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LEAD2 Launch conference in Brussels, Belgium

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LEAD2 project partners

1. Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB), Belgium – Coordinator
2. UNIVERSIDADE NOVA DE LISBOA (NOVA), Portugal
3. University of Vienna (UniVie), Austria
4. Aarhus University (AU), Denmark
5. Middle East Technical University (METU), Turkey
6. Silesian University of Technology (SUT), Poland
7. National Academy of Education Administration (NAEA), Beijing, China
8. Tongji University (TJU), Shanghai, China
9. Beijing Normal University (BNU), Beijing, China
10. Yunnan Normal University (YNNU), Kunming, China
11. China University of Geosciences (CUG), Wuhan, China
12. Guangxi Normal University (GXNU), Guilin, China



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I. Introduction

LEAD2 launch conference took place in Brussels and was hosted by Vrije Universiteit Brussel (VUB) between 20-22 March 2019. In order to evaluate the quality of the conference, participants were invited to fill in the evaluation forms each day during the conference, which included closed and open-ended questions. Through utilizing a five-point scale, close-ended and open-ended questions queried participants' level of agreements on the overall quality of the events and each specific section as well as the contribution to the knowledge, the opportunities to learn from other partners and expectations met. Furthermore, data analysis has been set up: descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviations, and frequencies) have been calculated for the close-ended questions while qualitative approach has been applied for the open-ended questions.

To that end, the report presents the results of this evaluation as follow: session 2.1 presents the demographic characteristics of the sample, session 2.2 performs an evaluation based on close-ended questions, session 2.3 carries out an evaluation based on open-ended questions.

This evaluation survey and the evaluation report is part of the internal quality assurance (WP3) of the LEAD2 project.

II. Results

In the following sections, participants' responses are presented for each day in a comparative manner under two main sections of results for the close-ended and open-ended questions.

2.1. Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Since this report presents the evaluation results for three days of the conference, the demographic characteristics of the participants are also explained for each day separately. On the first day of the conference, 22 attendees voluntarily filled in the evaluation forms. Of the participants, 15 of them were female while 7 of them were male. Participants predominantly have Chinese origin ($n = 12$) while the rest composed of Europeans ($n = 7$) and Turkish ($n = 3$). When the participants were asked their positions/functions, 10 of them reported that they have roles without administrative function including professors, lecturers, and researchers. On the second day of the conference, a relatively lower number of participants volunteered to fill in the evaluation form ($n = 16$). In terms of gender, an equal composition was observed with the presence of 8 females and 8 males. Of these participants, great majority was Chinese ($n = 10$) while there were 5 Europeans and 1 participant with different countries of origin including Turkey. Concerning the position hold, 6 participants reported holding positions without administrative function. On the last day of the conference, 11 participants filled in the

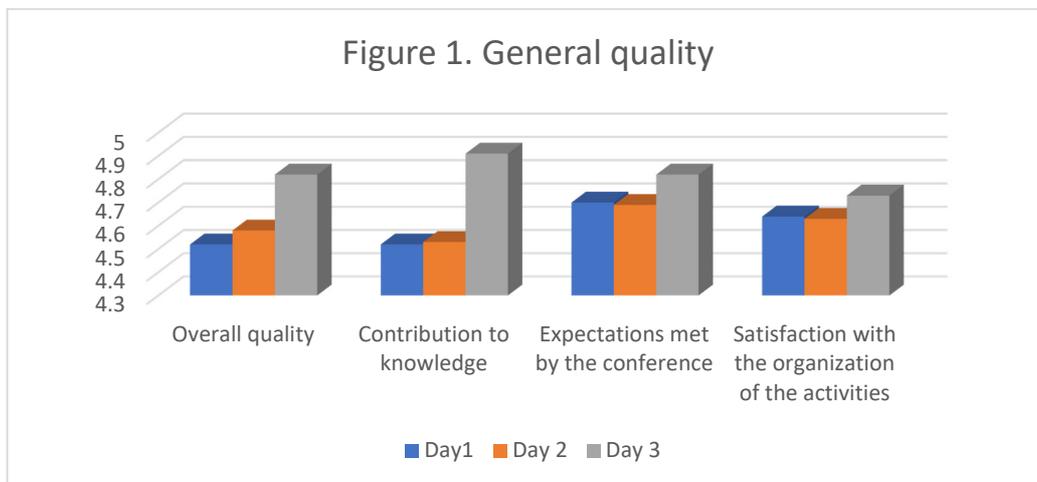
evaluation form. Of the sample, the majority of them were female (n = 9). Of the participants, 4 of them have Chinese origin and the rest composed of Turkish (n=4) and Europeans (n= 3). Concerning the position held, 4 of them have positions without administrative function while the rest were occupying positions with administrative functions including vice presidents and directors of some units.

