

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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DIES Conference at Bonn
Nov.28 & 29,2011

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
DAAD
for the support
&
LUH
for the
guidance &
cooperation