Teresa Chen • Peter Fischer • Minttu Merivirta (eds.)

BRIDGE – A Sustainable Network of HEIs and SMEs in the Barents Region:

Bridging Communities of Stakeholders to Enhance Regional Pursuits

(Kansikuvan tekee graafinen suunnittelijamme Pia Keränen)
Voit joko ehdottaa kansikuvaa, johon sinulla on tekijänoikeudet, tai pyytää graafiselta suunnitelijalta apua kuvitukseen julkaisun taittovaiheessa.

PUBLICATIONS OF LAPLAND UAS
Publication series B. Research reports and Compilations xx/2021 (graafinen suunnittelija täydentää)

Teresa Chen • Peter Fischer • Minttu Merivirta (eds.)

BRIDGE – A Sustainable Network of HEIs and SMEs in the Barents Region:

Bridging Communities of Stakeholders to Enhance Regional Pursuits

Publication series B. Research reports and Compilations xx/2021 (graafinen suunnittelija täydentää)

Lapland University of Applied Sciences
Rovaniemi 2021

HUOMIOITA JULKAISUTYÖRYHMÄLLE:

JOHDANTO- JA YHTEENVETO-ARTIKKELEISSA ON VIELÄ KOHTIA, JOTKA LISÄTTIIN VIIME HETKILLÄ KÄSIKIRJOITUKSEN MUIDEN ARTIKKELIEN VALMISTUMISEN JÄLKEEN. NÄITÄ KOHTIA EI OLE VIELÄ KAIKILTA OSIN OIKOLUETTU, JA MERKITSIN KYSEISET KOHDAT TÄHÄN KÄSIKIRJOITUKSEEN VIOLETILLA VÄRILLÄ. NÄMÄ TULLAAN TIETYSTI OIKOLUKEMAAN ENNEN JULKAISUA.

HUOM! TÄSSÄ TEMPLATESSA ALATUNNISTEET EIVÄT NÄKÖJÄÄN TOIMINEET OIKEIN, JOS ARTIKKELIPOHJAA KOPIOI YHDESTÄ KOHDASTA TOISEEN. TÄMÄN VUOKSI TÄSSÄ KÄSIKIRJOITUKSESSA EI KAIKILTA OSIN NÄY SIVUNUMEROITA. SIVUNUMEROT MERKITÄÄN TIETYSTI NORMAALISTI LOPULLISEEN JULKAISUUN TAITTO-OHJELMASSA. 😉

HANKKEEN RAHOITTAJIEN LOGOT LISÄTÄÄN ASIANMUKAISESTI TÄLLE SIVULLE TAITOSSA.

ALLA OLEVAT TIEDOT TULEVAT ENGLANNIN KIELELLÄ JULKAISUUMME, MUTTA EN ALA NIITÄ TURHAAN TÄHÄN MUUTTAMAAN, KOSKA PIA KERÄNEN ON JO TEHNYT SEN TAITTOPOHJAAN VALMIIKSI.

ISBN xxxxx (nid.)
ISSN xxxxx (painettu)
ISBN xxxxx (pdf)
ISSN xxxxx (verkkojulkaisu)

Lapin ammattikorkeakoulun julkaisuja
Sarja X. Sarjan nimi xx/2021

Rahoittaja(t): CBC Kolarctic 2014-2020

Toimittajat: Teresa Chen, Peter Fischer, Minttu Merivirta
Kansikuva ja graafinen suunnittelu: Pia Keränen
Taitto: Pia Keränen

Lapin ammattikorkeakoulu
Jokiväylä 11 C
96300 Rovaniemi

Puh. 020 798 6000
www.lapinamk.fi/julkaisut

www.luc.fi

Lapin korkeakoulukonserni LUC on yliopiston ja ammattikorkeakoulun strateginen yhteenliittymä. Konserniin kuuluvat Lapin yliopisto ja Lapin ammattikorkeakoulu.

Table of Contents

Peter Fischer
Minttu Merivirta

Introduction

Over three years, teachers and staff from five universities in Russia, Finland and Norway created bonds for innovation and education in the Arctic North of Europe. More than 50 small private and public firms participated assigning around 250 students with business life challenges.

The network of so many players was not, of course, created in some weeks or months. The network emerged over more than ten years of cooperation between partners. Small bilateral projects across borders for Russian, Finnish and Norwegian students became the basis of trust, of learning from each other and finally revealed common interests. Practice Future was the previous project in business innovation that gathered some partners who in 2017 built the BRIDGE team. The former project served as a kind of master plan (Chen, Merivirta & Smirnova 2014). Experience from Practice Future led to the question: What do small companies expect from cooperation with HEI? Communication with local businesses was essential for designing the BRIDGE project. The exchange convinced us not only to build the project on multidisciplinary teams of students, but also on the diversity of participating university departments: tourism, humanities, business marketing, entrepreneurship and innovation, and engineering.

