is based was one of the projects that were funded in order to provide a forum for students and staff from higher learning institutions to come together and discuss the topic of ageing in Europe. The term MEP-IP stands for, Multidisciplinary European Programme-Intensive Programme.

MEP-IP project enables students and teachers to work together in multinational and multidisciplinary groups in order to exchange views on issues concerning ageing and solidarity in Europe. The project was held in three different phases during the year 2011/2013 in three different countries. 1st phase 2011 in Lille, France, 2nd phase 2012 in Leiria, Portugal and 3rd phase 2013 in Joensuu, Finland.

Kemi-Tornio University of Applied Sciences now known as Lapland University of Applied Sciences was one of the participants of this project among other Institutions of higher learning in Europe. It was during this participation in Joensuu MEP-IP 2013 that one of the authors Faith Kilpeläinen, came up with the idea of researching on the topic of ageing.

The idea was shared with a lecturer who was also a participant of the project and before the end of the project the topic was agreed upon. Our interest to carry out this research as nursing students comes from the urgency and need for new insight on dealing with this current issue of ageing and challenges that are brought by this phenomena. The role of health promotion and advocating for policies that are beneficial to the ageing population for a better health is among the issues that encourage us to be involved with the project. The theoretical background of this research is based on ageing in Europe and MEP-IP project.

The purpose of this research was to describe the outcomes of MEP-IP project based on student participants' experiences. The research task was; what are the MEP-IP project outcomes? This research aims to produce an evaluating tool for MEP project outcomes based on students' experiences as well as to provide resource material for students who have an interest in the topic of ageing.

This research was implemented using qualitative method and analysis was done by means of content analysis with inductive approach and data were collected by interviews from students' participants. The main results of this research are in four main categories; Active ageing and solidarity, personal development, problem based learning and networking.

2 MULTIDISCIPLINARY EUROPEAN PROGRAMME (MEP)

The Project MEP is an Intensive Program (IP) which brings together students and staff from higher education institution in various participating countries: Belgium, Finland, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal and Spain (Malaquin & Lesaffre 2011). During the project these seven different European countries were involved in a three years educational program where ageing and related issues were discussed.

This three years program was guided by the main theme of how ageing can be dealt with in Europe in the future, from an intercultural and pluridisciplinary perspective based on solidarity. Each year the program had different themes and the main issue discussed was concerning active ageing in Europe. Participation enabled students and teachers to work together in multinational groups and benefit from special learning and teaching conditions. This provided the participants with a unique opportunity to acquire new perspectives on the projects topics in a broader way outside the school setting (Malaquin & Lesaffre, 2011).

The Multidisciplinary European Programme allowed members of the teaching staff to exchange views on teaching contents and new curricula approaches and to test teaching methods in an international classroom environment. The Multidisciplinary European Programme provided an opportunity for students and teachers to study topics such as ageing, ethics, solidarity and ethnicity in a multidisciplinary and multicultural environment. The topics rarely appear in academic curricula in most of the countries where participants came from. In order to tackle these issues the project used a method of intensive discussions and active instruction (Malaquin & Lesaffre, 2011).

The short MEP study programme, which gathered together teachers and students, aimed at teaching while interacting with each participant, so that participants could create innovative ways of approaching ageing and solidarity by using the knowledge gained through the programmes pluridisciplinary approach. During the programme several issues linked to ageing at different levels were assessed from economic, social, psychological, sanitary, and cultural perspectives, as well as from the view point of labour availability. These issues were presented by teachers to participants as a problem that needed solutions, after which the participants were divided into groups in order to create solutions to their respective topics. Each group had a teacher or mentor they reported to concerning their findings. This was when the participants had to be creative and innovative in applying the method of problem based learning approach to come up with solutions.

Problem based learning is described by Boud & Feletti (1997, 15) as an approach to structuring the curriculum which involves confronting students with problems from the practice which provide a stimulus for learning (Boud & Feletti 1997, 15). Organizers for the MEP project had discussed involving this approach of problem based learning during students assignments and workshops, as students had to focus on problems and finding innovative and creative solutions.

According to Savin-Baden, M. (2000) the essential delineating characteristics of problem based learning is that learning is initiated by learners focus on problem resolution without propositional knowledge (Savin-Baden, M. 2000). Real life problems such as ageing provide the initial impetus to promote exploration of the problem and to begin the process of critical thinking. Therefore by working in small groups and utilizing collective skills students develop collaborative processes to identify individual and group learning needs in order to solve the problem. Individual research informs the groups, and through interrogation and integration of the information, understanding is developed and used to provide potential solutions and identify further needs. This process of learning is active, self-directive and cyclical.

Problem-based learning allows determination of the problem, a number of approaches to the detection and information retrieval (Westcott Lyn & Whitcombe Steven W & Riley Jill & Clouston Teena J & Matheson Ruth, 2010). During the workshops, each country's representative will be able to present their own country's perspective from the social, economic, financial and health scientific point of view. These active learning methods are innovative because they combine multi-professionalism and mutual learning. This enables them to be used in contributing to sustainable projects (Lesaffre & Malaquin, 2011).

During the year 2010-2011 in Lille, France students presented data on the psycho-social and economic situations of their countries of origin. Based on the data presented, various problems and possible solutions to ageing were worked on. After the MEP intensive course students went back to their home countries with reports made from the countries participating in the project. The problems along with the solutions were discussed in small working groups. The various working groups produced an exhibition of photographs, videos, and web pages. A press conference was held and a written summary of the student reports was generated. A report of the outcomes of the projects activities was a book named "White Book: Ageing is our concern" produced by the participants.

During the second phase of MEP project from 11-22 March in Leiria, Portugal 54 students and 14 teachers participated. The main theme was on ageing in Europe and how it can be dealt with in the future from an intercultural pluridisciplinary perspective based on solidarity. Students were divided into six intercultural teams focusing on a case study concerning ageing and solidarity and the results were represented in the final paper. The task given was to solve and come up with ideas for solutions concerning active ageing and solidarity (Multidisciplinary European Program, 2012).

During the third phase of the MEP project, 60 students and 18 teachers participated from 11-22 March 2013 in Joensuu Finland. The theme during this phase was; the ageing society in Europe from an intercultural and pluridisciplinary perspective based on solidarity. Participants presented reports on ageing from their representative countries as well as worked on the case study assigned to their group during the program activities. During this phase the universities worked together in collaboration with local organizations such as firms and public institutions on how to deal with ageing impact on those organizations.

3 AGEING IN EUROPE

Ageing has become an important topic of discussions in Europe. This is due to the challenges brought by the phenomenon of an increasingly ageing population. Europe's population is ageing fast, the working age population is on increased decline and the population of over 60 year-olds is continuing to rise. This means, that along with the dwindling workforce population, new needs are arising in particular in the healthcare sector which could threaten the stability of European social systems. This situation also put Europe in a difficult position in world where other emerging economies still have comparatively younger and growing populations, which means a growing pool of future talents. In the long run this will affect Europe's competitiveness and relevance in the world in terms of work force.

The median age of EU Member States' populations remained fairly unchanged across those countries for which data are available from 1960 to 1980. The indications points out that from 1995 to 2010 the EU's population started to age at a relatively rapid pace.

See Chart 1.

	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010
EU-27	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	36.5	38.0	39.5	40.9
BE	35.2	34.7	34.5	34.1	33.9	35.2	36.2	37.3	38.7	40.1	40.9
BIG	30.3	31.8	33.2	33.6	34.1	35.1	36.5	38.0	39.1	40.7	41.4
CZ	33.2	33.7	33.5	32.7	32.8	33.9	35.1	36.2	37.3	38.7	39.4
DK	33.0	32.8	32.5	32.7	34.1	36.0	37.0	37.7	38.2	39.4	40.5
DE	34.8	34.5	34.0	35.2	36.6	36.9	37.6	38.2	39.8	41.8	44.2
EE	:	:	33.6	:	:	:	34.2	36.2	37.8	38.8	39.5
IE	:	:	:	:	:	:	29.1	30.8	32.4	33.5	34.3
EL	:	28.9	33.9	33.9	34.0	35.2	36.0	36.9	38.1	39.9	41.7
ES	:	:	:	30.1	30.5	31.8	33.4	35.4	37.4	38.6	39.9
FR (*)	33.0	32.8	32.5	31.6	32.2	33.5	34.7	35.9	37.3	38.6	39.8
IT	:	:	:	:	:	35.4	36.9	38.5	40.1	41.5	43.1
CY	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	32.0	33.3	35.0	36.2
LV	:	:	34.0	34.8	35.0	34.7	34.6	36.0	37.9	39.2	40.0
LT	:	:	30.7	31.5	31.7	31.9	32.4	33.9	35.8	37.7	39.2
LU	:	:	:	34.9	35.0	35.7	36.3	36.7	37.3	38.1	38.9
HU	32.0	33.3	34.1	34.2	34.3	34.9	36.1	37.6	38.5	38.9	39.8
MT	:	:	:	:	28.8	:	:	34.5	36.3	38.0	39.2
NL	28.7	28.5	28.5	29.2	31.2	32.9	34.4	35.8	37.3	38.9	40.6
AT	35.5	35.1	33.9	33.9	34.7	35.1	35.6	36.1	37.9	39.7	41.7
PL	26.4	27.5	28.3	28.2	29.4	30.7	32.2	33.7	35.1	36.5	37.7
PT	27.8	28.5	29.4	28.6	30.4	31.4	33.9	35.9	37.6	39.2	40.7
RO	:	:	30.9	30.8	30.5	31.6	32.6	34.0	34.4	36.4	38.3
SI	:	:	:	:	:	32.5	34.0	36.0	37.8	39.9	41.4
SK	27.5	27.9	28.3	28.1	28.7	30.0	31.2	32.4	33.9	35.3	36.9
FI	28.4	28.5	29.4	30.5	32.6	34.5	36.3	37.7	39.2	40.8	42.0
SE	36.0	36.3	35.5	35.3	36.0	37.6	38.4	38.4	39.3	40.1	40.7
UK	:	:	:	33.8	34.2	35.3	35.8	36.4	37.5	38.7	39.5
IS	25.6	24.2	24.3	25.2	26.7	28.1	29.8	31.3	32.8	34.1	34.8
LI	27.7	27.2	:	28.0	29.5	31.1	32.6	34.6	36.1	38.3	40.8
NO	34.3	34.2	33.0	32.2	33.2	34.5	35.3	36.0	36.7	37.8	38.6
CH	32.6	31.5	31.7	32.8	34.6	36.0	36.9	37.2	38.5	40.1	41.5
ME	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	34.5	35.6
HR	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	40.2	41.3
MK	:	:	:	:	:	:	:	30.7	32.3	34.2	35.8
TR	20.1	19.0	18.6	19.3	19.8	20.7	22.0	:	:	:	28.8

Chart 1. Increasing median age changes in EU population 65+yrs 1960 to 2010 (Eurostat 2012, 16.)

