

Development of Innovation Driven Culture at Higher Education Institution: ISPEHE Project Results

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to present results of needs assessment analysis that is carried out as the first outcome of Innovative Strategic Partnership for European Higher Education (ISPEHE) project. ISPEHE is a project funded by the European Commission under the Programme Erasmus+ Key Action 2: Cooperation for innovation and exchange of good practices. It aims at providing a foundation for spurring innovative and sustainable learning practices at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and long-term collaboration between HEI's and enterprises.

The one of the innovative components of ISPEHE project is Strategic Integration of Learning Models (SILM). The main purpose of the SILM, as first innovative project component, is to establish joint contemporary educational practices and produce a long-term strategic learning model based on the existing curricula adopted and successfully implemented in each partnering institution.

Keywords: ISPEHE project, SILM analysis, innovation driven culture, higher education.

Introduction

Innovative Strategic Partnership for European Higher Education (ISPEHE) is a project funded by the European Commission under the Programme Erasmus+ Key Action 2: Cooperation for innovation and exchange of good practices. The one of the innovative components of ISPEHE project is Strategic Integration of Learning Models (SILM).

The main purpose of the SILM, as first innovative project component, is to establish joint contemporary educational practices and produce a long-term strategic learning model based on the existing curricula adopted and successfully implemented in each partnering institution.

The Needs assessment analysis is the first element in preparing SILM. The objectives of analysis are aligned with the specific objectives of SILM, and support their accomplishment:

- Identify the actual situation in each of the partnering HEIs;
- Provide assistance for making decisions related to establishing optimal learning models and best practices;
- Obtaining a participatory approach from relevant stakeholders in constructing SILM.

Methodology of Research

Two types of questionnaires (for students and teachers) were prepared by the teams from all partnering institutions in order to establish a joint contemporary educational practice and produce a long-term strategic learning model based on the existing curricula in each partnering institution. The questionnaire for SILM Needs Assessment Analysis was conducted on first, second and third year undergraduate students and teaching staff in the field of business and management. The purpose of the survey was to collect information about: a) The teaching-learning practices applied in partnering institutions; b) Which common teaching and assessment methods are used and which one are specific, unique and more creative in all 5 partnering institutions; and c) What is the opinion of both, students and teaching staff, about such methods?

For determining the sample size, the Finite Population Correction (FPC) factor for systematic random samples when the standard deviation is not known was used for both populations. In total 376 students and 59 teachers were surveyed. The data obtained from the Survey was processed using descriptive statistical analysis and was presented graphically.

Findings/Results

Most important teaching methods to achieve specific knowledge and skills within the course are case studies and special practically oriented exercises. The view of teachers differs about Problem based learning (PBL), which is also deemed important for knowledge acquiring. While students agree that seminars are an

effective way to study the subject area. Both students and teachers concur that distance learning is the least important teaching method to build knowledge and skills.

Types of teaching methods used in the classroom like student presentations, rounds and buzz groups stated by both students, as well as teachers. The most unused teaching technique according to students is role-play, while teachers state that this method is snowballing. The most used teaching methods outside the lecture room stated by students and teachers are team work, group discussion and independent projects. The least used method is field trip according to students and writing media articles according to teachers.

The learning process met almost every student expectations (90%). This is confirmed by the answers provided, where the most used teaching methods and techniques are also deemed the most important by the students and motivate them to study the subject. Areas that can be improved to get higher interest of students are: implementation of techniques to acquire human resource management skills, visits to successful companies and greater number of case studies.

Areas for improvement in order to get optimal use of teaching methods in the course from student and teacher perspective are the ability to apply knowledge in practice and work in a team. This is in conjunction with the statements, where working in small groups are used on a weekly basis, and the theoretical knowledge is complimented with the practical skills of the business community. Both students and teachers agree that the curriculum shouldn't focus on improving the ability to communicate with non-experts.

Students believe that ability to apply knowledge in practical situations, talking in front of class, defending the arguments and searching for new solutions would improve their competence. Teachers believe that more case studies, PBL, use of teaching assistants, double diamond method, inquiry based learning, and creative techniques (e.g. role-play) would improve the quality of study and knowledge of students.

Conclusions

According to the results of the SILM Needs Assessment Analysis, the first recommendation is to involve students in practical analysis of business cases or problems/scenario based business simulations. In conjunction with the recommendation of students and teachers, round tables and debates can be further included, besides of working in groups/teams. Study process can be further enhanced with the greater number of company visits and visiting lectures from representatives/experts of the business community.

Team building is another aspect that is relevant to develop social and communication skills. This can be achieved through organizing field trips, at least once in the semester for each study year. Teachers and students should be involved in the entire process, including planning activities that will be carried out during field trip and assignments to be done pre- and post- field trip. Students developing certain HR management skills while working in groups and this can be enhanced by the introduction of older students in the lecturing process (mentoring/consulting).

One of the main problems stated by students is difficulty of completing tasks in the outlined time frame. The capacity of students for time management can be further increased by organizing workshops in this area.

The main idea regards students' evaluation is to involve the students in the assessment process. Student involvement in forming the grade can be implemented on the basis of 360 degree method.

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