

Benefits of Academic Continuing Education for Vocational & Professional Training: The Case of University for Continuing Education

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AGENDA

1. Background of Continuing Education in Austria
2. The Case: Danube University KREMS
3. The Alumni Study
4. Results
5. Challenges

1. Continuing Education in Austria

Organisation

Continuing education at universities is organised in the following different ways:

- as a central service facility with a focus on continuing education or as part of a service facility; at public universities this function can generally be found within the Vice-Rectorate responsible for teaching;
- as part of a faculty, maintaining a loose connection to a central office;
- the range of continuing education programmes on offer is a component that shares equal value with the remainder of the overall programme range and is fully integrated in the structure and process organisation (e.g. universities of applied sciences, private universities);
- as a separate organisation; continuing education programmes represent the regular range (Donau Universität Krems);
- as an outsourced provider of continuing education.“ (AQA 2012, p. 21)

1. Continuing Education in Austria

Challenges

- Integration of academic continuing education into the Bologna study architecture
- Clarification of issues related to introduction of EQF and the question of access for non traditional students
- Issue of the criteria for academic continuing education
- Lack of research on benefits of continuing education and longitudinal data

2. Theoretical Background

Benefits of Continuing Education

- Strong tradition of research measuring the benefits and returns of continuing education in economic returns/benefits such as career/occupational advancement, increase in earnings, improved working conditions or professional mobility and impact on labour market/economy
- Lack of research in Europe examining wider benefits of continuing education.
- BeLL Study (www.bell-project.eu): Participation in liberal adult education generates multiple benefits for individuals such as positive attitude change, self-confidence, the will for more active social engagement and tolerance, stronger sense of having control of own life, and better health.

2. The Case: Danube University Krems

History

- In 1995 founded as a centre for continuing education by the adoption of a federal law.
- In 2004, upgraded to a University of Continuing Education with the Federal Law for the Danube University
 - an attempt to reflect the new university law.
 - With this law, Danube University received the right to employ university professors.
- In May 2015, Audit successfully completed

2. The Case: Danube University Krems

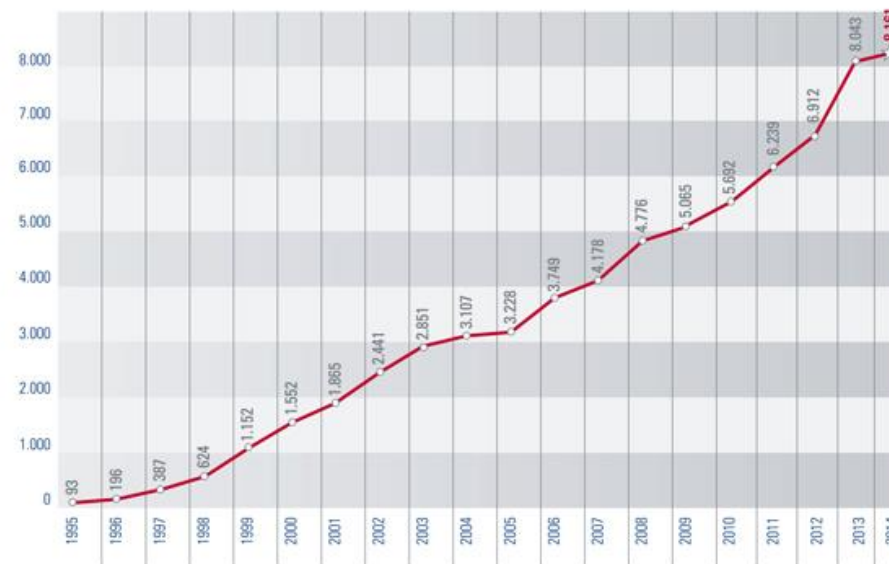
Function and Structure

- Offers only postgraduate continuing and advanced study programmes, Master or Academic Expert Degrees, under three faculties:
 - Faculty for Health and Medicine
 - Faculty for Business and Globalization
 - Faculty for Education, Art, and Architecture
- 15 departments offers more than 200 different study programmes
- 2 ERASMUS Mundus Master Programmes
- In 2014, a new law that enables PhD studies
 - Research capabilities were created and strengthened in order to facilitate PhD studies in interdisciplinary areas
 - In March 2015 accreditation of two PhD programs completed
 - Regenerative Medicine
 - Migration Studies

