

MOKSLAS IR MOKYMAS

The impact of tempus project "Education for international communication in Lithuania" on the development and management of joint masters' studies

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Getting to the future first is more a function of resourcefulness than resources. Resourcefulness stems not from an elegantly structured strategic architecture, but from deeply felt sense of purpose, a broadly shared dream, a truly seductive view of tomorrow's opportunity.

Our aim is to create a better future for universities.

To construct the right strategies for the future, universities need to know what is happening across changing social, political and economic climates. They need to be able to formulate hypotheses about the expected future to develop their own strategies. Faculties should screen and select mainstream and fringe information including signals, trends and assumptions about the world a client inhabits today and the factors that will shape it tomorrow.

The impact of Tempus projects on the management of higher education institutions is an incentive for more strategic planning on institutional level. Further development of institutional management represents one of the basic requirements in the Lithuanian pre-accession strategy and a pre-condition for participation in other EU programs.

Vilnius University has made successful TEMPUS S-JEP application for the project starting academic year 1997/1998, and the Faculty of Communication is envisaged as a pilot Faculty for the decentralization reform. The role of the pilot Faculty is to acquire competence in Faculty administration and management and then communicate this knowledge to other faculties. In this context the mission of the Faculty of Communication is to act as an agent of change and innovation for the whole Vilnius University. So, we want to continue strengthening our competitive position and become very competitive in the world. Having in mind these new developments for the Faculty management and development, we analyse and evaluate the results of our previous activity and the TEMPUS projects carried out for academic programmes.

In 1997, the Board of the Faculty of Communication has approved the Strategic Plan where staff development is seen as a strategic priority (Komunikacijos, 1997). Developing staff skills and improving working context, facilitating and increasing participation, human resources development in general – these are the key conditions for creation of organizational culture. Our success depends on the training we give to existing employees. With increasing number of staff members and students participating in mobility programs, the Faculty becomes a virtual Faculty where communication of ideas and innovation is a crucial factor. One of the Tempus projects allowing to strengthen this feature is “Education for International Communication in Lithuania” that has provided us with opportunities, resources, and partners. We can sum up the results of our activity in 1996/1997 with regard to the prospects.

The curriculum of the MA programme in International Communication was approved by the Senate of Vilnius University in 1995 and the first 15 students were accepted and started the studies on September 1, 1996. At the same time the message about the approval of

the Tempus project for the development of International Communication studies has reached the Faculty of Communication.

The programme in International Communication was initiated by the staff of the FC and was created jointly with the staff of the Institute of International Relations and Political Science (IIRPS). At the very beginning it occurred that as a joint programme it is an original one and most Western European universities offer only separate courses in International and Intercultural Communication without a coherent curriculum. Therefore the original curriculum was modeled on the MA programme for International Relations and International Communication of the Boston University College (US) and the main principles developed by the staff of the Faculty of Communication and the IIRPS. The programme consists of the courses delivered by the FC (50%) and the IIRPS (50%) and belongs to the study area 84000 – Information science (ISCED). The institutional support from the University Rector, the Vice-Rector, Study Department, International Relations Department as well as from the other faculties and University sectors was very satisfactory. This situation was a good starting point for the curriculum development activities that were actively stimulated by the implementation of the TEMPUS project. One of the main objectives of the Tempus JEP “Education for International Communication in Lithuania” is to develop a two years model Master’s degree programme in International Communication, to test its validity and to empower the staff of the Faculty of Communication so that it could be carried on independently after the project comes to an end.

The basic philosophy of the International Communication Master’s programme is based on the agreement with the main partners in the University of Amsterdam and Leicester University that “it should train students for a broad variety of jobs in communication, both for the consumer market and the business market” (Cuilenburg, 1997) with an emphasis on international aspects.

Project activities which contribute to the achievement of this goal are planned and carried out in order to fulfill several tasks of the Curriculum development:

1. *Revision of the existing curriculum*

Revision of the existing curriculum was made in several stages. The first one was carried out during the coordination meeting in December when the decision was taken to deliver basic modules during the first year of the studies, and to introduce three specialised streams:

- 1) International and Intercultural Communication – IIC,
- 2) International Public Relations – IPR,
- 3) Information Analyses – IA

They should be studied during the second year and are based on freely chosen modules (3rd semestre). The work on Master thesis should be completed during the fourth semestre. Faculty of Communication has recommended its staff members to supervise the curriculum development of every stream.

The staff of the Faculty of Communication together with the staff at the University of Amsterdam had designed the module structure for the first two streams and the final review of the modules for the three streams was made in June, 1997. The Information Analyses stream was changed into International Information Resource Management (IIRM) to realise the possibilities of links with the S-JEP 09062–95, carried out by the Faculty of Communication. The new streams differ from the main specializations offered by the University of Amsterdam (Media Studies, Information Studies, Audience Studies, Policy Studies) (Cuilenburg, 1997), though include and synthesize features from each of them.

The final stage was the approval of the revised curriculum by the participating institutions during the planning meeting at the Leicester University.