The BRIDGE project's objective has been to facilitate youth employment and economic growth by building a joint education platform HEI-SME for the Barents Euro-Arctic Region of Russia, Norway and Finland. In the project, international groups of students conducted research for firms as well as solved tasks in product or service innovation, customer development, and market entry. The project implementation period was 2018-2021, and the project was financed by CBC Kolarctic 2014-2020. (Kolarctic BRIDGE 2021.)

BUILDING THE NETWORK

It is evident that university candidates need to practically combine their specific theoretical knowledge with insight into business problems. Companies expect well-educated first-time employees to be fully operable from day one. Therefore, it is important to get to know each other before contracting. Usually, internships and practice semesters are common measures used to prepare students for work life. However, several interviews with businesspeople in Alta, Murmansk, and Tornio in 2016 asking for appropriate cooperation between higher education and small companies revealed that young university graduates would hardly be aware of

valuable job opportunities in rural areas. Rather than being acquainted with potential first-time employees through resource demanding internships, companies prefer short-term and problem-based projects together with students. According to daily tasks to be solved by firms, problem management would require competencies beyond knowledge application. Interviewees identified a gap between the candidate's theoretical basis and their communicative skills required in today's business: leading and cooperating in international multidisciplinary teams, including a steadily growing share of remote global cooperation with business partners and customers.

The already existing network exceeded the group of participants towards demanded competences such as engineering (ITMO St. Petersburg) and humanities (MASU Murmansk). Business education including marketing and business IT (PetrSU and Lapland UAS) and tourism (UiT) completed a range of disciplines. Partners decided to integrate their respective qualities and strengths.

The goal was to run an experiment: developing a learning environment as a sustainable platform for the interaction of local companies and HEI; an innovation brokering platform that is effective in both directions, i.e., innovating business and education as well. The target outcome was a permanent and daily available option for small companies, especially in rural areas.

The plan was simple. Five partner universities, together with selected local companies, assign business tasks to international teams of students. The teams should be from different nationalities and composed of various fields of study and work in a one-semester long session on solutions for companies. Cooperation should be mainly online, enriched by one meeting week per session for teams, teachers and companies.

ENHANCING STUDENT EMPLOYABILITY AND CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

The employability of graduates has been on the international research agenda for many years. Partners were inspired by topics such as enterprise education, as “the process of equipping students (or graduates) with an enhanced capacity to generate ideas and the skills to make them happen” (Wilson 2012, according to Owens & Tibby 2014, 3) or the concept of Innovation brokering (ENRD Coordination Committee 2013; Jacobsen, Fosse, Slinning & Våge 2012).

Deep employability enhancement of the individual student and growth of a company itself could not be the main target outcome of the three-year project. The project design allowed most of the students as well as the companies to participate only once. Yet, the platform features should be identified and developed, as well as the best structural conditions for an interactive learning environment (see Chapter 3 "Institutional Interactions”).

BRIDGE was inspired by recent decades of policies between neighbouring countries in the Barents region (see Dahle & Nordhagen 2018, 24). Cross-border cooperation became essential for education and especially for smaller firms in sparsely settled areas of the north. Furthermore, convergence in the partners' strategic

orientations, in areas such as internationalization, innovation, project-based learning has built the groundwork for common project goals (Grant Application 2018).

SHARING THE LEARNING EXPERIENCES

BRIDGE saw the light of the day with the help of financial support from the Kolarctic CBC program (TESIM 2021), partner universities' own contribution and the Norwegian co-financiers, the Barents Secretariat and Troms and Finnmark County.

In six semester-long sessions, more than 250 students from the five partner universities worked out business proposals for fifty-five companies in the Barents Region. Fortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021 did not affect BRIDGE seriously. Twice, students who would have had to travel abroad could not meet the companies face-to-face. However, online communication was a built-in feature from the beginning, and it guaranteed stable and effective project progress.

In this publication the BRIDGE project team shares their knowledge and experiences gained through the years. The focus of the articles is on the main three goals of the BRIDGE:

1. Growth development of businesses in the Barents region
2. Employability of HEI students
3. Institutional interactions.

This publication not only brings out the various aspects of organizing international development workshops that involve HEIs, SME's and students. In the articles the experts also give their implementation guidelines in a very practical level. Therefore, the main purpose of the publication is to serve as a source of innovation as well as a guidebook especially for the actors in Higher Education Institutes.

CHAPTER 1: GROWTH DEVELOPMENT OF BUSINESSES IN THE BARENTS REGION

Overall, the BRIDGE project activities aspired to develop businesses in the Barents region and provide possibilities for growth to the local SMEs. The first chapter of the publication focuses on this aspect. First, Esa Jauhola (Lapland UAS) discusses the social networking and how projects such as BRIDGE can improve companies' innovativeness and partnerships locally and cross-border. The need for knowledge networks has been recognized by participating companies. After that, Tatiana Tokareva and Igor Kupienko (ITMO) bring up some central challenges and good practices in cross-border cooperation with the BRIDGE project as an example. They highlight the skill-based education, which could provide the companies more suitable and multi-skilled employees in the future and thus enable growth.