The share of persons aged 65 or over in the total population rose by 3.7%, there was particularly rapid growth in Slovenia, Germany, Italy, the Baltic Member States and Greece, as the share of those aged 65 or over in the total population increased by at least five percentage points. At the other end of the range, the share of this group of the population rose by less than one percentage point in Denmark, the United Kingdom, Luxembourg and Sweden, while Ireland was the only Member State to report a falling share of persons aged 65 or over in the total population (Eurostat 2012, 17).

In terms of numbers the European countries had ageing population aged 65 years of about 45 million in 1950 and by 1999 the population aged 65+ had already doubled to 101 million and by 2050 Europe it is estimated there will be 173 million people aged 65 and above (Eurostat, 2012). Chart 2.

	Total population (1 000)	Aged 50-64 (% of total population)			Aged 65-79 (% of total population)			Aged 80+ (% of total population)		
		Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
EU-27	501 101.8	19.1	9.3	9.8	12.7	5.7	7.0	4.7	1.6	3.1
BE	10 839.9	19.3	9.6	9.7	12.2	5.6	6.7	4.9	1.7	3.2
BG	7 563.7	20.8	9.8	11.0	13.7	5.7	8.0	3.8	1.4	2.4
CZ	10 506.8	20.8	10.1	10.7	11.7	5.0	6.7	3.6	1.1	2.4
DK	5 529.4	19.7	9.8	9.8	12.2	5.8	6.4	4.1	1.5	2.7
DE	81 802.3	19.3	9.6	9.7	15.6	7.2	8.4	5.1	1.6	3.5
EE	1 340.1	18.8	8.3	10.5	13.0	4.6	8.3	4.1	1.0	3.1
IE	4 467.9	16.0	8.0	8.0	8.5	4.1	4.5	2.8	1.0	1.8
EL	11 305.1	18.9	9.2	9.7	14.3	6.4	8.0	4.6	2.0	2.6
ES	45 989.0	17.4	8.5	8.9	12.0	5.4	6.6	4.9	1.7	3.1
FR	64 716.3	19.2	9.3	9.8	11.4	5.1	6.3	5.2	1.8	3.5
IT	60 340.3	19.0	9.2	9.7	14.5	6.5	7.9	5.8	2.0	3.8
CY	803.1	18.0	8.9	9.1	10.1	4.7	5.4	2.9	1.2	1.7
LV	2 248.4	18.5	8.2	10.3	13.4	4.8	8.7	3.9	0.9	3.0
LT	3 329.0	17.7	7.8	9.9	12.4	4.5	7.9	3.6	0.9	2.7
LU	502.1	17.8	9.1	8.7	10.3	4.7	5.6	3.6	1.2	2.5
HU	10 014.3	20.3	9.4	11.0	12.7	4.9	7.8	3.9	1.2	2.8
MT	414.4	21.3	10.6	10.7	11.5	5.1	6.3	3.3	1.2	2.1
NL	16 575.0	20.1	10.1	10.0	11.4	5.4	6.0	3.9	1.3	2.6
AT	8 375.3	18.4	9.0	9.3	12.8	5.8	7.0	4.8	1.5	3.3
PL	38 167.3	20.8	9.8	10.9	10.2	4.1	6.1	3.3	1.0	2.3
PT	10 632.7	18.6	8.9	9.7	13.4	5.9	7.5	4.5	1.6	2.9
RO	21 462.2	18.8	8.9	9.9	11.9	4.9	6.9	3.1	1.1	2.0
SI	2 047.0	20.3	10.3	10.1	12.6	5.4	7.2	3.9	1.1	2.8
SK	5 424.9	19.5	9.3	10.2	9.5	3.8	5.8	2.7	0.8	1.9
FI	5 351.4	21.7	10.8	11.0	12.4	5.6	6.8	4.6	1.4	3.2
SE	9 340.7	19.1	9.6	9.5	12.8	6.1	6.7	5.3	2.0	3.3
UK	62 008.0	18.1	8.9	9.2	11.8	5.5	6.3	4.6	1.7	2.9
IS	317.6	17.1	8.7	8.4	8.7	4.2	4.5	3.3	1.3	2.0
LI	35.9	20.5	10.4	10.1	10.3	4.8	5.4	3.2	1.1	2.2
NO	4 858.2	18.6	9.4	9.2	10.3	4.9	5.5	4.5	1.6	2.9
CH	7 785.8	19.1	9.6	9.6	12.0	5.5	6.5	4.8	1.6	3.1
ME	632.9	17.9	8.7	9.2	10.6	4.6	6.0	2.3	0.9	1.4
HR	4 425.7	20.2	9.8	10.4	13.7	5.7	8.0	3.5	1.1	2.5
MK	2 052.7	18.0	8.9	9.1	9.8	4.5	5.4	1.8	0.7	1.1
TR	72 561.3	12.4	6.2	6.3	5.8	2.6	3.2	1.2	0.4	0.8

Chart 2. Increasing number of 65+ years old population in Europe (Eurostat 2012, 17).

The European Union has vowed to address the issue and made it the focus of its Europe 2020 strategy. To turn the challenge into an opportunity, it has decided to support investment in new technologies and services that can be adapted to an ageing population, as an important part of initiatives such as the Digital Agenda and the Innovation Union. It also has pressed Member States to conduct the structural reforms needed to save Europe's welfare systems from bankruptcy (WHO, 2002).

The factors contributing to these population changes includes several aspects. The decrease in births, derived from changes in habits and lifestyles of modern societies, has diminishing the time available for having children. Also the role of women in society has shifted and women now occupy positions of high responsibility more than before. The young people of childbearing age have decided to start families considerably later giving priority to academic and professional life becoming dependent on their parents and family for more years. The growth of life expectancy has derived from substantial improvements in quality of life and significant scientific advances in medicine.

Consistently low birth rates and higher life expectancy will transform the shape of the European Union's age distribution. Probably the most important change will be the marked transition towards a much older population structure and this development is already becoming apparent in several EU Member States. As a result the proportion of people of working age in the European Union is shrinking while the relative number of those retired is expanding. The share of older persons in the total population will increase significantly in the future, as a greater proportion of the "post-war baby-boom" generation reaches retirement. This will lead to an increased burden on those of working age to provide for the social expenditure required by the ageing population for a range of related services (Eurostat 2012, 2).

The latest Eurostat's ageing population projections were made by covering the period from 2011 to 2060 and it shows that population ageing is likely to affect all European Union Member States during this period. The survey unveiled a scenario where the population will be slightly higher in 2060 while the age structure of the population will be much older than it is now. The working aged population is expected to decline steadily, while older persons will likely account for an increasing share of the total population.

Another aspect of population ageing is the progressive ageing of the older population itself as the relative importance of the very old is growing at a faster pace than any other age segment of the European Union's population. The share of those aged 80 years or above in the EU's population is projected to almost triple between 2011 and 2060. (Eurostat 2012, 4): Chart 3.

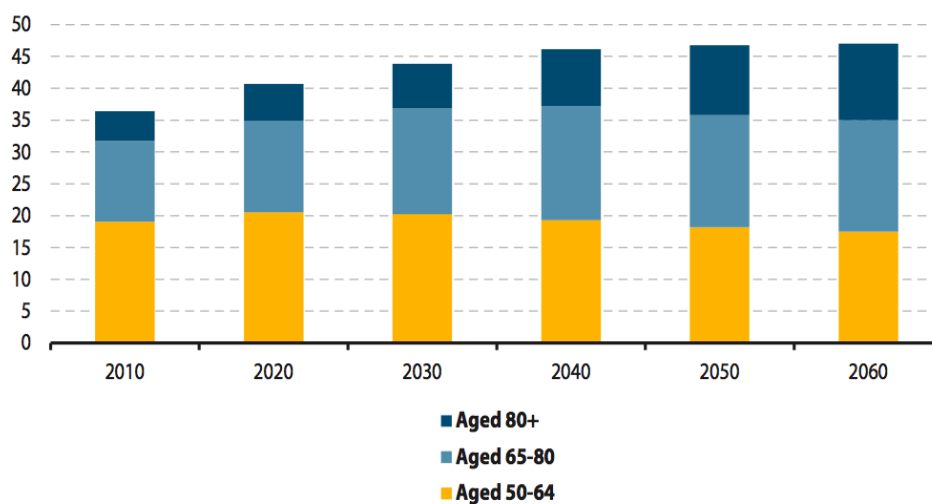


Chart 3. Projected population by age group, EU 27, 1 January 2010 estimates % share of total population (Eurostat 2012, 32).

Due to the shrinking working age population the ageing trend that Europe is experiencing will cause effects on working life. At the moment average retirement age in Europe is 62 years for women and 64 years for men. Health and the functional capacity begin to weaken soon after 45 years and they have direct influence on work ability. People cannot change the course of time or interfere the chronological ageing. Growing old is an individual process also affected by heritage, environment and work life (MEP 2011, 26)

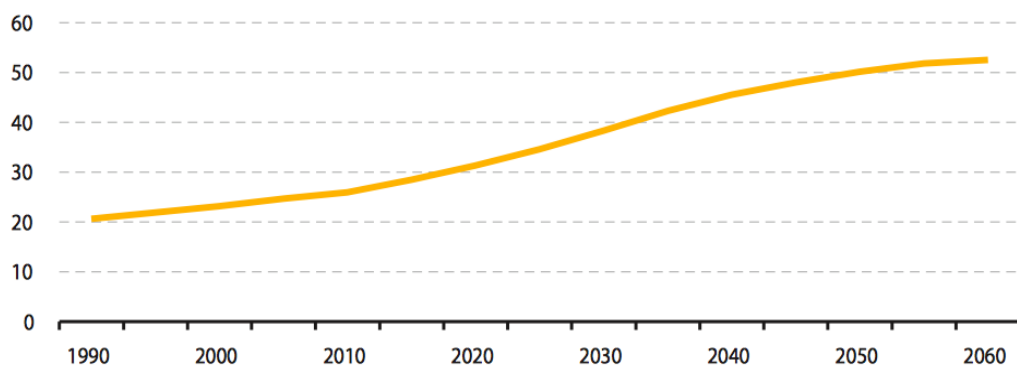


Chart 4. Old age dependency ratio, EU 27 (Population aged 65+ in relation to the population aged 15-64: Projections, 2015-2060.) in %.

This phenomenon implies that in the future we do not only have a smaller share of our working age population but also a decline in the overall population. The best way to ease the transition towards a smaller population would be to encourage people to work for longer and remove the barriers that prevent them from doing so. The pension policies have already been making changes to improve incentives for longer working careers by raising the state pension age, by restricting pathways to early retirement and by eliminating mandatory retirement. It is important to refer here to the potential of employment of women, not just part time employment but actually full time employment policies to encourage women into the workplace, through better provisions for child care and parental leave will help redress the balance between work and family for women.

As Asghar Zaidi (2008) points out the employment potential of other groups which often suffer from low employment should be utilized for example, policies towards greater employment amongst persons with disabilities should be pursued with a greater effort. One should also keep in mind the importance of the employment status of the migrant population which would also contribute to the labour force capacity of their new homelands provided their employment levels remain high (Asghar, Z 2008, 12).