2. The Case: Danube University Krems

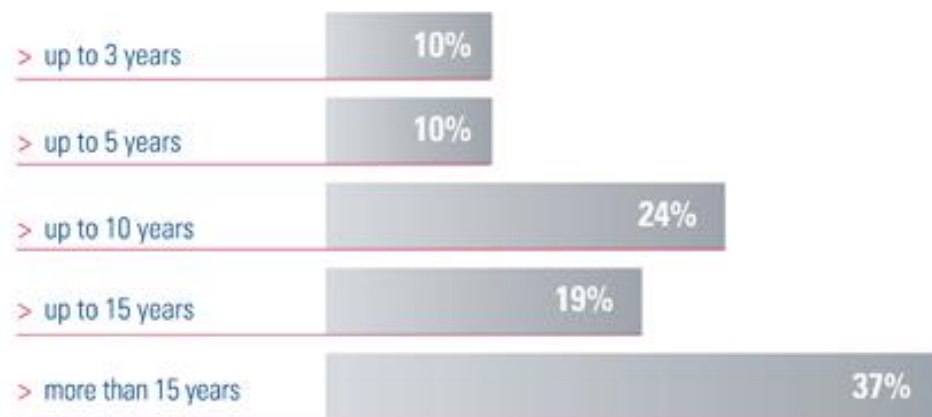
Students

- Total number of students: 8.598
- Average age: 39.6 years
- Female students: 51%
- International students: 30%
 - From 91 countries
- Alumni: 17.833



2. The Case: Danube University Krems

Professional Experience of Students at the Begin of Studies



2. The Case: Danube University Krems

Principles

Danube University has developed 11 principles of research-based teaching stemmed from its 20 years of experience with heterogeneous groups and promotion of social inclusion and mobility, and operates on these principles:

1. Taking the specific phases of life and needs of the students into account during the provision of support, mentoring, organization the course of study, and implementing didactical methods – all balanced with quality management
2. Blended learning didactics (professional/occupational and group-specific)
3. Expanding the international focus as well as the number and variety of courses offered in English
4. Careful selection and mentoring of lecturers from both academic and/or professional backgrounds
5. Offering courses of study that are not yet in demand, such as applicable future technologies and the professionalization of “non-academics” in areas where management competency is necessary (empowerment of professionals who are not academics)
6. Admittance of students with non-academic qualifications comparable to academic degrees
7. Equal representation of the genders and age groups within university courses of study
8. Providing a culture of welcome and services to support access for students and faculty with disabilities or chronic illnesses.
9. Offering pre-learning and pre-reading sessions, and preparatory modules before and during their study to improve their academic and scientific competences in the related study programs
10. Granting a variety of scholarships
11. Didactic approaches appropriate for different group sizes

3. The Alumni Study

Data Collection

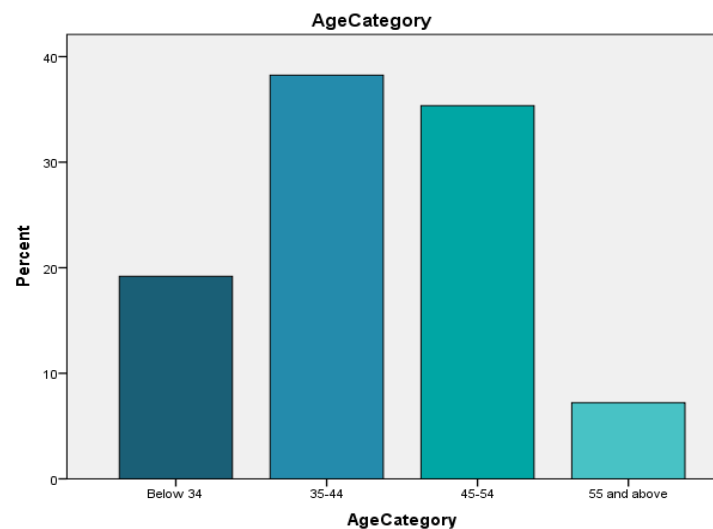
- Alumni study conducted online annually since 2009
- Cohorts and return rates:
 - 2009: 18%, 988 from 5526 (alumni of the years 2004 to 2008)
 - 2011: 20%, 624 from 3073 (alumni of the years 2009 and 2010)
 - 2012: 24%, 416 from 1753 (alumni of the year 2011)
 - 2013: 23%, 369 from 1639 (alumni of the year 2012)
 - 2014: 24%, 468 from 1960 (alumni of the year 2013)
 - **Total: 2865 Alumni, 21,8% of the all alumni**