Furthermore, Tuomas Valtanen (Lapland UAS) focuses on presenting the business communication platforms that were implemented in the BRIDGE sessions. He points out the need for digital tools and platforms in enabling students, coaches and commissioners to work efficiently and describes how this was done in the BRIDGE project. Finally, Natalia Pulakka (Lapland UAS) discusses the importance of business

visibility. She explains the ways to increase visibility in general and then focuses on the examples and results of the BRIDGE project.

CHAPTER 2: EMPLOYABILITY OF HEI STUDENTS

The second chapter of this publication brings out one important goal of the BRIDGE project, which is empowering HEI students' employability skills and possibilities. Contents in this chapter are vastly based on different surveys made throughout the BRIDGE project. Overall, the results shed a light on how many ways students can improve their employability possibilities during multi-cultural cooperation projects like BRIDGE.

The chapter starts with Yulia Shestova's (MASU) article, in which she introduces the BRIDGE project as an example of short-term academic mobility that can develop student's intercultural competence. Her focus is on the research of students' IC components developed during the BRIDGE project. Anthony Okuogume (Lapland UAS) focuses in his article on student's business development skills and competences and how those can further improve students' employability. His research material is based on the student questionnaire during the BRIDGE project. After that, Oksana Prokhorova (PetrSU) shifts focus to practice-oriented learning in the BRIDGE project and especially "case method" as a tool of it. Her research material demonstrates the versatility and effectiveness of this technique among students and thus further develops individual's working life skills.

Furthermore, Ani Ruusila (Lapland UAS) takes a look at the student's perspective on digital communication in BRIDGE teams. As the digital communication tools varied from team to team, it was important to research which of them where mostly used and how. Finally, Minttu Merivirta (Lapland UAS) discusses how students perceived the multicultural cooperation in the BRIDGE project, focusing on employability and teamwork skills. Her article concentrates on student feedback gathered throughout the project during each of the sessions organized.

CHAPTER 3: INSTITUTIONAL INTERACTIONS

The third and final chapter of this publication is called "Institutional Interactions" as during the BRIDGE project this has been a cross-sectional theme concerning all activities. The chapter starts with Peter Fischer's (UiT) article about creativity framework focusing on what are the institutional essentials for a cross-border learning environment. His objective is to propose institutional prerequisites that enable HEIs more effectively design similar projects as BRIDGE. After that, Teresa Chen (Lapland UAS) describes how universities partnering in the BRIDGE project has helped collaboratively achieve common goals. She points out the gains and pains the project team ran into and how the outcome was a successful network engaging regional stakeholders to make a difference.

In Alla Rapopova's (MASU) article, the focus is on coaching activities during the BRIDGE project. It is emphasized that the project included international interaction not only between coaches and students but between coaches from different

nationalities as well. This kind of institutional interaction developed individual's professional skills along the way and thus created a stronger foundation for future cooperation. To conclude this chapter, Petri Hannula (Lapland UAS) takes a look back at the digital communication tools' selection process. This article emphasizes that as selected online tools are a basis of successful communication in any group, especially an international one, it is important to involve all parties in the process to enable strong commitment to this kind of institutional project interaction.

CONCLUSION

After many years of planning, creating, testing, implementing, evaluating – and doing this all over and over again iteratively – we have learned and refined the BRIDGE session process to its' final form. Although there could be much more knowledge and experiences to share, in this publication we decided to focus on the three main goals of the BRIDGE project. Our highest hope is that a reader of this publication can find inspirational ways of implementing international cooperation into educational practices, thus creating benefit for all stakeholders and enhancing regional pursuits in the process as well.

REFERENCES

Chen, T., Merivirta, M. & Smirnova, G. (eds.) 2014. Practice Future : A platform for international cooperation and cross-border entrepreneurship learning. Publications of Lapland University of Applied Sciences Publication series B. Reports 14/2014. Rovaniemi: Lapland UAS. Accessed on 17.11.2021 https://urn.fi/URN:ISBN:978-952-316-035-4.

Dahle, M. & Nordhagen, I.C. 2018. Evaluation of the High North Programme. Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education (SIU), January 2018. Accessed on 17.11.2021 https://diku.no/content/download/3194/file/Evaluation%20of%20the%20High%20North%20Programme%20-%20samlet.pdf.

ENRD Coordination Committee 2013. Focus Group on Knowledge Transfer & Innovation. Towards Successful Innovation Brokerage: Insights from the 2007-2013 Rural Development Programmes. Phase 2 Report of the KT&I Focus Group September 2013. European Network for Rural Development. Accessed on 17.11.2021 https://enrd.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/assets/pdf/research-and-innovation/FG_KTI_Phase_2_report_IB_Web_version_September_2013_Main_Report.pdf.