Active ageing recognises that if people are to work for a longer period of time then they will need to be in good physical and mental health with access to more flexible working arrangements, healthy workplace, retirement schemes and lifelong learning. The EU supports various initiatives in this domain such as promoting lifelong learning strategies. In a Communication titled 'New skills for new jobs anticipating and matching labour market and skills needs', the European Commission seeks to present an assessment of the skills requirements in Europe up to 2020 taking account of the impacts of technological change and ageing populations.(Eurostat 2012, 5).

As European Union points out many of the challenges that arise from population ageing are universal to all member states. They include pressure on public budgets and fiscal systems, strains on pension and social security systems, adjusting the economy and in particular workplaces to an ageing labour force; possible labour market shortages as the number of working age persons decreases; the likely need for increased numbers of trained healthcare professionals; higher demand for healthcare services and long-term institutionalized care; potential conflict between generations over the distribution of resources.(Eurostat 2012, 7).

The European Union designated 2012 as the European Year for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations on 23 September 2011. This initiative aims to help create better job opportunities and working conditions for the growing numbers of older people in Europe; help them play an active role in society, and encourage healthy ageing and independent living (Eurostart 2012, 10). One of the main goals of the European Year 2012 is to reverse the idea that older persons are a burden on society. It is known that Europeans live longer and healthier lives comparing to most other cultures, therefore governments are looking for ways to involve older persons more in society and to keep them active. These changes could result in economic benefits for society as a whole, while at the same time promoting the physical, mental, and social well-being of ageing society

The demographic changes that are likely to be experienced across the EU in the coming decades also present an opportunity for the development of new products and services that are geared to the needs of older people. There is the potential for a wide range of new technologies to be developed that could allow older people to stay autonomous and live longer in their own homes, to transform the delivery of care, or to personalize services in response to patients' needs.

The European Year 2012 was designed to raise awareness of these issues, identify and publicize good practices, while encouraging policymakers and stakeholders (at all levels of governance) to promote active ageing. Without further institutional and policy changes, demographic change could potentially impinge on inter-generational solidarity, as working populations are increasingly asked to pay for the needs of an expanding group of older persons.

MEP project has been a response of the 2008 European Commission published a report entitled Meeting Social Needs in an Ageing Society. This issue compelled all European countries to devise and implement a policy reaching far beyond a mere series of measures designed to comfort voters.

The focus of MEP project was to discuss the topic of Ageing in Europe from various perspectives. This is an issue all European countries are facing, instead of restricting the scope of the problem to a mere national problem, it would be preferable to assess and tackle issues linked with ageing at different levels such as governance, economic, social and cultural.

Some of the topics discussed during MEP-IP project included how ageing can be dealt with in Europe in the future from an intercultural, multidisciplinary perspective based on solidarity, the psycho-social and economic situation in different European countries, problems and possible solutions to ageing (White book was published) and best practices for active ageing in Europe.

4 DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

4.1 Purpose and aim of the research

The purpose of this research is to describe the outcomes of the Multidisciplinary European Projects-Intensive Programme (MEP-IP) based on student participants' experiences, during the seminars which were held in three different countries, Lille, France 2011, Leiria, Portugal 2012 and Joensuu, Finland 2013. This research aims to produce an evaluating tool for MEP project outcomes based on students' experiences as well as to provide resource material for students who have interest in the topic of ageing. MEP-IP was a 14 days intensive educational program where students and teachers from seven European countries participated and worked together in order to review ageing issues from different aspects.

The main theme discussed during MEP-IP project was ageing in Europe from an intercultural and pluridisciplinary perspective based on solidarity. To achieve the aim of the research, the authors used a qualitative approach in which extensive interviews were conducted among students who participated in the MEP-IP programs' activities. The authors chose this approach because they wanted to understand students' experiences, opinions and thoughts that were raised during the MEP-IP program activities in the hosting countries.

This research was carried out by using a qualitative research approach. According to Kumar (2005, 12) a study is classified as qualitative if the purpose of the study is primarily to describe a situation, phenomenon, problem or event; the information is gathered through the use of variables measured on nominal or ordinal scales and if analysis is done to establish the variation in the situation, phenomenon or problem without quantifying it (Kumar 2005, 12.). The method was chosen because the authors wanted to describe and capture student participants' experiences based on their participation in an existing project.

Qualitative research is characterized by its aims, which relate to understanding some aspect of social life, and its methods which in general generate words, rather than numbers as data for analysis (Brikci & Green 2007, 2.) The nature of qualitative research is such that it seeks to answer questions, systematically uses a predefined set of procedures to answer the question, it collects evidence, produces findings that were not determined in advance and it produces findings that are applicable beyond the immediate boundaries of the study (Denzin & Lincoln 2000, 1).

Qualitative methods characteristics suit the nature of this research well, as the research aims to analyse and describe a situation that could not be solely quantified in numbers since it concerned people's experiences. In order to achieve the aim of the research, the authors used interviews conducted for the purposes of the study as primary data, and collected supporting secondary data such as material produced by the MEP-IP program and other relevant literature. The data was then analysed to produce useful new results and material for evaluating the MEP-IP programs outcomes based on students' experiences.

In this research a group of nine students were included in interviews and it is through the perspective of this focus group that the authors aimed at understanding the experiences of the students. The qualitative research method allowed the authors to obtain information about the values, opinions, behaviour and social contexts of the studied focus group. Also supportive quantitative data was used to provide background information about the situation of the ageing population in Europe. The use of quantitative clarifications such as the tables and graphs in this thesis was to support the collected qualitative data in the implementation of this research. Triangulation form of mixing data was used to validate any claim that might arise as to why quantitative data were included in this research. As Kananen (2011, 41) explains, although qualitative research methods are person-centered and quantitative methods are variable-centered (Kananen 2011, 41.), quantitative data can be used to complement qualitative research in a variety of ways without compromising the nature of qualitative research.

As (Silverman 2006,114.) explains, when you are concerned with exploring people's life histories or everyday behaviour, accessing an individual's attitudes, values and aspects that cannot necessarily be quantified, then qualitative methods are favoured (Silverman 2006,114). When conducting qualitative research a researcher is searching for answers such as *where*, *when* and *how* in order to understand more about the historical and social circumstances in which behaviour comes into being. Therefore this method is concerned with the reality and seeks to stress on the meanings and questions as to why certain phenomena are the way they are.

The qualitative research method that was used in this study allowed the authors to take the role of active learners instead of experts. Actively listening to and learning from the participants allowed the authors to explore the experiences of the students in the focus group in their natural environment. As the study describes the outcomes of the Multidisciplinary European Projects-Intensive Programme (MEP-IP) from the participants' perspective, the conclusions are on a practical level and can therefore be used to further develop the program and support it in reaching its objectives. The research findings can be used as an evaluating tool for MEP project outcomes based on students' experiences, also as resource material for students who are interested in the topic of ageing and solidarity in Europe.

4.2 Data collection

A total of 9 interviews were done from different countries, meaning that 9 students who participated in the third phase of MEP-IP which took place on 10th-22nd March 2013 in Joensuu, Finland were interviewed. The criteria for participation in the research were that, a student should have been a participant in the projects activities. Participation in the interview was voluntary and all of the students interviewed gave their consent. The interview offered the possibility for interviewee to decline and withdraw their participation in case they so wished.

The interviews were conducted in as a peaceful, quiet and relaxed atmosphere as possible. The participants were informed in advance that they would be tape-recorded and all gave their consent. This was to reduce the possibilities of the participants becoming nervous with tape recording which could affect their response to interview questions. The interview questions were in different categories, each category had a main subject and several questions under that subject to make sure that information could be gathered more clearly according to these categories. Data collection is core of every research work since it provides the information needed to make an analysis and produce answers to the research questions.

Theme interview is one of the qualitative data collection methods. In this method the researcher makes questions according to themes or topics beforehand and these themes help to guide the interviews so that they focus on the main points. The themes were chosen according to the MEP-IP project intended objectives. However the authors were flexible in interviews, as Moule & Goodman(2009, 288.) explain, this method needs the interviewer to be open minded and flexible in order to get as much answers as possible from interviewees without limiting them (Moule & Goodman 2009, 288).

The interview enabled a structure for a fluent guided discussion, enabling the interviewer to steer the discussion when the focus slips away from the researched subject or when the researcher wants to deepen or clarify concept. Through interviews the researcher can utilise participants' facial expressions, tone and other gestures which gives more information about the topic discussed rather than use of a simple questionnaire.

Authors preferred interviews in carrying out this research because when conducting an interview, the interviewee may bring out many ideas and themes within a short period of time as compared to using questionnaires which may lead to very short answers like yes or no. As Hirsijärvi & Hurme (2008, 23.) explain, there might not be enough space and time to fill in the questionnaires. The questions might also be very straight-forward and require limited answers but with interviews it gives opportunity to ask open ended questions which responses could lead to more probing to get more information (Hirsijärvi & Hurme 2008, 23).

4.3 Data Analysis

Analysis of any research refers to the interpretations of data. The authors of this research used content data analysis due to its suitability in localizing the different themes from the primary and secondary data. As Moule & Goodman (2009) explain, this method of analysis is said to be a research method that systematically describes and quantifies research phenomena (Moule & Goodman 2009, 343).

When the data was collected it was recorded and stored, the authors had to repeatedly listen to the tapes and tried to get familiar with what the respondents had said. The recorded interviews were transcribed as an exact copy of what was heard on the tape. The answers were later coded according to their respective themes. The authors listened to all of the answers from every interviewee and wrote down different issues that came up and then compare all the different result to the same question. All the answers for the similar questions were coded and placed in one table as raw data.

Content analysis involves reducing data exploration and data processing. Data proceeding includes coding which basically involves organizing data into categories, for example, meaning unit, condensed meaning unit, codes, categories and themes. Content analysis is a tool used to determine the presence of certain words within a text. Researchers analyse and quantify the presence, meaning and the relationship of words and ideas and then make logical scientific inference about the message carried within the text in line with that research (Moule & Goodman 2009, 343).

In this research the authors used the same process, grouped same ideas and selected key words to form subcategories and then came up with main category to represent those ideas what formed the findings. This is clearly presented in the following charts as the ideas explained in the paragraphs. (See page 28)

4.4 Advancement of research

The initial idea for this research arose when one of the authors had opportunity to participate as student representative of the then known Kemi-Tornio University of Applied Sciences at one of the Multidisciplinary European Programme-Intensive Programme (MEP-IP) spring 2013 in Joensuu, Finland. The theme discussed was ageing in Europe from an intercultural and pluridisciplinary perspective based on solidarity.

It was during these 14 days of MEP-IP project in Joensuu when one of the authors had a discussion with a supervising teacher about the possibilities to produce visible written materials concerning the outcome of the MEP-IP project based on student participant's experiences. After some discussions with the teacher, the idea was transformed into research purpose, aim and written open ended interview questions were drafted. Several students were approached with the request to participate in the interviews, out of which nine students agreed to take part. From the nine students who took part in the interviews, four have been participants of the MEP-IP project in both Lille France and Leiria, Portugal. This was the main criteria for choosing our sample because attending MEP-IP projects in Lille, Leria and Joensuu respectively contribute to student's vast experiences.