3. The Alumni Study

Sample Characteristics

- Gender:
 - Female: 43.6%
 - Male: 56.4%
- Age: Average is 42

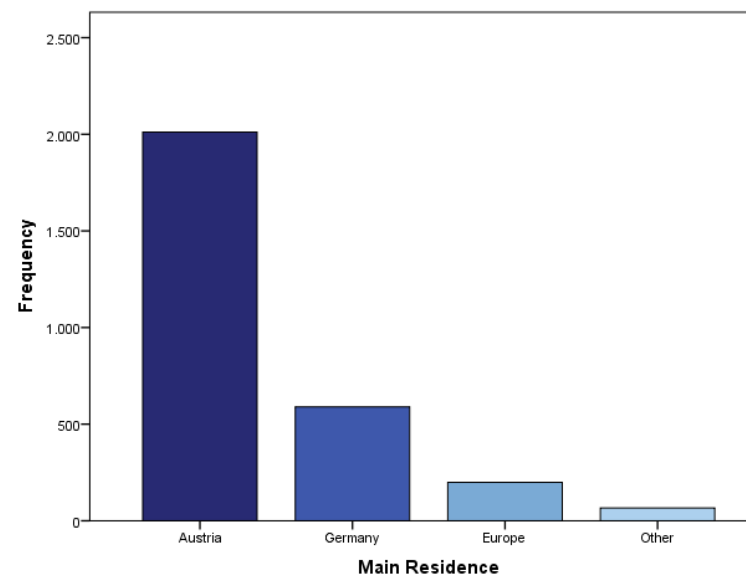
Age Category		
	f	%
Below 34	546	19,2
35-44	1088	38,2
45-54	1006	35,4
Above 55	205	7,2
Total	2845	100,0



3. The Alumni Study

Sample Characteristics

Main Residence of the Participants		
	f	%
Austria	2011	70,2
Germany	589	20,6
Europe	199	6,9
Other countries	66	2,3
Total	2865	100,0



3. The Alumni Study

Sample Characteristics

- Educational Level

Last level completed	f	%
Without secondary education final examination (Matura)	329	11,5
With Matura but no academic degree	876	30,6
Academic degree (BA or equivalent)	1201	41,9
Post graduate	331	11,6
Other	128	4,5
Total	2865	100,0

3. The Alumni Study

Sample Characteristics

- Distribution according to graduation degrees

Degrees	f	%	Alumni Total (Since 2009) %
Master	2431	84,9	70
Academic expert	298	10,4	16
Certification Program	136	4,7	14
Total	2865	100,0	100

4. Results

Employer Support

- What measures employers implement to assist participant with their study (multiple answers)

Measures	f	%
More flexible work hours	755	26,4
Reduced amount of work	85	3,0
Paid time-off for a portion of course attendance	505	17,6
Paid time-off for entire course attendance	455	15,9
Unpaid time-off for a portion of course attendance	152	5,3
Unpaid time-off for entire course attendance	95	3,3
Provided assistance in financing fees	846	29,5
Other Measures	141	4,9
No support from my employer	879	30,7
I was/am self-employed, therefore no support from an employer	248	8,7

~70%

4. Results

Financing the Study

- Finance of the last study program (multiple answers)