Grant Application 2018. CBC Kolarctic.

Jakobsen, S.-E., Fosse, J. K., Slinning, A. & Våge, A. 2012. Research-based Competence Brokering in Norway: Bridging firms and R&D institutions. In: F. Cremonese (ed.) The Innovation Competence Broker: Bridging firms and R&D institutions. Milano: McGraw-Hill Education, 1-14. Accessed on 17.11.2021

https://issuu.com/confindustriaveneto-siav/docs/the-_innovation-competence-broker.

Kolarctic BRIDGE 2021. About the project. Accessed on 17.11.2021 https://kolarcticbridge.com/.

Owens, J. & Tibby, M. (eds.) 2014. Enhancing employability through enterprise education: Examples of good practice in higher education. The Higher Education Academy. Accessed on 17.11.2021 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275830422_Enhancing_employability_through_enterprise_education_Examples_of_good_practice_in_higher_education.

TESIM ENI CBC 2021. ENI CBC Programmes. Accessed on 17.11.2021 https://tesim-enicbc.eu/about-eni-cbc/.

CHAPTER 1:
Growth Development of Businesses in the Barents Region

Esa Jauhola

Building Knowledge Networks Through Social Learning

The BRIDGE project (Barents Region Initiative for Developing Growth and Employability) which started in spring 2019, is an example of how young students from five Arctic universities and 21 different nationalities, learn about the networking and business life in Finland, Norway and Russia, and how it is to work in transnational teams (see Kolarctic BRIDGE 2021).

Networking can take place on personal level between the students and coaches but the project also deepened the collaboration between the participating universities, and between universities and local firms. This article aims at discussing the social networking but also, how this kind of projects could improve the innovativeness and partnerships between the firms locally and cross-border. During the six semesters, we have seen that many participating companies are interested in internationalization. They not only would like to find foreign customers but also find active and committed partners abroad targeting at building the so-called knowledge networks.

In addition, a suggestion for a new training programme is made based on the three focus areas of Finnish chairmanship of Barents Euro-Arctic Council in 2021 - 2023.

KEY CONCEPTS

BRIDGE is designed to prepare students to be able to work in the international business environment, to become future-ready. In the international business context, the students need several skills after graduation. According to Blommaer and van den Brock (2016, 30), the key concepts in the fast-developing world are: be connected, cooperation, creativity, agility and engagement.

There are several definitions for networking. Kastelle and Steen (2014, 103) describe the network as a set of things or actors (people, firms, regions, computers, and so on). According to Oxford Lexico (2021), a network can be seen as “the action or process of interacting with others to exchange information and develop professional or social contacts”. On the other hand, “it means the linking of computers to allow them to operate interactively”.

Personal networking is defined as “a set of human contacts known to an individual, with whom that individual would expect to interact at intervals to support a given set of activities. Having a strong personal network requires being connected to a network of resources for mutual development and growth.” (Definitions 2021.) “Effective knowledge networks are composed of unique individuals working on common challenges, together for a discrete period of time before the network shifts its focus

again. The network enables infinite combinations between unique nodes." (Jarche 2019.)

Kagan (2021) states that networking usually takes place in informal social setting. It is the exchange of information and ideas among people with a common profession or special interest. Networking can help one identify opportunities for collaboration, strategic joint ventures, partnerships, and new areas to expand their business (Kagan 2021).

INNOVATION IS ALL ABOUT CONNECTIONS

Networking, among others, is a competence, university students need to learn during their education, writes Barnard-Bahn (2021). He argues, that in a job interview, you are not only asked what kind of skills you have but also, what kind of networks do you have. The BRIDGE project is a great way to learn how to operate in an international environment with students and firms from another culture. Barnard-Bahn (2021) writes that each of us has preferences in working and communication styles, and usually there are some people who have greater difficulty working with than others. The earlier you can identify the specific personality characteristics that are challenging for you (see Schwartz 2011), the more time you have to develop strategies for working effectively with them, Barnard-Bahn concludes.

In KolarcticBridge, students are given assignments by the firms to develop their processes such as digitalization or marketing. In the project workshops, the students then, in transnational teams innovate ideas, and discuss with the university coaches and the commissioners. Thanks to the Creative Steps (Arkko-Saukkonen & Krastina 2018) they get tools to work in a structured way. The workshops were partly online or hybrid due to the Covid19 pandemic.

After all the six seasons in Tornio, Murmansk, Vardö, Petrozavodsk, Alta, and St.Petersburg, we have asked the commissioners to give feedback. Majority of them were satisfied with the students' activity and commitment, and the creative ideas and outcomes.

After the first on-campus workshop in Tornio, one commissioner informed that his expectation was met a 100% and had no hurdle in collaborating with the UAS and satisfied with the international aspect of the project. Currently they do not have the resource but it is very likely that the app will be utilised in the future. (Datadrivers, Tornio)

Another commissioner in Tornio said that the international aspect of the project was an advantage as it provided different perspective for various target groups and to learn how little (if at all) known Tornio is. The ideas provided by the team for the commissioner to be more active online and the tools to attract Russian tourists would be used (Tornio town).