At the moment of writing the new version of the curriculum is approved by the Council of the Faculty of Communication (the revised third semestre curriculum for the students accepted in 1996, and the revised curriculum for the students accepted in 1997). This curriculum

is submitted to the Joint Committee of the International Communication programme and the Senate of Vilnius University.

2. *Introducing new and modern teaching methods*

Development and updating of contents and methods in teaching the courses by Lithuanian staff during their visits abroad and the discussions with the Western colleagues during the teaching assignment activities is a part of the curriculum development as well. The staff of the Faculty of Communication is working on the preparation of syllabuses and teaching material for each module. During the first year the characteristics and plans of each module and the lists of the most important literature were prepared by teachers. Equipment bought for the FC is a background for new courses, e.g. *Transborder Data Flow; International Information Resources, International News Flow*, etc.

Vilnius University has plans to start education in foreign languages, mostly English, for foreign students. TEMPUS project activities are very helpful for the Faculty of Communication staff to develop this type of modules. The experience of the University of Amsterdam in organisation of the ACCESS programme for the foreign students is a good example and gives an opportunity to get acquainted with the management of this type of programmes. It is useful in other aspects as well. The MA International Communication programme is accessible for the undergraduates with different educational backgrounds and degrees as well as the ACCESS programme. The solutions and methods of teaching of the heterogeneous groups of students used in ACCESS are very important for the Faculty of Communication and worth studying.

3. *Revision and modernisation of existing courses; preparation, development and implementation of new courses.*

During their mobility programmes abroad Lithuanian staff members had worked on either preparation or modernisation of the courses they deliver or will have to deliver for International Communication students in Vilnius:

Dr. A. Augustinaitis – International Information Resource Management;

Dr. R. Gudauskas – Strategic Management;

Dr. A. Nugaraite – Public Relations, Diplomatic Journalism;

A. Lydeka – Diplomatic Protocol;

Dr. V. Gudonienė – International Public Relations, International News Flow; Dr. E. Macevičiūtė – Global Communication, Intercultural Communication.

At the same time the development and revision of the courses went on at Vilnius University as well. During the first year the main attention was directed towards the preparation and development of the basic modules by the VU staff. At present the core of the curriculum for International Communication is supported mainly by the staff of Vilnius University. The remaining gaps are filled in by:

4. Study period abroad and intensive courses for students

Faculty of Communication students' study period abroad is recognised by Vilnius University as one term of studies at the Faculty of Communication. Six students from the International Communication programme may benefit from this opportunity. The intensive courses in Vilnius are regarded as an integral part of MA programme. During the first year project they were targeted at the 15 MA students. For the second project year this number is bigger as 25 students were accepted for MA studies in International Communication from the beginning of the academic year 1997. The decision was taken to give the opportunity to ten MA students accepted to Communication Science programme to benefit from the intensive courses carried out according to this project.

One of the main objectives of this activity is to implement the European Credit Transfer System for the Communication Science and International Communication Studies. According to the requirements of this System the Faculty fully acknowledges the study period abroad on the grounds of information about study programmes and student's achievements, general agreement with the partner universities, and credits assigned for the scope and quality of the students work (Europinė, 1995). The partner universities provide the Faculty with all necessary data.

5. *Teaching materials for the modules in MA programme for International Communication include:*

- material developed by foreign professors and translated into Lithuanian;
- material brought from abroad (text books, diskettes, monographs, etc.);
- material developed by Lithuanian teachers during the visits abroad;
- material (mainly books) ordered from abroad.

The Faculty library has a collection of newest books in International Communication, International Public Relations, Intercultural Communication, Political Communication, and other related fields. The books were selected by Vilnius University staff and the staff of the University of Amsterdam. The main textbooks are available in multiple copies. However most of the books are kept only in one copy. Teaching materials prepared by Lithuanian staff are available in manuscripts and prepared for publishing by Vilnius University Press.

Main teaching material is available for the use of students and staff. It is used for teaching purposes (students' course projects, seminars, workshops) and for preparation of the syllabuses.

6. *Institutional changes*

There were two main institutional changes introduced in the context of the present TEMPUS project:

1. Before the first project year the new Master's programme for International Communication was approved and during the first project year the management of the programme was tested. The International Communication MA programme is a joint programme of two Vilnius University units – the Faculty of Communication and the Institute of International Relations and Political Science. The main decisions are taken by the Joint Committee that consists of two representatives from those two units. The Joint Committee members accept new students to the programme, approve main decisions regarding the curriculum and solve other major problems. The everyday management of the teaching problems is the responsibility of the Programme Manager. This management is carried out with the help of the FC Dean's office. The

TEMPUS project was started during the very first year of the International Communication MA programme and facilitated the running of it greatly. The management of the Joint Interdisciplinary Master's programme by the Joint Committee inside the Faculty of Communication proved to be efficient and acceptable.