Open ended interview questions were designed and approved by the authors supervisors so that the interviews could be conducted. Some of the interviews were conducted during MEP-IP in Joensuu and the rest after the end of the programme. The three student participants from outside Finland were interviewed through Skype program whereby the interview was tape recorded then saved as an audio file which was later transcribed into written text document to produce eight pages of raw data. The material from interviews were analysed by the means of content analysis from April 2013 to October 2013. As Moule & Goodman (2009) explain, analysis of textual data content is often produced as part of qualitative research to identify key themes (Moule & Goodman, 2009, 343). The research was progressive work involving all steps required for thesis writing from the spring of 2013 to the spring of 2014.

5 RESULTS

The results of this research intend to answer the question: What are the MEP-IP project outcomes? The primary data enabled the authors to discover four main categories, Active ageing and solidarity, personal development, networking and problem based learning. These four main categories are the MEP-IP Project outcomes based on student experiences.

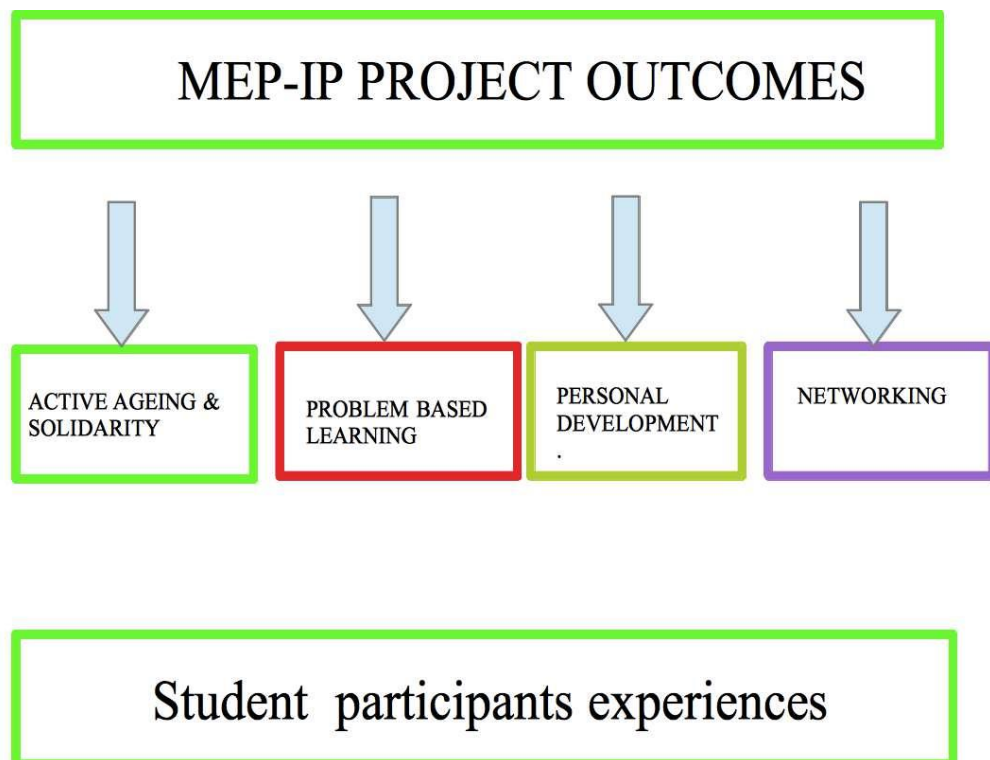


Chart 5. MEP-IP outcomes based on student participants experiences (Kilpeläinen and Tambila 2014).

5.1 Active ageing and solidarity

Active ageing and solidarity was created from the several components in upper category as seen in chart 5. The Participants of MEP-IP emphasised the involvement of ageing people, creation of supportive policies, campaigns to create a positive view of all generations in a population and the importance of maintaining good health throughout one's life span. All of the above mentioned issues could be achieved if an active ageing and solidarity approach is adopted.

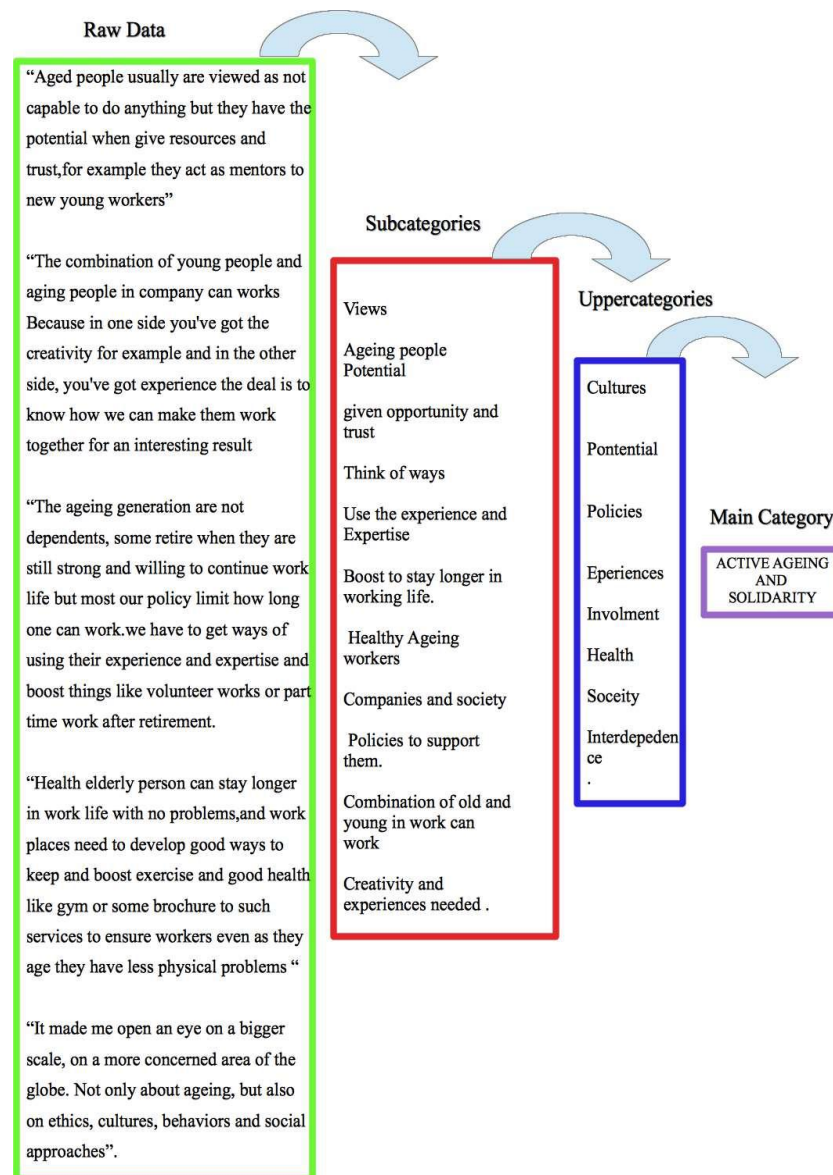


Chart 5. Active ageing and solidarity as an outcome of MEP-IP project (Kilpeläinen and Tambila 2014).

The participants of MEP-IP expressed that during this project they got more information about active ageing and their understanding of the meaning of the active ageing and solidarity increased. Some did not know this concept before in their lives while others knew about it but did not actually know what it entails. The MEP-IP created a chance for young people in different places and different backgrounds to come together and discuss these concepts of ageing together and come up with their own idea about it hence learning together.

“It made me open an eye on a bigger scale, on a more concerned area of the globe. Not only about ageing but also on active ageing, ethics, cultures, behaviours and social approaches”.

There was emphasis on more efforts to be focused in areas of enabling elderly people to realise their potential for wellbeing and participate in society, while providing them with adequate protection, security and care when they need it. In practice, active ageing will be achieved when a given society will be able to provide better education and lifelong learning, age-friendly working conditions, and supporting the role of older people in family life and society as a whole. This process begins with having forums such as the MEP project to discussing such topics.

Culture was mentioned as one of the main influences to how the society views individuals in the society, be they young or old. Therefore culture is an important factor in active ageing. Cultural values and traditions determine to a large extent how a given society views older people and the ageing process. When societies are more likely to attribute symptoms of disease to the ageing process, they are less likely to provide prevention, early detection and appropriate treatment services.

Culture is a key factor in whether or not co-residency with younger generations is the preferred way of living. For example, in most Asian countries, the cultural norm is to value extended families and to live together in multigenerational households. Cultural factors also influence health-seeking behaviours. For example, attitudes toward smoking are gradually changing in a range of countries. In other societies elderly people could be viewed in a negative way and this affects greatly how the society behaves towards them.

“Aged people usually are viewed as not capable to do anything but they have the potential when give resources and trust, for example they act as mentors to new young workers”.

The views such as that ageing individuals are a burden to the community or they cannot have a longer career are expired. Embracing and tapping the potential for these individuals in the society is beneficial.

Maintaining a harmonious setting in a society where all people of all ages are autonomous and independent individuals should be the goal for policy makers. Ageing takes place within the context of friends, workmates, neighbours and family members. This is why interdependence as well as intergenerational solidarity is important. This entails the two-way path of giving and receiving between individuals, both older and younger generations.

“Yesterday’s child is today’s adult and tomorrow’s grandmother or grandfather. The quality of life they will enjoy as grandparents depends on the risks and opportunities they experienced throughout the life course, as well as the manner in which succeeding generations provide mutual aid and support when needed.

“The combination of young people and ageing people in company can work Because in one side you've got the creativity for example and in the other side, you've got experience the deal is to know how we can make them work together for an interesting result”.

The European Union set aside the year 2012 in order to boost the link between active ageing and the solidarity of generations. This means striving to maintain vitality and respect the dignity of all individuals. The MEP project succeeded in highlighting the social values of the European Year during its two week intensive programmes in different countries.

A community life is depicted by what policies they put in place. Some of the employment policies in Europe are thought to be age limiting, especially the retirement age. This was an interesting topic because some people felt there is need to have retirement age because not everyone supports the idea to work longer and at the same time not everybody want to retire at the set retirement age. Hence having a possibility to stay at work longer should be an option created in employment retirement policies.

“The ageing generation is not dependent; some retire when they are still strong and willing to continue work life but most our policy limit how long one can work. We have to get ways of using their experience and expertise and boost things like volunteer works or part time work after retirement”.

We need an active ageing approach to policy and programme development in order to address many of the challenges of both individual and population ageing. When health, labour market, employment, education and social policies support active ageing, this could result in fewer premature deaths in the highly productive stages of life, fewer disabilities associated with chronic diseases in older age, more people enjoying a positive quality of life as they grow older, more people participating actively as they age in the social, cultural, economic and political aspects of society, in paid and unpaid roles and in domestic, family and community life and lower costs related to medical treatment and care services.