Source	f	%
Myself	2307	80,5
Employer	962	33,6
Stipend or grant	256	8,9

4. Results

Contribution to Career

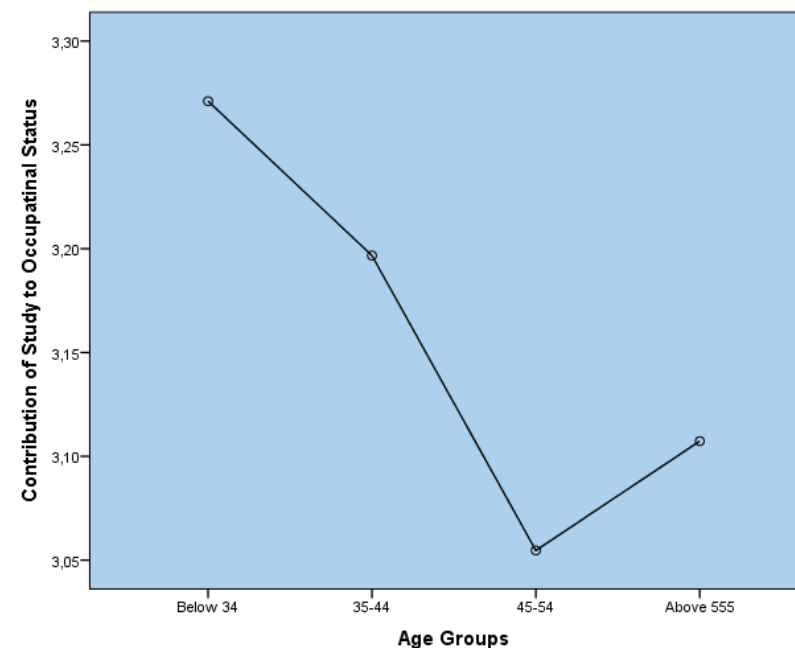
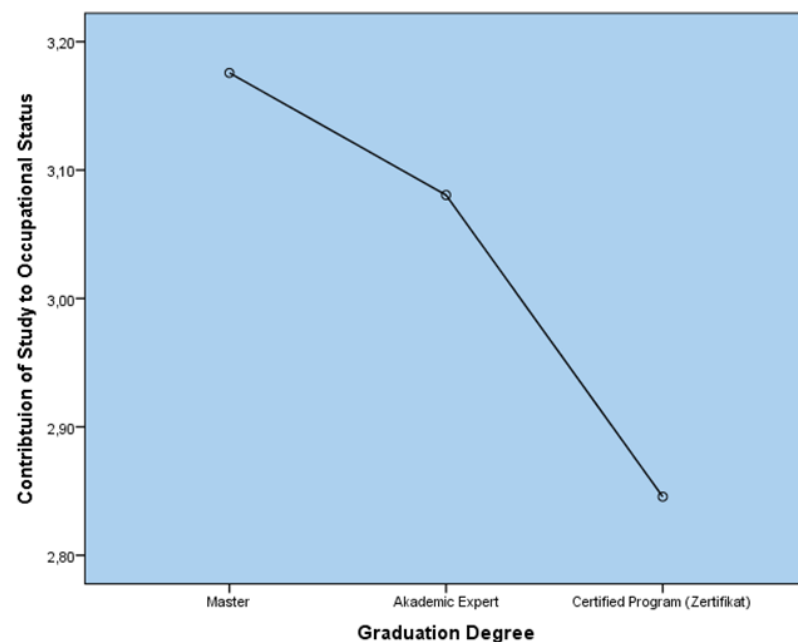
- To what extent do studies at Danube University Krems contribute to improving career situation?

	f	%
Fully	420	14,7
For the most part	744	26,0
More or less	926	32,3
Not really	394	13,8
Not at all	380	13,3
Total	2864	100,0

4. Results

Contribution to Career

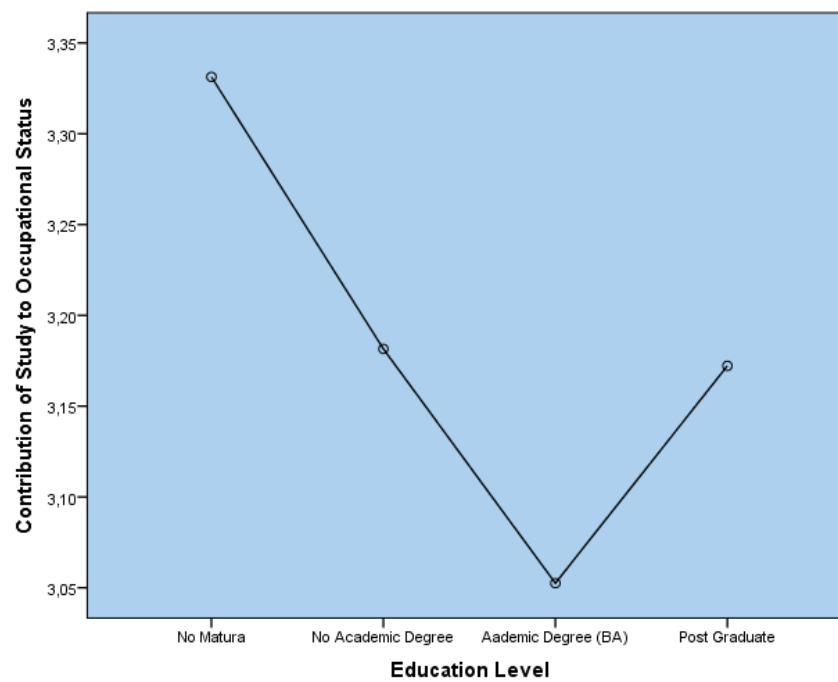
- Significant differences between **degrees** ($p=,005$), and **age** ($p=,0004$) but not according to **gender**