The experience was very good as I got lots of ideas. It was nice that students are from different nationality. The Russians had good points. Very successful. (Lappari, Tornio)

Very smart and active students, high level communications, a lack of time (short-term project for developing and implementation a strategy. (AmaKids, Murmansk)

Some commissioners expressed their willingness to continue the cooperation in the future as well.

Thanks a lot to the students for the work done. You did not just make a presentation, but really did a large-scale work to study our market and potential customers. We hope to continue our cooperation. (LappiTour, Murmansk)

The entrepreneurs also thanked to organizers and members of the BRIDGE project.

We are so glad to be a part of it and to have such a great team. A lot of work have been done, at first was analyzed and then created great number of ideas and suggestions for our business development. I was pleasantly surprised how the team was involved into the process. It was the reason why we get so much as the result. For me it was a pity that time passed to fast. If I could I took a part another time once more. (Freediving, Murmansk)

The project not only opened the students' world view but also the firms got creative ideas how to enter new markets.

While working on the case, all team members showed interest in the work, and were focusing on the result. The team conducted an analysis of the company, proposed specific measures to promote it, and compiled a list of potential partners. Entering new markets implies the presence of an interesting offer, which should be attractive and capacious.

Participation in new university projects is desirable; it is good to broaden the own horizon. (Varanger View, Vardø)

In some cases, the outcomes exceeded the expectations.

Originally low expectation due to the complicated case; yet, the Bridge project in general turned out to be a big and valuable event for a small place like Vardø. Some new thoughts for recruitment workshops and meetings for vocational education. (Seafood Center, Vardø)

The commissioners also had recommendations for the future development of the project. It was stated that the commissioners could be more involved in the teamwork process. They suggested that more time should be made available to the commissioners. Also, there was not enough interaction between the commissioner and the team and they would have preferred to be more involved with frequent

communication. Nevertheless, the entrepreneurs said that they would like to participate in the future, after the project has ended as it "does not take so much time".

According to the feedback, timetable and responsibilities were the biggest challenges. In the beginning there should be more time for informal discussions so that the entrepreneur, students and coaches would learn to know each other and the region better.

Preliminary communication work (student's team presentation, making local network before project start. (AmaKids, Murmansk)

Also, the participating firms could learn to know each other, to build local networks with help of the university. After the project it would be easier to be in contact. It would be important that not only the entrepreneurs work in the project but also their employees.

Local Bridge partner as well as commissioners should provide students with locally relevant information regarding peculiarities of a case (economic, cultural).

It is recommended to spend more time with students during the workshop week. It also might be useful to involve more people of a firm or an organisation in the project. (LappiTour, Murmansk)

For the sustainability of the outcomes several ideas were suggested such as internship and master thesis writing. Two firms already used the possibility to invite students from another country to do the practical training in their premises and to develop their digitalization. It would be valuable to involve the coaches more during the BRIDGE but also after the project has ended.

The commissioners also wanted to point out that the students learn to know how it is to operate in the Arctic business environment, and also the special characteristics of the cultures in the High North.

The provided result can be a source of continuation: Idea to develop the proposed recruitment funnel with help of a master's course or MA thesis writing…To provide students with relevant local knowledge and cultural background. Better to involve more members of the staff. (Seafood Center, Vardø)

DIGITAL NETWORKING

Today, networking between individuals and organizations more often takes place digitally. For small firms it is a good way to expand the partnerships and to find new customers. We're living in a digital world and many firms are missing out of not having good skills or resources. Universities already play an important role locally but cross-border cooperation is needed.

Many of the assignments given to the student teams included digital elements such as website design or digital marketing. The internship after the project would support the practical implementation

Website draft is a good start of developing tourist guide devices. Post project cooperation planned with other case commissioners from Vardø (build a common web portal). Happy to get an additional student from Finland who will complete practical work. (---) General idea: good to get an intern (who either has been part of the case team, or e.g. an MA student) for supporting practical implementation of proposed solution. (Fortress, Vardø)

In Norway, Vardø Tourism was the hub which had close cooperation with the project manager Peter Fischer from UiT Alta and participating firms before, during and after the BRIDGE.

We expected new ideas, different perspectives Outcome: More than expected. (Vardø Tourism)

Generally they comment that the provided solutions were feasible. They were looking for an additional internship post project. A good Finnish student was found. He worked with several clients and assisted with several technical solutions including website design and helped to contact several foreign artists abroad who could in future cooperate with Norwegian artists.

Vardø Tourism concludes that now there is a big potential for an international network. Further, the entrepreneurs got valuable suggestions regarding joint marketing of Vardø.