The interviewees expressed that health ageing does not begin at old age, it is rather a journey that begins when one is born, and it is a progressive of the whole lifespan there is great need to promote interventions that create supportive environments and foster healthy choices at all stages of life.

“In life everyone needs to be healthy in all aspect of life to that even as they age they have good condition, having a community that value healthy life style could ensure our health population, children , young people ,middle aged adult and elderly all need to be encouraged to live healthy way.”

“Health elderly person can stay longer in work life with no problems ,and work places need to develop good ways to keep and boost exercise and good health like gym or some brochure to such services to ensure workers even as they age they have less physical problems”

The aspect of health included physical, mental and social wellbeing. There is urgency in Europe today to promote an active ageing framework, policies and programmes that promote mental health and social connections. They are as important as those that improve physical health status.

5.2 Personal development

The personal development main category was created by different aspects from the upper category. Students shared their knowledge, exercised their skills and talents, applied their techniques and used different tools in order to meet the demands of the task given. By doing so each individual person got different benefits.

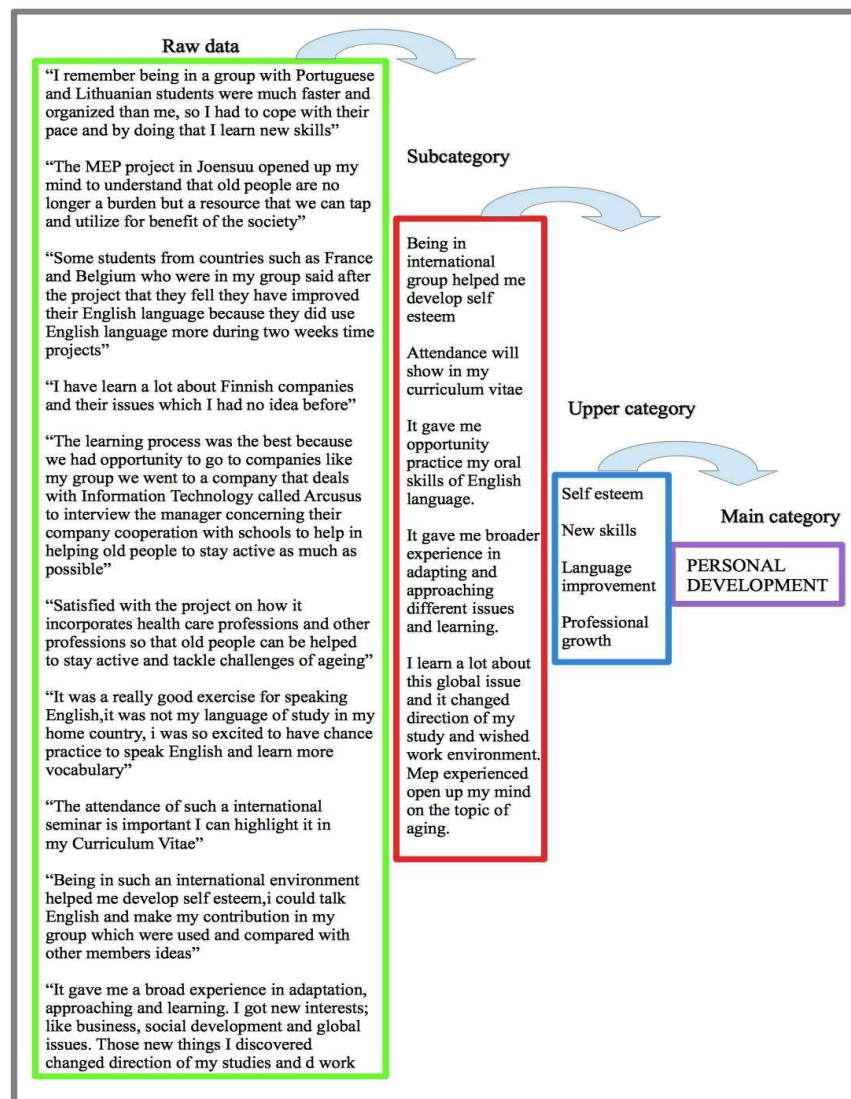


Chart 6. Personal development as an outcome of MEP-IP project (Kilpeläinen and Tambila 2014).

The participants agreed that their MEP-IP participation was of great benefits to them in many areas. The student participated in different activities such as in groups, forums and individual tasks. Through these activities the students were challenged to use all of their resources while some were given chances to use their talents and take leadership roles in the groups. Even though the tasks that were given during IP's were group tasks, all individual efforts and contributions were needed. The areas mentioned in personal developments were the improvement of language oral and written skills, self-awareness, professional skills, knowledge and new insights on the topic of ageing in Europe.

“It was a really good exercise for speaking English, it was not my language of study in my home country, I was so excited to have chance practice to speak English and learn more vocabulary”.

“The MEP project in Joensuu opened up my mind to understand that old people are no longer a burden but a resource that we can tap and utilize for benefit of the society”.

“Some students from countries such as France and Belgium who were in my group said after the project that they felt they have improved their English language because they did use English language more during two weeks' time projects”.

“The attendance of such an international seminar is important I can highlight it in my Curriculum Vitae”.

Personal development touches on aspects such as self-control, empathy, cognitive capacity, self-knowledge, one's motivation and social skills. The student participants awareness of themselves was not only achieved but also awareness of what they need to work on in the future.

The authors also used some data collected from all student participants during MEP-IP in Joensuu during a mini research that was done by one student and teacher and presented during the project. This data clearly shows how students' personal development was achieved. The data of this mini research was collected via a questionnaire; the scale of development was 1-7 of which 1 was the lowest and 7 was the highest. Authors have used this data to support the finding the researchers got Chart 7, 8 and 9 shows personal development in different ways.

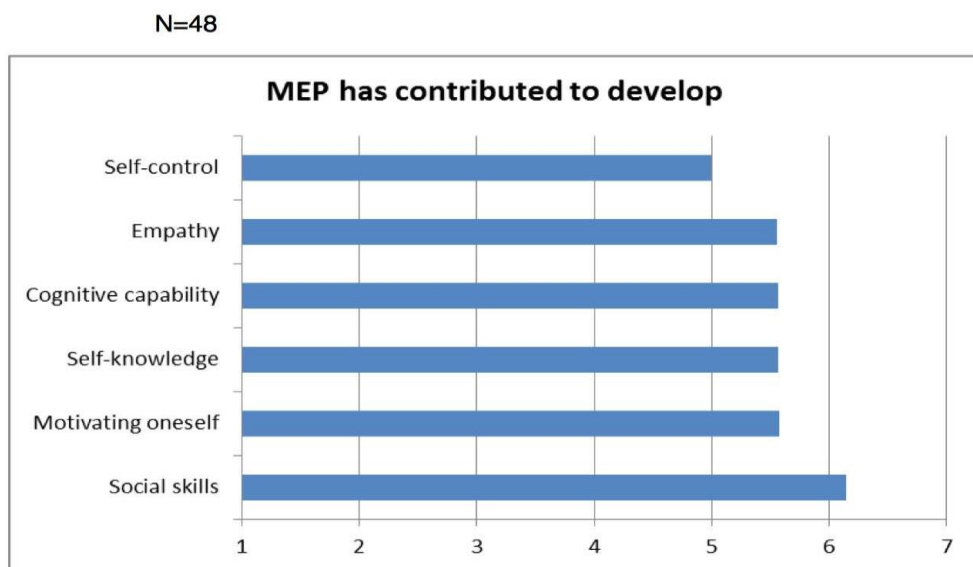


Chart 7. MEP-IP project participation contribution to personal development

The MEP-IP project participation contributed to a greater extent the development of social skills. As seen in the chart 7 above the social skills was achieved on a score of 6 and over this was achieved due to the learning and teaching methods and the participatory approach to dealing with different topics that supported and focused on group interaction. Language development, listening to each other's, supporting each other in the group, coping with different members in the group and being organised are among the social skills.

“It was a really good exercise for speaking English, it was not my language of study in my home country, I was so excited to have chance practice to speak English and learn more vocabulary”.

Motivation, self-knowledge, cognitive capability and empathy was achieved on nearly the same scale, self-knowledge was more emphasised and recognition of individual capabilities.

“I remember being in a group with Portuguese and Lithuanian students were much faster and organized than me, so I had to cope with their pace and by doing that I learn new skills”.

“Being in such an international environment helped me develop self-esteem, I could talk English and make my contribution in my group which were used and compared with other members ideas”.

Self-control from the chart shows that it was on scale 5, bearing in mind the highest scale was 7 this means it was achieved to some extent, and the students felt there is need to work on developing more this aspect.

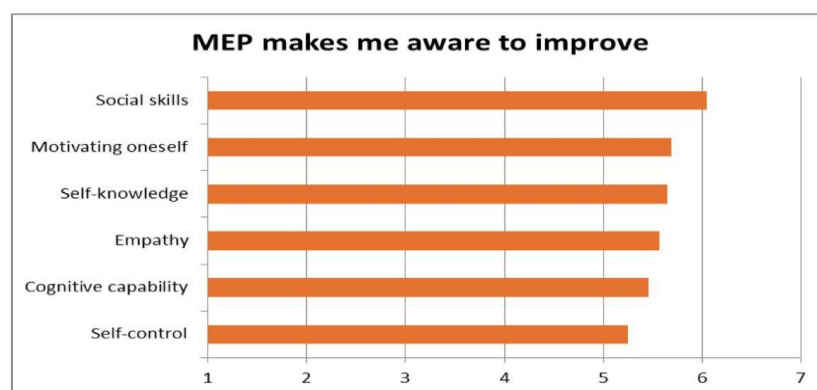


Chart 8. MEP-IP participation raised awareness to improve in self-developments.

This chart shows how MEP-IP project raised awareness on various aspect of self-development. There were different activities and forums through which information was passed and received, these avenues created the opportunities to learn and acquire new insights.

“It gave me a broad experience in adaptation, approaching and learning. I got new interests; like business, social development and global issues. Those new things I discovered changed direction of my studies and wished work environment”.

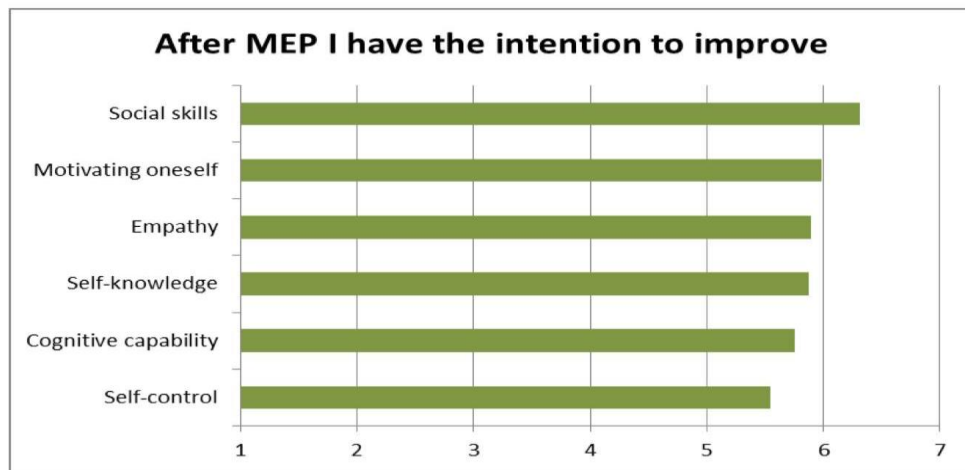


Chart 9. What students hope to improve on personal development after attending MEP-IP project

The students personal development did not stop at MEP-IP project weeks. These weeks acted rather as a booster to more self-reflections and development after the MEP-IP project. Some felt that participating in such a forum will benefit them at long term basis, not only in their personal development but also in their professional development and career.