2.2. Results for the close-ended questions

The evaluation form used to collect data for each day composed of three common closed-ended and two common open-ended questions. The closed-ended ones participants' evaluations about the overall quality of the event organized on the respective day, and the extent to which the events enriched their knowledge on university governance and academic leadership as well as fulfill their expectations. The evaluation form used on the first day also included one extra question that assesses the overall quality of each specific session organized. For all closed-ended questions, the higher scores received implied the higher quality perceived by the participants. While interpreting the figures presented below, the differences in the sample sizes between three evaluation studies should be taken into consideration.

2.2.1. General evaluation for three days of the conference

General evaluation for three days of the conference is complemented by four components: overall quality, contribution to knowledge, expectations met by the conference and satisfaction with the organization of the activities. The participants' perspectives about the general quality of the LEAD2 conference for each day are presented in figure 1 and table 1. In general, a substantial majority of attendees expressed high satisfaction with the conference in all categories.



First of all, the participants' evaluations about the overall quality of the LEAD2 launch conference, the mean scores computed for each day were very close to each other and greater

than 4, suggesting that participants found the overall quality of each event very high. Even though all mean scores were interpreted as positive, the mean scores computed for the events on the second ($M = 4.58$, $SD = .49$) and third days ($M = 4.82$, $SD = .40$) were relatively higher than that computed for the first day ($M = 4.52$, $SD = .49$). Thus, it is logical to reach the conclusion that the overall quality was increasing during three-day events.

In term of the contribution to knowledge, participants were asked to what extent the conference contribute to share and enhance knowledge regarding the project goals and academic leadership. The result of this question is very positive. On the scale of poor to very well, all the answers have a modal value and median of 4 or 5. Hence, the computed mean scores for each day were remarkably high, which means that attendees were highly satisfied with the aspect of sharing and cultivating knowledge provided by the conference. Interestingly, the last day of the conference had the greatest contribution to extending participants' knowledge ($M= 4.59$, $SD= .30$).

Concerning the expectations met by the conference, participants were asked the extent to which the events have met their expectations. The results indicated that the mean scores for each day were very high ($M = 4.7$, $SD = .48$ for the first day, $M = 4.69$, $SD = .60$ for the second day, $M = 4.82$, $SD = .41$ for the last day). The statistical results provided strong evidence that the events on three days of the conference mostly met attendees' satisfaction, especially on the last day of the conference.

Regarding the participants' evaluations about the organization of activities, participants were asked to evaluate the quality of the organization of activities. As shown in figure 1 and the table 1, the lowest mean scores are for the first day ($M = 4.64$, $SD = .49$) and the highest mean scores are for the last day of the conference $M = 4.73$, $SD = .47$. The result was considered as the sign of high satisfaction with the organization of the activities perceived for each day.

Table 1. Means and standard deviations for the three-day events

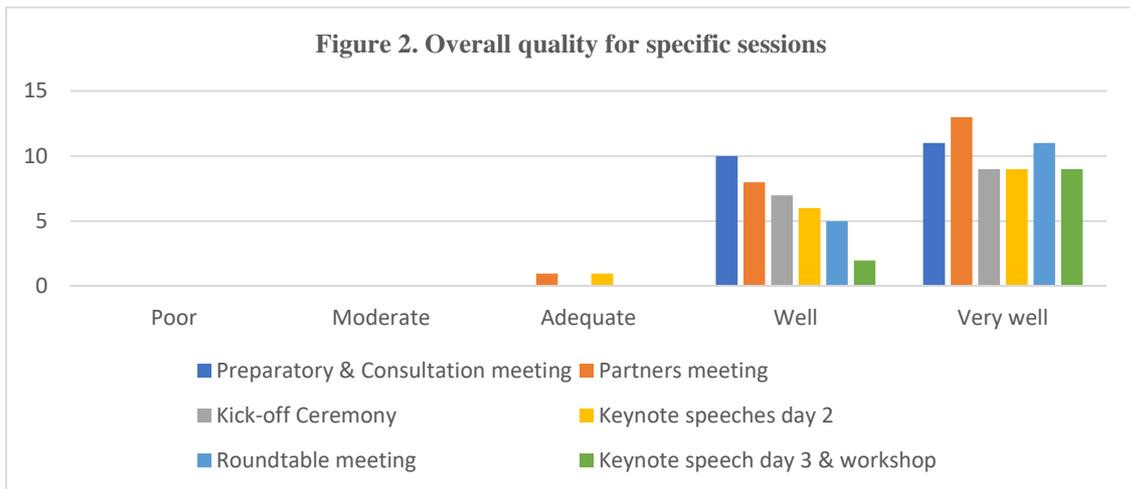
Events	Overall quality		Contribution to knowledge		Expectations met by the conference		Satisfaction with the organization of the activities	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Day 1	4.52	.49	4.52	.51	4.7	.48	4.64	.49
Day 2	4.58	.49	4.53	.56	4.69	.60	4.63	.61
Day 3	4.82	.40	4.91	.30	4.82	.41	4.73	.47