Vardø actors now have entrance into European network of artist village. (Vardø Tourism)

Innovation is closely linked to both networks and learning. Innovation is not so much about having ideas as it is about connecting and nurturing ideas. Kastelle et.al. (2014, 102) state that, "Innovation is the process of idea management". They argue that networks are essential elements of innovation. Innovation is built up of a network of connected ideas. Networks of people scale up into networks within a firm, networks of firms, networks of clusters, and networks of regions (Kastelle & Steen 2014, 103 - 105).

Innovation is like democracy, writes Jarche (2019) and continues that it needs people to be free within the system in order to work. In order to be innovative, you need to use your own tools and to connect to outside social networks to get work done. They can be programmers, marketers, sales people, but they also can be people you meet outside the work, such as at hobbies.

ATTITUDE AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS ARE EVERYTHING

The purpose of the Kolarctic BRIDGE project is to connect regions in the Barents area, small and medium-sized enterprises, universities and students in the Barents region. The key success factor is that the young generation, the students learn to know the regional and business cultures in neighbouring countries, they can build networks which can be valuable also after graduation.

The goal of many students is to become a manager or leader in the future. Curiosity and positive attitude are key characteristics together with self-awareness. Networking is a key competence but in the new world, there are many more such as resilience, team work, internationalization, creativity, self-awareness, empathy and emotional excellence. From experience I can say that positive attitude and good communication skills are the key to succeed in the working future life. Once more I want to state that international projects such as BRIDGE are the best ways to develop these skills already during the studies. In addition, projects help students to widen their world view.

In networks and service ecosystems, interconnectedness is an important feature. They are characterized by a large number of loosely interconnected participants who depend on each other for their mutual effectiveness and survival. In our Northern operating environment, the interplay between the enterprises, universities and coordinating organization such as Regional Council of Lapland, is an important element in the sustainable development of the Arctic Europe, not to forget other factors such as culture and environment.

In each of the five regions of Kolarctic BRIDGE, the universities are the hub of the local and regional networks. The wider ecosystem, covering the Barents Euro-Arctic region has officially existed in almost 30 years. Digitalization has developed with big steps in all regions during Covid-19, but in many firms, it is still not well-developed. In this process the university network could join the forces and become bridge builders, constructors of a sustainable digital ecosystem.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the BRIDGE project builds bridges on different levels, between universities, teachers and other employees, firms, students and regions. My suggestion is that Lapland UAS will take the role of a hub coordinator of this wider ecosystem, and take care that it will continue developing also in the future, and to become sustainable. Finland has the chairmanship of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council in 2021 to 2023. The three focus areas of the agenda, are environment, youth and education, and logistics. My suggestion is that the participating universities start planning a joint/double degree or at least a joint module (for instance 20 or 30 ECTS) which covers all three focus areas. This would mainly be done online but also on cross-border workshops to learn to know the cultures and to build sustainable networks.

REFERENCES

Arkko-Saukkonen, A, & Krastina, A. 2018. Creative Step-by-Step – Innovation workshops. Rovaniemi: Lapland UAS, Publication 1/2018.

Barnard-Bahn, A. 2021. Promotions Aren't Just About Your Skills – They're About Your Relationships. Harvard Business Review 4.2.2021. Accessed on 12.11.2021 https://hbr.org/2021/02/promotions-arent-just-about-your-skills-theyre-about-your-relationships?utm_campaign=hbr&utm_medium=social&utm_source=facebook&fbclid=IwAR0u4uEUnQ81CvublLKjjN_IbmhX8h5zfGaGCSb7EewjyUgmoJMCOyCyGwI.

Blommaer, T. & van den Brock, S. 2016. Management in Singularity. From linear to exponential management. Vakmedianet.

Definitions 2021. Definitions for personal network. Accessed on 12.11.2021 https://www.definitions.net/definition/personal+network.

Jarche, H. 2019. What is innovation? Work is learning and learning is the work. Harold Jarche 13.5.2019. Accessed on 12.11.2021 https://jarche.com/2019/05/what-is-innovation/.

Kagan, J. 2021. Networking. Investopedia 10.9.2021. Accessed on 12.11.2021 https://www.investopedia.com/terms/n/networking.asp.

Kastelle, T. & Steen, J. 2014. Networks of Innovation. The Oxford Handbook of Innovation Management, 102 - 120.

Kolarctic BRIDGE 2021. About the project. Accessed on 12.11.2021 https://kolarcticbridge.com/.

Oxford Lexico 2021. Networking. Accessed on 12.11.2021 https://www.lexico.com/definition/networking.

Shwartz, T. 2011. The Secret to Dealing With Difficult People: It's About You. Harvard Business Review 12.10.2011. Accessed on 12.11.2021 https://hbr.org/2011/10/the-secret-to-dealing-with-dif.

ARTIKKELEIDEN YHTEYTEEN TULEE AINA TÄLLAINEN YHTEENVETO KOLMESTA TÄRKEIMMÄSTÄ HAVAINNOSTA. NÄMÄ LISÄTÄÄN TAITOSSA ARTIKKELIEN LOPPUPUOLELLE. LAITAN NE JULKAISUTYÖRYHMÄN KOMMENTOITAVAKSI AINA LÄHDELUETTELOJEN PERÄÄN.