“The attendance of such an international seminar is important I can highlight it in my Curriculum Vitae”.

5.3 Networking

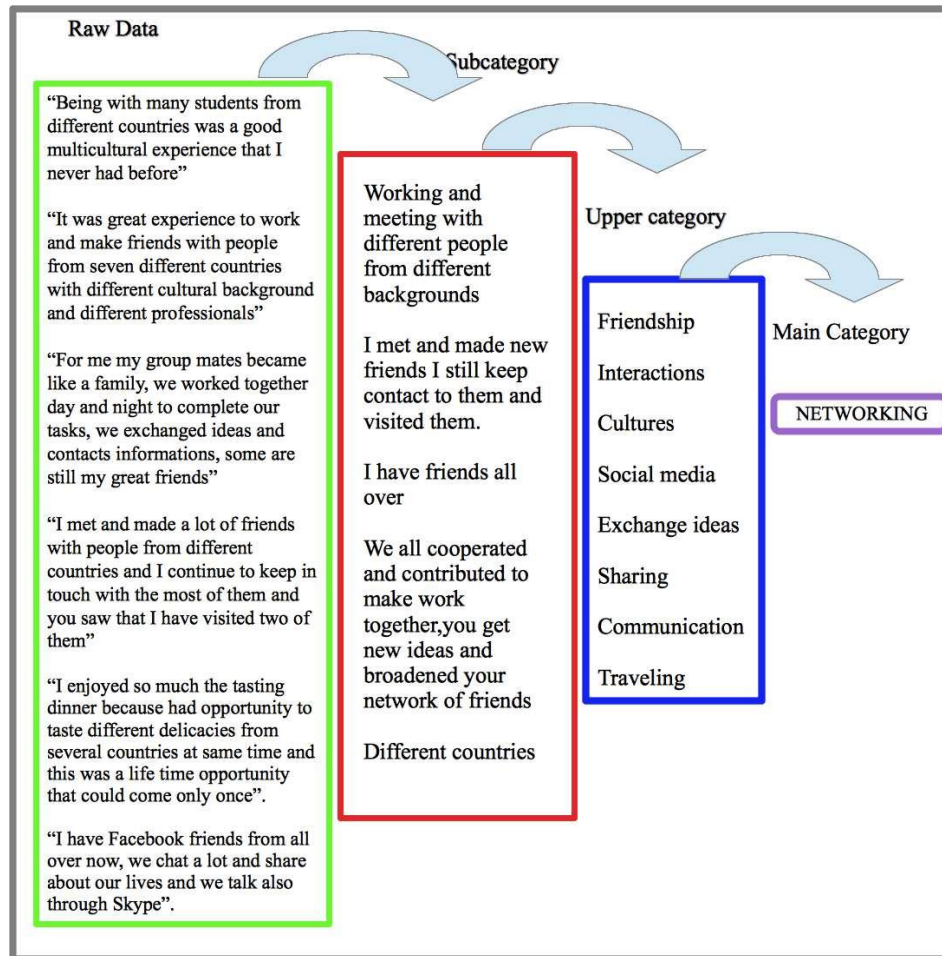


Chart 10. Networking as an outcome of MEP-IP project (Kilpeläinen and Tambila 2014).

The main category results is formed by the various components outlined in upper categories, friendships, communication exchanging ideas, cultures social media, interaction and sharing. All of these were experienced by students during MEP-IP through group works, lecture activities and different forums.

Networking comes about when different people from different backgrounds meet formally or informally and maintain interaction through exchanges of information. It was possible through MEP-IP project for students to participate in meeting other students from different countries and making connections while they participated in various group activities. The students greatly appreciated the different backgrounds brought about by each individual. The groups consisted of students from different nationalities and different academic disciplines.

“Being with many students from different countries was a good multicultural experience that I never had before”.

“It was great experience to work and make friends with people from seven different countries with different cultural background and different professionals”.

The MEP-IP project intensive programme which took place in 2 weeks in every participating country gave an opportunity to students and staff from higher education institutions from seven participation countries to work together and exchange ideas on different topics and learning methods.

“For me my group mates became like a family, we worked together day and night to complete our tasks, we exchanged ideas and contact information, some are still my great friends”.

“I met and made a lot of friends with people from different countries and I continue to keep in touch with the most of them and you saw that I have visited two of them”.

Friendship and social interactions are important to students because they give a sense of belonging and identification which could enhance personal happiness. This can have a positive impact on students study and social life. Through friendly discussions and sharing students may discuss about how they think or view the situation of ageing people in their respective countries. The discussions may have raised awareness and a change in attitude as to how the students respond to the society now and after the studies.

The student participants were all from average ages and making connections with each other was important. During leisure activities they shared their cultural experiences for example on one occasion all of the students had an event to showcase different foods and drinks from their respective countries. This type of sharing boosts the students' interest to know more about other cultures and countries.

“I enjoyed so much the tasting dinner because had opportunity to taste different delicacies from several countries at same time and this was a life time opportunity that could come only once”.

As can be seen from the respondents, students have made friends who they have kept in contact with after the project through social networks such as Facebook and Skype. Therefore the project had great impact in the social life of the student participants during and after the project.

“I have Facebook friends from all over now, we chat a lot and share about our lives and we talk also through Skype”.

From the interview it was clear that some of the student who participated at the MEP IP project has become friends and some were able to visit different countries to see their friends. This is positive experience for EU students to be able to interact freely and embrace different cultures through such friendships. To many students this project became a connecting factor to their circle of friendships to many young people and they greatly appreciated that opportunity.

The networking cycle that students made was not only between students but also students to staff and students to local companies where they visited during the two weeks programme. During the two weeks IPs the students had group assignments where they had to visit different companies to gather information concerning the tasks given. This gave an opportunity for the students to learn about Finnish companies and how they involve ageing people in their respective companies. It also made it possible for students to make contacts with various Finnish companies, out of which some of them could be future prospect for their working career and a contact for sharing innovative ideas.

“When we had our group task we visited some of the Finnish companies in Joensuu in order to gather information for our assignment and it was during this visit when I made first contact with Finnish companies and understood the issues they deal with and see how they accommodate and support aged workers to continue with their working life. This was one of the aspects that I would wish to take into managing skills in the future when I graduate to ensure that the company I work with support aged workers”.

It was clear that networking with different companies gave students new ideas on the reality of ageing people working in the company and the various forms of support they need. The young managers, social and health care personnel's, IT experts and business professional all benefited from such experience of networking through discussions with companies. Discussions were based on several issues such as guidance, discussion of challenges, available opportunities and contact information for further support needed.

The networking cycle created during the two weeks MEP IP's in various countries eventually spread out within the EU members states creating a learning community. Students, staff and all the guests involved went back to their respective countries with the knowledge and information acquired during these seminars. Some of them continue sharing their reflections and engage in various activities. Some have even engaged in actual projects that deal with ageing and solidarity in Europe.

5.4 Problem based learning

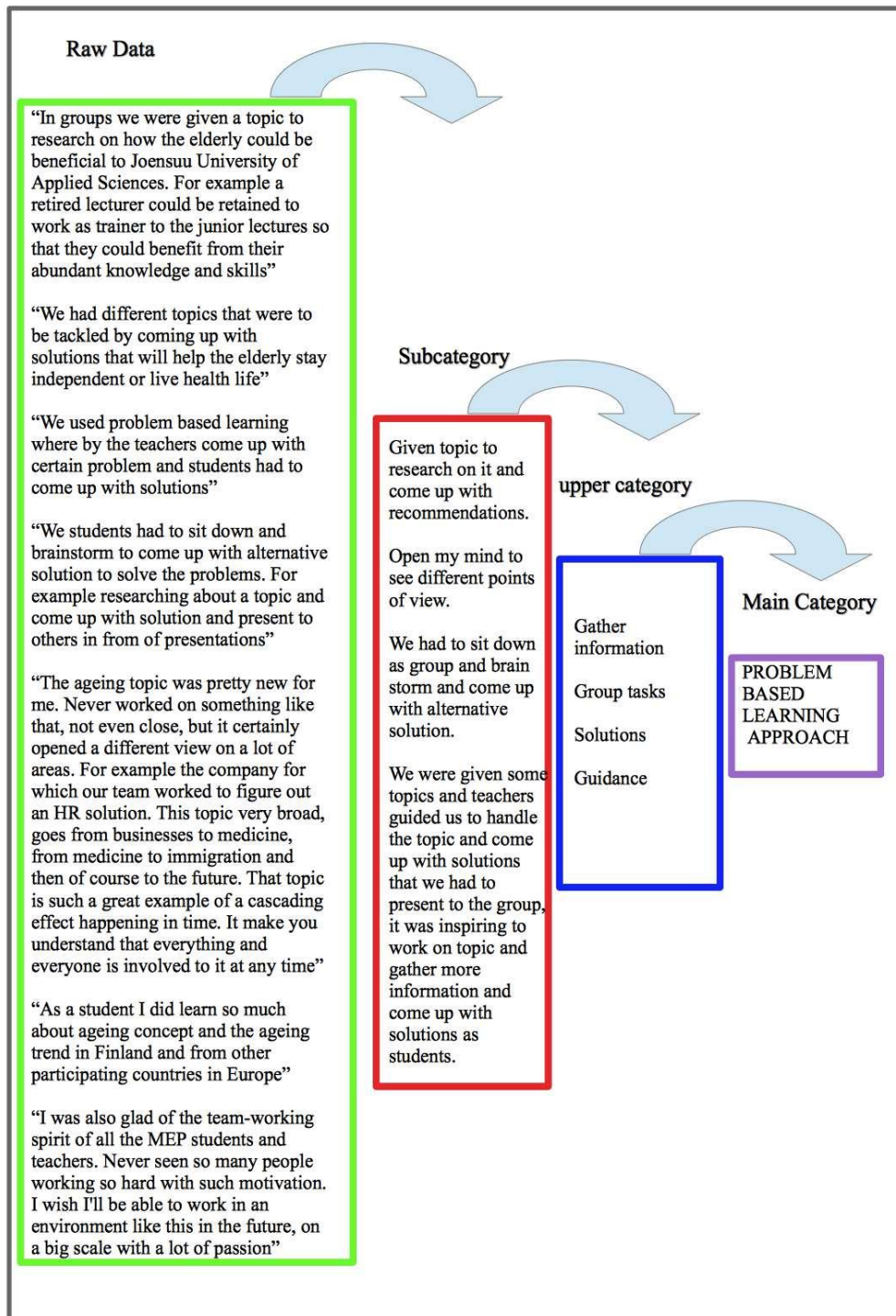


Chart 11. Problem based learning as an outcome of MEP-IP project (Kilpeläinen and Tambila 2014)

According to Maggi Savi-Baden (2000) problem based learning is an approach that allows students to work in groups or teams to solve or manage certain situations but they are not expected to acquire a predetermined series of right answers. Instead they are expected to engage with complex situation presented to them and decide what information needed in learning and what skills gained in order to manage the situation effectively.