4. Results

Contribution to Career

- Significant differences between **level of education** ($p=,001$)



4. Results

Contributions

- To what extent do studies at Danube University Krems contribute to the following areas?

To what extent did your studies at DUK contribute to the following?	Fully %	Mostly	More or less	Not really	Not at all	Total (n)
Personal continued development	46,5	38,6	11,7	2,3	0,8	2831
Increased competence in specialist area	38,4	44,7	13,4	2,9	0,7	2851
Ability to apply new knowledge in different contexts	20,9	44,5	27	5,5	2,1	2800
Ability for critical thinking	20	36,1	29,2	10,7	4	2746
Interdisciplinary understanding	18,6	41,2	29,8	8	2,3	2752
Analytical skills	16,5	38,3	30,6	11,1	3,4	2747
Increase in prestige	16	33,1	32,3	12,3	6,3	2634
Professional reorientation	14,5	17,8	22,7	16,9	28	2234
Building a network	14,2	26,1	33,6	19	7,1	2691
Move to another company	13,8	9,4	12	11,7	53,2	1836
Professional advancement	12,3	20,5	26,7	18,8	21,6	2555
Assume management responsibilities	11,3	18	24,5	20,3	25,9	2354
Build a second career base	10,1	15,1	18,7	19,6	36,6	2070
Increase income	7,2	15,1	23,4	22,3	31,9	2598
Become self-employed	6,9	5,6	10,3	14,4	62,8	1710

5. Challenges

Contributions: Occupational or Personal?

- Younger professionals, those with lower level of education and those who completed master degree perceives higher level of contributions to their occupational status (similar with Buscha et al. 2009, study)
- Occupational benefits such as professional reorientation, professional advancement, building a second career base or increase in income have been cited less frequently compared to the wider benefits of continuing education such as personal continued development, analytical skills or critical thinking.
- Professional studies have wider benefits as personal development like wider benefits in liberal adult education

5. Challenges

Build an alliance for lifelong learning and continuing education!

- Unfortunately, too many people miss out in lifelong learning, so that in their highly productive years between 30 and 40 they lose the chance and readiness to learn. In older age groups, a reduction in mental flexibility and the danger of losing writing and reading skills has been shown. Therefore, working environments structured to provide the chance and stimulation to learn are needed for adults from all kinds of groups including gifted persons who are often invisible and not mentioned in policies (see Salamanca declaration of the UNESCO 1994 that supports the inclusion of gifted persons as well). It is important that the adults need to take the lifelong learning and continuing education seriously for the benefit of the individual, the family, and the society as well as for the economy. Supposed minimal knowledge is not only a result of personal history and formal education, but also a result of limited access to non-formal education, such as too low acceptance rates in continuing education. Therefore, advising, consulting, and guidance are needed in (academic) continuing education.
- Offering courses of study that are not yet in demand, such as applicable future technologies and the professionalization of “non-academics” in areas where management competency is necessary (empowerment of professionals who are not academics) in areas where research and innovation are coupled (see Horizon 2020) with the emphasis on excellent science, industrial leadership and societal challenges.

To deal with this challenge:

- **To keep professionals improve their competences and skills, we are responsible for the cooperation among universities in research areas around whole Europe**



Danube University Krems.
The University for Continuing Education.

Thank You!

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