Layout element: TOP 3

- New training programme should be designed based on the three focus areas of Finnish chair of Barents Euro-Arctic Council in 2021 – 2023.
- In the Kolarctic project BRIDGE, young generation, the students learn to know the regional and business cultures in neighbouring countries, and they can build networks which can be valuable also after graduation.
- Positive attitude, curiosity, and effective communication skills are the key to succeed in the future working life.

Tatiana Tokareva
Igor Kuprienko

Good Practices and Examples, Lessons Learned and Challenges in Cross-border Cooperation – BRIDGE as an Example

The education system in universities is differ from countries to countries. ITMO University during past several years has seriously invested into changes in education system. From classical approach of knowledge-based education, ITMO made a strong attempt to introduce the skills-based education, which are more understandable and demanded by the future employers of graduates. The BRIDGE project was even a little bit advanced, reducing the gap between university and their clients (employers) in the sector of SMEs.

This article cannot be considered as an in-depth analysis for all cases but based on the practical experience of the authors. The lessons learnt and some ideas for the future is presented in this article.

WHAT IS NEW IN THE BRIDGE PROJECT

The BRIDGE project was designed by making the cooperation link between universities and potential employers. In fact, the universities are criticized, that the graduates are far away from the real needs of the market stakeholders. Employers are widely complaining that they have to invest up to one year's time to reeducate the graduates according to the needs of the employer. The possible solution of this situation is introducing the skills-based education, focusing not only on knowledge of the students but also their skills to do the concrete job tasks. Simple sample is based on fact that the person, having a knowledge in coding, has no skills on making the communication system with clients based on web-site solutions. Small business is requiring a complex of the skills from one employee, because of lack of resources on narrow specialized experts. Other important skills to be highlighted: project-based management, team-work skills, good combination of technical and business skills.

The BRIDGE project is exactly offering the project- and teams-based skills, including skills to work in international teams by realizing the tasks of international

commissioners, which are looking for the services on international markets. Each word from previous phrase is the separate training course for majority of universities.

ITMO UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCES

ITMO University has started the strong changes in education system, introducing the formula of ITMO, which is includes: V – values, F – fundamental, PS – professional skills, SS – soft skills. Soft Skills is something that corresponds more to the BRIDGE Project. Soft Skills include language, management skills, emotional intelligence, and teamwork. In fact, the BRIDGE Project is implementing for the participating students the soft skills with very valuable point based on practical tasks, given by the commissioning company.

ITMO University was a pilot university, which introduced the idea of Startup as Diploma, meaning the master-degree students can do their qualification theses as a startup. An interesting point, that the defense of the theses can be done by the team, formed by students from different schools of the university both technical and economic specializations. The experience of the BRIDGE project is demonstrated that the teams might be not only interdisciplinary, but also inter-university and even international.

The discussion of the international possibilities for startup as diploma education has been started by BRIDGE partners. Same discussion has been initiated by ITMO University and XAMK (South-Eastern Finland University of Applied Sciences). This type of approach in education for master-degree students is a good possibility for the skills-based education with strong international focus, which can bring good positive efforts for the interregional competitiveness of involved regions and countries.

ACADEMIC CHALLENGES IN CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

The implementation of project-based and team-based education has challenges from the academic approach point of view. ITMO university has introduced the module-based education for majority of the master-degree subjects. It means, that each module is carried out during three-weeks with exam at the end of each module. This approach can differ from other universities. In fact, the harmonization of education systems can be the challenge addressing the national educational systems and practices.

Another challenge is language, when cooperating with various countries. In fact, many students, who were participating in the BRIDGE sessions are from other countries outside of the Arctic region. The language is a serious threat in addition to the cultural differences, considering the wide range of countries represented by the students. Some students were withdrawing from the sessions based on these two challenges.

THE LESSONS LEARNT

The BRIDGE Project has highlighted several issues, which were not addressed, and must be addressed for the future cooperation between the universities and the companies from the cooperating regions.

Motivation of companies (commissioners)

The companies are interested in cooperation with universities. Those who took part in the training have positively marked the students work. That is a good message to universities to implement the cooperation with companies on regular bases. Experience of ITMO University in Startup as Diploma must be learnt and modified to the new initiative Project as Diploma. In fact, not all students wish to open own business, but the project-based activities are the trend in modern companies, which build its operation not on vertical integrated temple model but to horizontal oriented grid model.

Motivation for students

Like the commissioners, most students are very positive in participation in the project and some of them were interested to participate for the second time. From another point of view, the schedule of education in university were the threat on participation in the BRIDGE project. ITMO University students did not get the credits from the project events, but still were interested due the following factors: improving the language skills, possibility for travelling, possibilities to get new friends from different countries, possibilities for new type of educational techniques.