Such skills for managing the situation were needed during MEP-IP project in Joensuu 2013 where by students were grouped and given tasks in order to use their own knowledge and skills to come up with what they thought could be a beneficial approach to the ageing society that needs to be helped through ideas generated from the workshops. The students were grouped and worked together in teams to come up with solutions to tasks given.

“In groups we were given a topic to research on how the elderly could be beneficial to Joensuu University of Applied Sciences. For example, a topic discussed concerning on how to involve a retired lecturer who could be retained to work as a trainer to the junior lectures so they could benefit from their abundant knowledge and skills”.

“We used problem based learning where by the teachers came up with certain problem and we students had to come up with solutions”.

“We had different topics that were to be tackled by coming up with solutions that will help the elderly stay independent and live health life”.

One of the difficulties today for students in attaining certain objectives is reflecting to the complexity of the subject or scenario aimed at finding solution for. Therefore; student's participant during MEP-IP project in Joensuu 2013 had to demonstrate their knowledge in finding solutions that would be discussed by the entire group in order to be presented as solution concerning elderly people in Europe. Students reported that it was during several team work discussions when they came up with creative ideas on how to tackle the given assignment. Students felt that the two weeks intensive programme had an impact on their creativity that is needed when tackling several issues in their future career.

“We student had to sit down and brainstorm to come up with alternative solution to solve the problems. For example researching about a topic and come up with solution and present to others in several type of presentation form such as power point”.

“Most of the groups were made by students from several study fields; therefore, during discussion everyone came up with ideal solution based on his/her field of study. For example students with Information and Technologies (ICT) skills were mostly effective on matters concerning computer use which helped other student to learn from them on how to access and search materials quickly using internet and the effective use of power point as presentation aid”.

The objective of MEP programme was to assess issues linked with ageing at different levels such as economic, social, psychological, cultural and sanitary. Therefore, students during MEP-IP in Joensuu 2013 had an opportunity to learn and understand several concepts associated with ageing in relation to how several experts and professionals use their knowledge and skills in helping the ageing society to live long and active lives.

It is therefore understood that student participants had an opportunity to learn and understand more about the ageing concept and how the elderly can be helped to live independently and actively when empowered by the society. Students reported that lectures, cases and presentations presented by several experts during MEP-IP in Joensuu helped them to understand broadly the concept of active ageing in Europe and how different professions can be used to give a positive impact on the ageing society.

“Methods of learning deployed during MEP-IP in Joensuu broadened my knowledge on several issues because we had lectures, cases, presentations works and invited speakers from different fields such as business people, managers of companies and representatives from several associations. Although most of the associations were those working with the elderly such as Alzheimer Society of Finland”

“As a student I did learn so much about ageing concept and ageing trend in Finland and from other participating countries in Europe”.

Multinational teaching of specific topics was efficiently practiced during MEP-IP in Joensuu 2013. This enabled students and teachers to work together in multinational groups with benefits from such interactions allowing members to gain new knowledge from the discussed topics concerning ageing in Europe. Participating students revealed their great satisfaction of how the two weeks program was conducted by getting to interact with teachers for all the days. This was a welcome change to the regular situation, where students are in their respective institutions, where most of the time the students chance to be with the teacher is only during lectures.

“I was also glad to be part of the team-working spirit of all the MEP-IP students and teachers. Never seen so many people working so hard with such motivation, my wish is to be able to work in such environment in my future career”.

"We were given topics and teachers guided us on how to handle the topics given and come up with solutions that we later present to the group. It was inspiring to work on the topics, gather information and come up with the solutions. This meant a lot to me as student when I gave contributions which theoretically seek solution for the elderly life".

6 ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

Ethical considerations are expected to be fulfilled when carrying out a qualitative research. Therefore, qualitative research is bound to take the ethical issues into consideration due to the sensitive nature of some of the topics involved. Reliability of this research is ensured by involving scientific materials which were acquired from reliable sources such as journals, books and internet materials. Most of the used materials on this research were all searched through school electronic resources such as EBSCO and Elsevier.

The researchers considered the importance of having valid materials and documents in order to ensure that the study conducted is credible to the readers. As Moule & Goodman (2009, 184.) explains, validity is a measurement of whether data collection tool accurately measures what is it supposed to. In nursing practice we use validated measurement tools to record data on a daily basis (Moule & Goodman 2009, 184).

The ethical principles that guide nursing researchers are the same that guide nursing practice. These principles are set out in the codes of conduct nationally or internationally. For example, in the International Council of Nurses Codes of Ethics for Nurses; these principles provide specific guidance for research it may relate to nurses involved in research (Moule & Goodman 2009, 56).

In this research qualitative method was used, therefore researchers observed those aspects of qualitative research that concern ethical regulations and legislations. Deception and disclosure of the participants of this research is prohibited to maintain anonymity and confidentiality. The participants in this research were informed about the topic and the reasons for the research, so they were not deceived. The participants of this research were also made aware in advance concerning the duration of interview, the procedures that the research will undergo and the questions to be asked. Also, the participants were told that they would be tape recorded and the recorded interviews would be deleted after the successful completion of the research. No incentives were given to the participants in order to bribe them to participate in the research.

In qualitative research it is the duty of the researcher to respect the confidentiality agreement that he/she signed before carrying out the research. In this case, the researcher should safeguard the identity of the participants, not writing their names and trying to expose the particular information that came out from them. As expressed by Padgett (2008, 67) if the researcher wants to hand out the information to a third party, it is the duty of the researcher to seek permission from the participants and ask them if they would like the information to be passed to third parties. If they refused, the researcher has no right to give out the information without their knowledge. There should be no breach of confidentiality no matter the circumstances (Padgett 2008, 67). In this research, the authors assured and maintained terms of the confidentiality agreement and names of the participants were not mentioned at any stage. It was also information that came from each participant could not be easily identified to a specific person.

7 CONCLUSION

The Multidisciplinary European Programme-Intensive Programme (MEP-IP) project was a three years program funded under the initiative of European Union which was focused on creating forums where issues of ageing in Europe could be discussed by students and staff of higher institutions. This program was guided by the main theme ageing in Europe and the goal was to address the issue of how ageing can be dealt with from an intercultural, pluridisciplinary perspective based on solidarity. Each year the program brought together students and teachers from various universities within seven countries that participated in this project. Participants worked together in multinational groups so that they could benefit from special learning and teaching conditions which are not available in learning institutions and to gain new perspectives on the topic being studied in a broader way.

The authors of this research endeavoured to find out the outcomes of this project by conducting various interviews in order to obtain information needed from the student participants. Results after analysing the interviews were in the following main categories; Active Ageing and solidarity, problem based learning, personal development and networking.

The results of the analysis indicate that students who participated during MEP-IP project concerning ageing in Europe had benefited greatly from this programme. Students became more aware of the situation of ageing in Europe and about the consequences that are brought by the growing ageing population. During discussions concerning ageing in Europe the concepts of active ageing and solidarity were discussed as one of the solution for population ageing in Europe. Most students agreed that the MEP project activities have allowed them to learn about this concept that was new to most of the participants. Ageing is no longer a social health care challenge in the society but also an economic, social and psychological. It is the responsibility of individuals, stakeholders, governance and community to ensure security, involvement and promotion of health as well as equal access to opportunities and resources for all members of the society irrespective of all their age.

The meaning of active ageing and solidarity will be achieved when a society will be able to provide better education and lifelong learning, age friendly working condition and support to the role of old people in the society as a whole. Students have been impacted by the programme and the knowledge gained will be useful in their future professions and their individual involvement to improve the life of the ageing population in society. Solidarity between generations brings about harmonious living in the society, because all ages need each other as it entails the two ways of giving and receiving between individuals as well as older and young generations.

Personal development of students was cited among the main outcomes of the MEP-IP project. This is because students themselves expressed that through the experiences they gained during the workshops, they have developed also some personal aspects. Self-esteem was one of those personal aspects that were improved through interaction with other participants. Language skill also was developed by students since the language used for communication was English. This is because student had to present, discuss and socialize in English which benefited most of the students who did not have an English language educational background.

Other personal developments includes the impact that MEP-IP project had on creating awareness contributing to developing and boosting the initiative to keep working in the future on individual attributes such as self-control, empathy, cognitive capabilities, self-knowledge and motivation and social skills. (See chart 3, 4 & 5). These developments were thought to be beneficial in achieving confidence both at personal and professional levels for students. Some of the students felt that the knowledge and skills gained can be transmitted to benefit various communities where they represent; they could speak and safeguard the rights of the ageing population in the community.

Problem based learning was another major outcome of MEP-IP project as reported by the student participants. This learning approach entails a given task which can be an actual real-life situation. For example a company that has to design a tool for helping ageing workers to remain active at work. The students had to study such tasks, gather necessary information needed such as consulting the companies and receive guidance from their teachers to come up with realistic solutions.

Some of the solutions given by students were the use of new technologies and broadcasting such as TV, newspapers and social network that would benefit to integrate all ages in the community. During MEP -IP project such methods were used by various groups who were given real-life task in various companies and organizations expecting them to find solutions that will help the ageing population within the society.

Last but not least networking was cited as major category in the MEP-IP project outcomes. Students experiences new cultures and people of different backgrounds from various countries. Throughout the project they interacted with each other, shared ideas and made friendships. Some students continue to communicate through various means of social media; these ongoing friendships have benefited students in different levels for example experiencing new cultures when traveling to the other countries.

Through MEP-IP project students got the opportunity to know various companies and organizations that work in support of ageing issues in the hosting countries as well as from represented countries. From the interviewed students agreed that MEP-IP project had given them memorable life experience and awareness concerning ageing in Europe.

8 DISCUSSION

The MEP project focused on students and staff from different European institutions of higher learning. The student were selected from their schools and allowed to participate in the seminars which were arranged during the school period. They were awarded certificates of participation; this made it possible for students to get ECTS credits from the 14 days participation in the MEP-IP project.

The student participants experiences formed the basis of MEP-IP project outcomes. These outcomes point out the accomplishments of the project objectives. The four main categories discussed in the result chapter correspond with the project objectives.

It was clear that these experiences were achieved through multinational and multidisciplinary approaches of the participants. For example each university was given 7 slots and all had to be shared among different departments, making sure that students came from different discipline and ethnic background.