2.2.2. Evaluation of the specific sessions

During three days of the conference, five sessions were partially organised including the preparatory and consultations meeting, partners meeting (on day 1), the LEAD2 kick-off ceremony, the keynote speeches and roundtable meeting (on day 2), the keynote speech and workshop (on day 3). Each session has specific goals to achieve. Hence, apart from the overall quality for three days of the conference, participants were asked to evaluate the quality of each session.

a. Overall quality for specific sessions

Regarding the participants’ evaluations about the overall quality of the specific sessions during three days of the conference, frequency analysis indicated that for all sessions the most frequently selected options are “very well” and “well”, suggesting high satisfaction on the part of the participants.



As shown in Figure 2, the highest option of “very well” is the most frequently selected one for all the sessions. Although there is no participant in the sample who rated the sessions as “poor” and “moderate” in terms of quality, there were only two participants selected the “adequate” options. The mean scores accordingly were high to be considered as the sign of high overall quality perceived for each session with the lowest mean of $M = 4.5$ ($SD = .51$) and $M=4.5$ ($SD=.63$) achieved for the preparatory and consultation meeting and the keynote speech session (see Table 2).

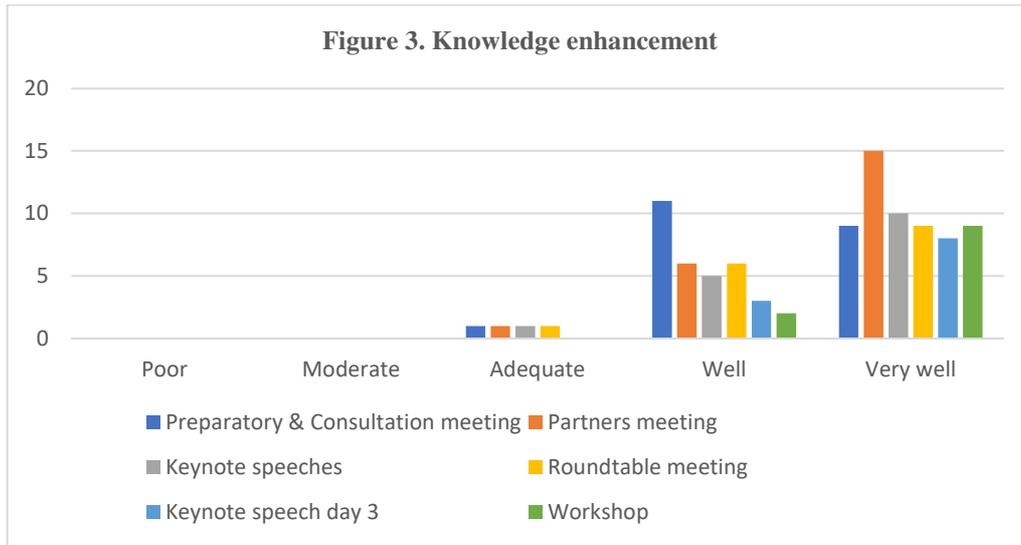
Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviations for the events

<i>Specific sessions</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Preparatory & consultation	4.5	.51
Partners meeting	4.6	.59
Kick-off ceremony	4.6	.51

Keynote speeches	4.5	.63
Round table meeting	4.7	.48
Keynote speech &workshop	4.8	.41

b. Knowledge enhancement

Participants were asked to what extent they believed the conference provided them with new insights into university governance and academic leadership, as displayed in figure 3.



It is significant from the frequency figure, a substantial majority of attendees expressed a high level of knowledge enhancement. For all session, the most frequently selected options are “well and very well”. However, three of the survey participants who reported that the contribution of knowledge for the preparatory meeting, the partners meeting, the keynote speech, and roundtable meeting was adequate.

