

# **Strengthening Universities, Enhancing Capacities - Higher Education Management for Development**

**Strategies of Internationalisation :  
DIES Partnership Programme on Higher Education Management**



***Success of the DIES Project on Internationalization :  
VIT University Perspective***

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# Motivation and Main Idea for the Project

- VIT's vision - to blossom into an international institution offering quality education. Our vision statement reads :  
*“...set global standards, making our students technologically superior and ethically strong, who in turn shall improve the quality of life of the human race.”*
- The vision prompted us to constantly look for ways to enhance internationalization activities.
- India also started encouraging internationalization of higher education, following globalization and economic liberalization in the 1990s.
- VIT sensed this early and started promoting internationalization activities.
- VIT is a forerunner in internationalization among higher education institutions in India.

## Internationalization at VIT

- Internationalization at VIT started with admission of foreign students in 1998.
- As the pace of internationalization activities increased, a full fledged International Relations Office( IRO) was created in 2003 – a facility that did not exist in many Indian institutions then.
- The office was started with a director, an assistant director, a foreign students' Adviser and secretarial staff . Today it has a director, a deputy director, 2 assistant directors, 2 international student coordinators and secretarial staff.
- IRO wanted to improve its systems, processes and functioning and looked to partner universities for guidance.
- VIT signed an MoU in 2007 - LUH's rich experience in internationalization was an inspiration to VIT

## **Origin of the Project**

- We sought the help and guidance of LUH in streamlining internationalization activities since LUH already had a long history of internationalization.
- LUH readily agreed to help and came out with the idea of applying for the DIES Project to DAAD.
- In July 2007, LUH submitted a proposal to DAAD for this project with VIT as the third world partner.
- Project sanctioned in February 2008.
- Kick off workshop held in July 2008 – Set the tone for the project.

# **Methodology**

**Project was conducted in 2 phases :**

**Phase –I ( July 2008- November 2010) : LUH & VIT**

**Phase - II ( March 2010 – November 2011) :**

**LUH & VIT pass on the benefits of phase I to two other Indian Institutions – University of Madras and Symbiosis International University.**

**Methodology Adapted**

- **Workshops (11)**
- **Training Programmes (5)**
- **Internship for VIT IR staff at LUH (2 – each )**

**Communication & Interaction established through :**

- **Personal visits**
- **Exchange of mails & telephonic conversations.**
- **Video conferences**



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# **Objectives of the Project**

## **Phase I**

- To Compare the Internationalization structures and processes at VIT & LUH
- To mutually benefit from the learning and experiences of both institutions
- To help VIT gain an insight into the functioning of IR office at LUH and a few other German higher education institutions
- To implement the best practices of the partner institution at the home institution adapting

# **Objectives of the Project**

## **Phase II**

- To share the learning experiences gained from Phase I with other Indian institutions, thereby creating a multiplier effect
- To benefit from the synergy of German and Indian partners for mutual benefit

## **Benefits to VIT**

- VIT had an International Relations Office before the project commenced but the project helped in streamlining the processes and procedures.
- It Provided an inter-cultural learning experience.
- Helped us identify and implement some of the best practices suited to our needs.
- The project helped us realize our strengths, weaknesses and opportunities in internationalization with respect to German institutions and other Indian institutions.

## **Outcomes**

Since the beginning of the project we were clear that the success of the project lies in :

- adapting and assimilating processes unique to each institution and not merely imitating the practices prevailing in any institution.
- finding home-grown solutions rather than employing alien ideas.

With this idea, we worked on the project and a review of the results showed that more than 70 % of the desired goals were achieved.

# **Internships – A Novel Experience**

- Two Internships at the IO of LUH
- Each internship had one month duration
- 4 staff of VIT IR Office participated
- It provided real-life experience of the functioning of German International Office
- Provided an opportunity to visit different German institutions and to study the functioning of International office in each of them
- Helped us understand that each German institution had its own unique international office structure.
- Gave us the chance to understand the uniqueness in each of them in spite of being in the same country

## **Specific Outcomes of the Project**

**Some of the specific outcomes are :**

- Reorganization of tasks at IRO to increase efficiency- transition from task-based approach to a region oriented reorganization.
- Development of Internationalization Strategy
- Appointment of IR Coordinators
- Periodic team meetings
- Study Buddy
- Student Assistance
- Short-term programmes/ Summer School for foreign students
- Structured Process

## **Specific Outcomes**

- Newsletter to share the internationalization activities
- IR webpage made more comprehensive
- Open Hours for students at IR Office
- Streamlining of the SAP Process
- Orientation Programmes for incoming students
- Inter-cultural workshops and training programmes
- International Students' Club
- Preparation of Calendar of events for IR Office
- Streamlining of database management
- Improved Internal Communication (Internalization)

## **What We Learnt from the Project**

- Prioritizing issues and setting goals
- Essence of team work
- Working with deadlines
- Paying careful attention to minute details
- More precise in communication
- Follow-up of activities
- Creating detailed documentation for future reference
- Effective utilization of available resources

## In a nutshell...

The project :

- provided the unique opportunity of working closely with an amazing German partner, LUH, and brought us closer to the wonderful Indian partners – University of Madras & Symbiosis
- served as a platform for exchange of ideas and experiences
- helped us realize our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in the internationalization process
- Provided direction to our internationalization efforts *vis- a- vis* other institutions
- Helped us appreciate the uniqueness of each institution and taught us to accept differences

## **Future Perspectives**

- To work with all the partners to pass on the benefits gained through this project to other willing Indian institutions.
- To explore the possibility of creating a network with other international partners to strengthen internationalization activities at each institution for mutual benefit.



Thank You  
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for the support  
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