The method of learning included the use of lectures, group work, presentations, case studies and personal reflection. This gave flexibility to student participants to brainstorm and be more involved at their own level without restrictions. The topic of ageing in Europe is a realistic phenomenon that boosts various discussions which presented a learning opportunity to students through engaging on this topic.

The process of conducting research was aided by various factors such as ready and motivated audience from whom the researchers randomly chose the interviewees. Regarding the fact that one of the authors participated in one of the MEP-IP's gave a more clear understanding concerning the project and the topic discussed. Both authors came from social and health care department in which the topic of ageing is addressed in their curriculum through course such as nursing care and health promotions of elderly. This gave authors a starting point to understand the topic of ageing in holistic manner; the authors had to avoid controversial terminologies which are not agreed upon globally such words as senior, aged and elderly in the research instead used universal term of describing ageing in Europe.

Ageing in Europe is a current issue of discussion with a lot of research ongoing concerning this topic. It was therefore of advantage to the authors of this research in terms of materials availability.

One of the limitations the authors encountered was the fact that ageing in Europe had to be studied under the umbrella of MEP-IP project. This means that authors had to be in line with the theme discussed during MEP-IP's concerning ageing in Europe. The MEP-IP objectives formed the outcomes of this research.

The author noticed some of the areas that could be improved to ensure better results are achieved in the research. These areas includes having more respondents from all MEP-IP's in equal numbers in order to gather more needed information and improving time schedule during the process by having a continuous time period to carry out the research rather than having long breaks in between research process.

The authors have produced this piece of research with hope that it will be useful as an evaluating tool for MEP project as well as to provide resource material for students who have an interest on the topic of ageing in Europe.

REFERENCES

Aber S & Perren, K & Davidson, K. 2002. Involvement in Social Organizations in Later Life: Variations by Gender and Class. Auburn House.

Asghar Zaidi 2008. Features and Challenges of Population Ageing: The European Perspective. European centre Vienna

http://www.euro.centre.org/data/1204800003_27721.pdf

Read: 1.11.2013

Boud, D & Feletti, G. 1997. The Challenge of Problem Based Learning. Kogan Page Ltd. London

Brikci, N & Green, J. 2007. A guide to using Qualitative Research Methodology. Medicins San Frontieres.

Denzin N.K & Lincoln Y.S. 2000. Handbook of Qualitative Research. Sage Publication. London

Elo Satu & Kyngäs Helvi. 2008. The Qualitative Content Analysis process. Journal of Advanced Nursing 62(1), 107-115

Hayward, M. D & Zhang, Z. 2001. Demography of Ageing. Handbook of Ageing and the Social sciences 5th ed. Academic Press. San Diego

Hirsjärvi, S. & Hurme, H. 2008. Tutkimushaastattelu - teemahaastattelun teoria ja käytäntö. Helsinki: Gaudeamus, Helsinki University Press.

Hoffmann Jacob 2012. Population Ageing 5:147-150: Springer Science & Business Media.

<http://download.springer.com/static/pdf/826/art%253A10.1007%252Fs12062-012-9069-5.pdf?auth66=1383590570_109f20678ae3378650f8919258be640c&ext=.pdf>

Published July 2012: Read 1.1.2013

Kananen, Jorma. 2011. Rafting through the Thesis Process: Step by step guide to thesis research. JAMK AMK. Jyväskylä.

Kumar, Ranjit. 2005. Research Methodology: A step by step guide for beginners 2nd ed. Sage Publications. London.

Lesaffre, P. L & Malaquin, R. 2011. Multidisciplinary European Program. University of Lille, 14-25 March 2011.

<http://www.mep_activeageing.ipleiria.pt/lille2011>

Read 25.9.2013

Lesaffre, P.L & Malaquin, R. 2011. Multidisciplinary European Program. University of Lille, 14-25 March 2011.

Malaquin, R. & Lesafree P.L. 2011. The Genesis of an IP: In Multidisciplinary European Program. University of Lille. Lille.

Moule, P. & Goodman, M. 2009. Nursing Research an Introduction. Sage Publications Ltd. London.

Multidisciplinary European Programme 11-22 March 2012. All right reserved.

<http://www.mep_activeageing.ipleiria.pt/leiria-2012>

Last updated: 28 March 2012. Read: 1.11.2013

Orimo, H & Suzuki, H 2006. Reviewing the definition of elderly: Geriatrics and Gerontology International Journal Volume 6.

Padgett K .Deborah 2008. Qualitative Methods in Social Work Research. Sage Publications Inc. London.

Punch, K 1998. Introduction to Social Research, Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches. Sage publications, London.

Savin-Baden. M. 2000. Problem Based Learning in Higher Education: Untold stories. SRHE & Open University Press. Buckingham.

Silverman, David. 2006. Interpreting Qualitative Data: Methods for analyzing talk, text and interaction 3rd ed. Sage. London.

Westcott Lyn & Whitcombe Steve W & Riley Jill & Clouston Teena J & Matheson Ruth. 2010. Problem Based Learning in Health and Social care. Willey-Blackwell. New Jersey.

World Health Organization. 2013. Ageing and life course: What is active ageing?

http://www.who.int/ageing/active_ageing/en/index.html

Read: 30.10.2013

World Health Organization. 2002. Active ageing: A policy framework. WHO. Geneva.

http://www-iut.univ-lille1.fr/__images/contenu/12730.pdf

Read: 25.9.2013

http://www.mep_activeageing.ipleiria.pt/leiria-2012/

Read: 25.9.2013

http://www.mep_activeageing.ipleiria.pt/joensuu-2013/

Read: 25.9.2013

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 : Interview questions	57
Attachment 2 : Thesis agreement	58
Attachment 3 : Evaluation form	59

Attachment 1: Interview questions

1. Describe your experiences of MEP-IP?
2. How has been your topic of this year and how did you experience working together before came here and after you came here and during?
3. What is your understanding about the term active ageing and solidarity?
4. Also describe the issues concerning multicultural cooperation skills during MEP-IP
5. Describe you language experiences and multicultural learning?
6. What do you think of the topic ageing, active ageing and solidarity in Europe?
7. Describe the experiences of the different topics discussed and teacher guidance in this way of learning?
8. How has been the different methods used here enhanced your learning?
9. What impact MEP-IP created in you?

Attachment 2 : Thesis agreement

Kemi-Tornion ammattikorkeakoulu ja alla mainittu toimeksiantaja sopivat tästä sopimuksella opiskelijatyön tehtävien hankkeistetun opinnäytetyön tekemisestä.

Toimeksiantaja			
Nimi	MEP-project's IP in Joensuu, Karelia UAS		
Osoite	KARJALANKATU 3, 80200 JOENSUU		
Puh.	0503765742	Sähköpostiosoite	timo.pakarinen@karelia.fi
Yhdyshenkilö/työelämäohjaaja			
Nimi	Timo Pakarinen		
Osoite	KARJALANKATU 3, 80200 JOENSUU		
Puh.	0503765742	Sähköpostiosoite	timo.pakarinen@karelia.fi
Oppilaitoksen tiedot			
Kemi-Tornion ammattikorkeakoulu			
Opinnäytetyön ohjaajan nimi	Anja Mikkola and Seppo Kilpeläinen		
Nimi	Kemi-Tornio University of Applied Sciences		
Osoite	Meripäistokatu 25, 94100, Kemi		
Puh.		Sähköpostiosoite	Etunimi.sukunimi(et)@okem.fi
Opinnäytetyön tekijät (nimi, koulutusohjelma, yhteystiedot)			
Faith Kilpeläinen and George Tambila. Bachelor of nursing. George.Tambila@edu.tokem.fi Faith.Kilpelainen@okem.fi			
Opiskelijanäytönsä tehtävän opinnäytetyön tiedot:			
Opinnäytetyön nimi/aihe	Active Ageing and Solidarity in Europe: MEP-IP project outcomes		
Työn alkamisaika	March - December 2013		
Opinnäytetyössä aiheutuista kustannuksista vastaa	N/A		
Tulosten säilyttämisestä sovitaan seuraavaa	We are bound by privacy and confidentiality of our interviewees. No mention of names.		

Opinnäytetyön hankkeistusta koskevat tiedot:

- Toimeksiantaja maksaa joko ammattikorkeakoululle tai opiskelijalle työn tekemisestä ja tästä on kirjallisesti sovittu ennen opinnäytetyön aloittamista.
- Opinnäytetyön ohjaukseen osallistuu nimetty työelämän edustaja ja tästä on kirjallisesti sovittu ennen opinnäytetyön aloittamista.
- Toimeksiantajan tarkoituksena on alusta lähtien hyödyntää opinnäytetyön tuloksia ja tästä on sovittu kirjallisesti ennen opinnäytetyön aloittamista.

Jos tähän sopimukseen tulee muutoksia, on se jokaisen osapuolen uudelleen hyväksyttävä ja allekirjoitettava.

Tämä sopimus on tehty kappaleena, yksi jokaiselle sopijapuolelle.

Päivä Kemi Aika 08/11/2013
 Anja Mikkola ja Seppo Kilpeläinen
 AMK:n edustaja Toimeksiantajan edustaja

 Faith Kilpeläinen
 Opinnäytetyön tekijä(t)

Attachment 3 : Evaluation form

Kemi-Tornion
ammattikorkeakoulu

TOIMEKSIANTAJAN ARVIOINTI OPINNÄYTETYÖSTÄ

Toimeksiantajana olette tarjonneet ammattikorkeakoulun opiskelijoille/opiskelijalle merkittävän ja tärkeän yhteyden työelämään. Pyydämme arviointianne toimeksiantamastanne ja juuri valmistuneesta opinnäytetyöstä. Arviota käytetään tukena lopullisen arvosanan määrittelyssä.

Toimeksiantajan/ yrityksen/yhteisön nimi	Karelia AMK
Yhteyshenkilö ja hänen asemansa	Timo Pakarinen, koulutus- ja kehittämisspäälikkö
Opinnäytetyön tekijä(t)	
Opinnäytetyön nimi	

Mihin yrityksen/yhteisön kehittämistehtävään/projektiin tilaamanne opinnäytetyö liittyi?	KV-toimintoyen kehittäminen
Kokonaisarvio opinnäytetyöstä perusteluineen.	Hyvä ja tasapainoinen kokonaisuus
Opinnäytetyön merkitys ja hyödynnettävyys yrityksessänne/yhteisössänne.	Antaa pohjan jatkoille
Miten haluaisitte tulevaisuudessa kehittää yrityksenne/yhteisönne ja Kemi-Tornion ammattikorkeakoulun opinnäytetöihin liittyvää yhteistyötä?	

Päivä	Aika 12.5.2019
 Toimeksiantajan/yhteyshenkilön allekirjoitus ja tehtävä Koulutus- ja kehittämisspäälikkö Timo Pakarinen	

Kiitos arviostanne!

Pyydämme palauttamaan arviointilomakkeen Kemi-Tornion ammattikorkeakouluun ko. opinnäytetyön ohjaavalle opettajalle sähköpostilla, postitse tai opinnäytetyön tekijän kautta.