Consistent with the frequency analysis, the descriptive analysis indicated that all sessions have highly effect on improving attendees’ knowledge and skills on academic leadership (table 3). Interestingly, by type of sessions, the most highly rated session was the workshop with a mean of $M= 4.8$ ($SD= .40$) while the preparatory and consultation session got the lowest mean of $M= 4.4$ ($SD= .59$).

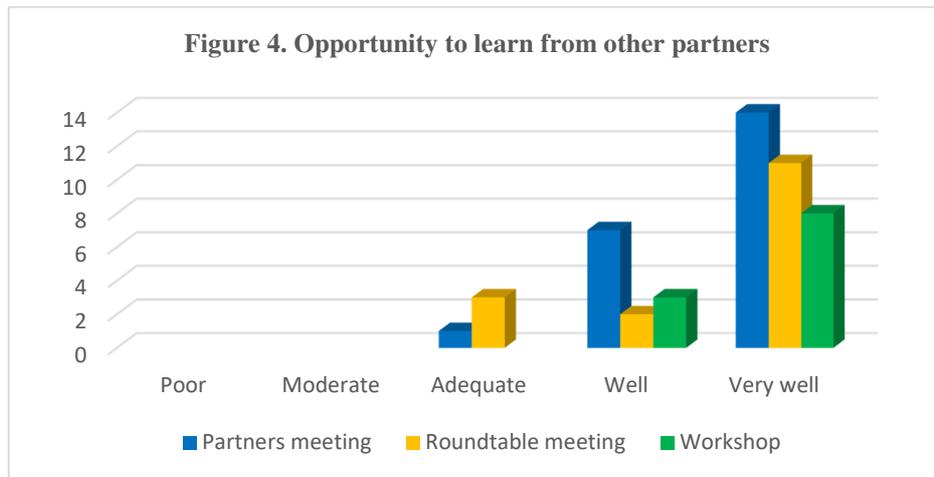
Table 3. Mean and standard deviations for events

<i>Specific sessions</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Preparatory & consultation	4.4	.59
Partners meeting	4.6	.58
Keynote speeches day 1	4.6	.63
Roundtable meeting	4.5	.63

Keynote speech day 2	4.7	.47
Workshop	4.8	.40

c. Opportunity to learn from other partners

Survey participants were asked to assess the degree to which they can learn from other partners. This question was applied for three sessions only: partners meeting, roundtable meeting, and workshop. The reason is the discussion was an essential part of those sessions.



The frequency figure 4 illustrates participants’ perception about the opportunity to learn from other partners in three main events. Virtually all participants responded that those meetings offered a great opportunity to learn from other partners. Although there is no attendee in the sample who rated the meeting as “poor” or “moderate” in term of the opportunities to learn from other partners, there were also few participants who rated the partners meeting and the round table meeting as “adequate”.

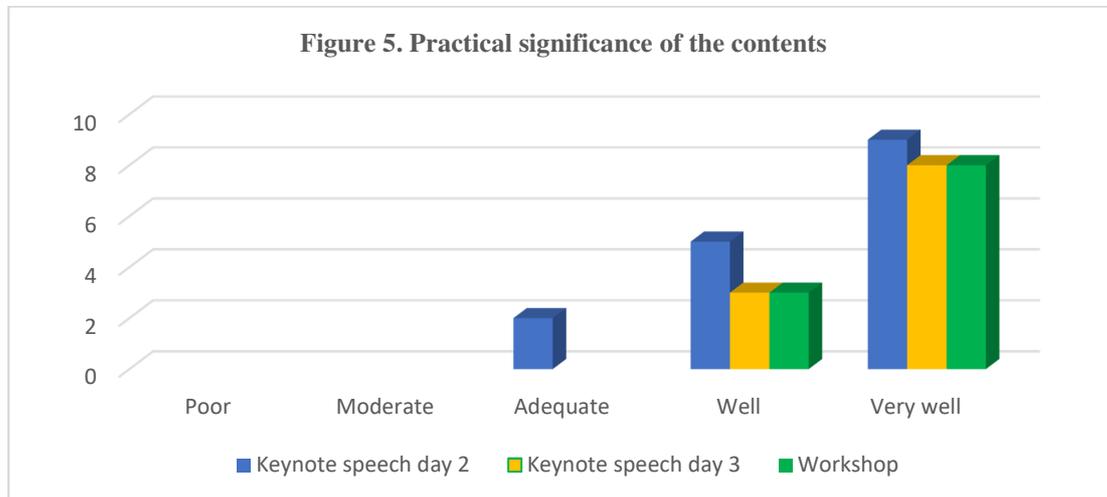
Accordingly, the descriptive analysis indicates similar result as the mean scores were high to be considered as the sign of high agreement perceived for each session with the lowest mean of $M= 4.56$ ($SD= .73$) achieved for the roundtable session.