2. The multimedia computer laboratory consisting of three powerful and fully equipped with modern multimedia possibilities PC's (CD equipment, audio and video conferencing) and all necessary software has been installed at the Faculty of Communication. It is essential for education in modern International Communication MA programme as it gives the possibilities to study and use the computer mediated communication throughout the world. Besides, it provides the access to the main information resources on international communication research and study on the Internet. It is an essential background for teaching some of the modules (Computer Networks, Transborder Data Flow, etc.).

The set of equipment needed to ensure the effective and reliable connection of the laboratory computers to the computer networks (including Internet) was bought at the request and with the consultancy of the Computing Centre of Vilnius University. It had to be compatible with the previously set network of Vilnius University and is installed and functions in the Computing Centre. It is maintained as a part of the University Computing Center networking facilities by the staff of the Computing Centre.

Books purchased for the library of the FC are relevant for the teaching purposes of International Communication. This objective was considered one of the most important during the first year of the project as the building of a specialized library provides the foundation for development of the curriculum and syllabuses. All the books are registered at the FC Library and are available for the students and staff.

Computer laboratory is used for the teaching purposes by the students of International Communication at the Faculty of Communication, for the intensive courses by Western teachers and by Lithuanian teachers. The laboratory is used by the students for the individual projects, access to the Internet, networking with the colleagues, for the marketing of the

International Communication MA programme and the TEMPUS project, electronic publishing.

Education/teaching equipment creates a technical infrastructure for the realization of the main goal of the project and supports the activities and other elements of the project. It is important to stress that the equipment purchased within the TEMPUS S_JEP 11296-96 is an integral part of the Integrated Information Centre established in the framework of the JEP 09062-95 in November, 1997, and it enhances the possibilities of the above mentioned equipment as well as of the equipment installed earlier. The integration of the results of the two TEMPUS projects and usage of the possibilities for the achievement of mutual goals expands the benefits for the beneficiary institution (the Faculty of Communication). In a long term perspective the computer laboratory will be used for education of the BA students in Communication Science and there are projects and plans to offer the distance learning courses in International Communication.

The critical success factors of the first year of the project are:

- created network;
- new quality of knowledge and skills, including use of the new equipment;
- definition of the main principles for the curriculum development in International Communication and implementation of those in a revised curriculum;
- new degree of understanding the approaches and teaching strategies in a joint programme;
- acquisition of new experience in teaching students coming with different backgrounds.

Sustainability of the outcomes of the project comprise visibility, networking, policy consensus, users feedback, funding (public or external), official recognition (Sustainability, 1996). Sustainability of a new curriculum may be measured in terms of official recognition, funding and the users feedback. These prove to be quite satisfactory after one year of the project. The competition to enter the International Communication studies as well as the number of accepted students has increased (in 1995 there were 18 students to 15 students places, in 1996 – 35 students to 25 students places).

Cooperation structures with the possible employers depend rather on networking and policy consensus than official recognition. The Faculty is stressing the importance of this task.

We should monitor the most dynamic industries and create possible future scenarios. These scenarios may help decision makers to understand the forces that could impact their businesses in the future. But the real future will be a mixture of elements from many scenarios, some of which we have not yet imagined. Vision design cannot eliminate uncertainty, but it can provide a rational framework within which to explore uncertainties and paradoxes. It helps to focus and motivate a Faculty team toward success in strategy formulation.

Our task is also to create environment in which the organization's partners could share a organization wide vision. They have to see the benefits from working together in new ways.

The work on the academic TEMPUS projects has provided the staff of the Faculty with crucial understanding, skills and management experience that serve as a background for further development and make the Faculty of Communication an invaluable resource for testing the administrative reform of the University.

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TEMPUS projekto „Tarptautinės komunikacijos programa Lietuvai“ įtaka bendrų magistro programų plėtrai ir valdymui

Santrauka

Šio straipsnio tikslas – apibūdinti Vilniaus universiteto Komunikacijos fakulteto vykdomo TEMPUS projekto „Tarptautinės komunikacijos programa Lietuvai“ rezultatus. Svarbiausias uždavinys, kurį siekė įgyvendinti projekto bendradarbiai iš Amsterdamo, Lesterio ir Vilniaus universitetų pirmaisiais metais, buvo mokymo planų rengimas ir jų įgyvendinimo užtikrinimas. Todėl 1996–1997 metais buvo peržiūrėti patvirtinti mokymo planai, Komunikacijos fakulteto dėstytojai rengė naujų kursų mokymo programas, įsigyta mokymo medžiagos. Studentų studijos ir dėstytojų stažuotės Vakarų Europos universitetuose padėjo įgyvendinti šį uždavinį. Kitas svarbus rezultatas – tai naujų organizacinių struktūrų – Jungtinio magistrų studijų komiteto ir Integruoto informacijos centro – sukūrimas. Darbo su akademiais TEMPUS projektais patirtis ypač naudinga, nes Komunikacijos fakultetas tapo eksperimentiniu fakultetu, vykdančiu naują Vilniaus universiteto administracinio pertvarkymo TEMPUS projektą.