Table 4. Mean and standard deviations for events

<i>Specific sessions</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Partners meeting	4.59	.59
Roundtable meeting	4.56	.73
Workshop	4.73	.46

d. Practical significance of the contents

Participants were asked to evaluate the practical significance of the content during the keynote speeches and the workshop for the last two days. The results are presented in figure 5.



Significantly, a vast majority of participants predominantly selected the “well” and “very well” options suggesting high satisfaction on the practical significance of the contents. However, there were also very few attendees selected the option “adequate” for the keynote speech on day 2. In line with the results of the previous questions, the high mean scores for three sessions illustrated strong evidence that the contents for the keynote speeches and the workshop were relevant and practically significant. Further details are found in table 5.

Table 3. Mean and standard deviations for events

<i>Specific sessions</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Keynote speeches day 2	4.44	.73
Keynote speech day 3	4.73	.47
Workshop	4.73	.47

To conclude, the statistical results indicated that all five sessions of the conference were productive and fruitful. Those provided meetings significantly contributed to enhance participants’ knowledge regarding academic leadership and also to create an opportunity to learn from other partners.

2.2. Results for the open-ended questions

Each evaluation form included two open-ended questions that ask participants’ comments and suggestions about different aspects of the conference. On the first day, participants were asked to provide their comments about the seminar organized and make



suggestions, recommendations for the activity improvement. The comments generally clustered around the positive effects of the preparatory and partners meetings. Specifically, the seminar for the first day was perceived as well-organised with a clear structure and rich contents. Moreover, some positive comments were made about the discussion part in the sense that it was helpful to understand the LEAD2 project goals as well as to know other partners. The other comments were generally in the form of suggestions for the partners' presentation part. In order to improve the quality of this session, controlling the time for each partner presentation, mixing up the European and Chinese presentations were recommended. Furthermore, identifying specific roles of the partners in each phase of the 5 work packages was the other suggestion made about the organization of the activities. Concerning the language being used in the seminar, one of the participants suggested to have both English and Chinese versions for the work plans and in the university introductory part to enhance mutual understanding.

In the evaluation form administered on the second day, participants were asked to comment on the second day's seminar and make suggestions to enhance the conference quality and future collaboration. Concerning the first question, the quality of the keynote speeches and the roundtable meeting, the benefits gained and suggestions were the main themes framed. As for the quality of the seminars, highly qualified speakers, rich contents that cultivate further learning were underlined. Concerning the benefits gained, the opportunities provided for cross-national collaboration in comparative research were indicated. The recommendation was made about extending the time for the keynote meetings. Besides, one of the participants suggested receiving a summary of the discussion part and the presentations of the keynote speakers. When it comes to the suggestions regarding future collaboration in the domain of comparative research on university governance and academic leadership, one of the attendees suggested that some definitions of terminology which relate to theories and practices should be emphasized.

On the last day of the conference, participants were again asked to comment on the seminar of the day and make suggestions regarding the current and future cooperation between institutions on university governance and academic leadership. Participants mainly indicated the positive quality of the workshop on university governance and academic leadership. The effect of the seminar on improving knowledge and skills, the opportunities to learn from each other were also highlighted.

III. Conclusion

Taken together, remarkably high overall mean scores computed showed that the LEAD2 launch conference organized at VUB between 20-22 March 2019 was remarkable satisfactory in terms of its overall quality, contribution to the knowledge, the degree of fulfilling the expectations, and specific sessions. Responses given to the open-ended questions



also indicated quite parallel results with the quantitative evaluations by yielding the results of improved knowledge and understanding and opportunities provided for exchange and collaboration. The suggestions given for enhancing the quality of the conference and strengthening future collaboration between institutions were mainly about providing more time for the keynote lectures, narrowing the language barriers and the way of organizing activities in order to improve the engagement of the partners.

The evaluation survey and internal quality evaluation report serves as a means for internal monitoring of the quality for the implementation of the project; especially the comments and recommendations from the participants are important elements for taking into consideration for further improvement. These measures are crucial for ensuring a good quality implementation and enhancing the impact of the project.