For the future implementation of the BRIDGE project education (training) approach, the universities shall implement the project-based education into educational practices. The experience of several ITMO University educational staff, who use the project-based education in different Soft Skills training modules received the positive feedback from the students, who are interested in obtaining news skills especially on interdisciplinary and international spaces.

Motivation for universities

ITMO University has several slogans: non-classical, entrepreneurial and international. Project-based education on practical tasks from industrial partners is one of the priorities of ITMO university. A reason why universities shall be interested in the results of the BRIDGE project; the skills vs knowledge. Universities shall continue with academic education and simultaneously are interested in the majority of their students obtaining job positions after the graduation. As mentioned already, the future employers are interested not in the academic knowledge but in practical skills of the new employees. Regular cooperation between the universities and industrial partners, including the sector of SMEs, is the guarantee of the growth of the interest in the university from the enrollees. Finally, the ranking of university would grow up.

CONCLUSION

The BRIDGE project has highlighted several topics, which definitely shall be learnt and implemented by larger number of the universities. Some ideas, which were identifies already 4 years ago are already partly implemented, but some of them are still on the way to regular usage. What is the project's most important discovery? The companies (commissioners) are often surprised, that the students' team can provide

the consulting support to the companies both on technical side and on managerial and marketing side. Not all students' results are fully applied by the companies but gives to them the new way of thinking, new ideas for future development or, even, the changes in the company strategy, especially on international development stage.

The results of the BRIDGE project are the good input for academic, business and regional development. Regional development means international development for cooperating regions from different countries.

REFERENCES

Kozlova D.K., Petrusha P.P. & Ivanova K.Y. 2020. Multidimensional Innovations in Russian Higher Education Institutions//Proceedings of the 33rd International Business Information Management Association Conference, IBIMA 2019: Education Excellence and Innovation Management through Vision 2020, 2019, 5173-5179.

Mezentceva D., Dzhavlakh E., Eliseeva O. & Bagautdinova A. 2020. On the question of pedagogical digital competence//Высшее образование в России [Vysshee Obrazovanie v Rossii], 2020, Vol. 29, No. 11, 88-97.

Oreshin S.A., Filchenkov A.A., Kozlova D.K., Petrusha P.G., Lisitsyna L.S., Panfilov A.N., Glukhov I.A., Krasheninnikov E.I. & Buraya K.I. 2020. The Use of Students' Digital Portraits in Creating Smart Higher Education: A Case Study of the AI Benefits in Analyzing Educational and Social Media Data//Smart Innovation, Systems and Technologies, 2020, Vol. 188, 233-243.

Petrusha P., Kozlova D., Ivanova K. 2019. The human capital: Education and the green economy//E3S Web of Conferences, 2019, Vol. 110.

JULKAISUTYÖRYHMÄLLE: Olen pyytänyt tämän artikkelin osalta, että asianmukaiset lähdeviitteet lisätään tekstiin. Tämä tullaan varmistamaan ennen teoksen julkaisua. T. Minttu

Layout element: TOP 3

- The BRIDGE Project facilitated the participating students in acquiring Soft Skills with very valuable point based on practical tasks, given by commissioning company.
- The BRIDGE project is demonstrated that the students' teams might be not only interdisciplinary, but also inter-university and even international.
- The future employers are interested not in the academic knowledge but in practical skills of the new employees.

Tuomas Valtanen

Business Communication Platforms in BRIDGE Semesters

To enable students, coaches and commissioners to work efficiently through a semester while collaborating remotely, suitable digital tools and platforms are necessary. Various digital solutions have been tested throughout the BRIDGE-project, and the process has been finalized in its current form as the project is heading towards its closure. A BRIDGE-session starts with creating the student groups and ends with the gathering of all tangible results produced during the session, placing them into the BRIDGE project -website. All these aspects together form the typical session workflow of BRIDGE, where the chosen business communication platform functions as the central workspace.

MODERN COLLABORATION WITH DIGITAL PLATFORMS

For the past few years, many of us have either studied or worked remotely with a modern collaboration tool, probably on Microsoft Teams, Slack, Zoom or some other alternative. While already useful without a global pandemic, it was likely the globally common social distancing requirements that boosted the modern business communication platforms into everyday use, even without considering cross-border distances. In BRIDGE project, the coaches and students were already familiar with business communication platforms, simply because of the actual physical distance between multiple participants. Both positive and more challenging experiences have been recorded during the years of BRIDGE.

Business communication platforms are still a relatively new sets of technologies. It's difficult to determine where they actually started, but according to some discussions, the current generation of platforms started to emerge around 2014 (Shah 2021). A typical business communication platform contains channel-based chat features, file sharing, project management tools and other productivity enhancing features. These features have already existed separately much before the platforms that actually combined everything into a single application. (Gera 2020.) A quick literature review reveals the rise of modern business communication platforms in recent years, Slack and Microsoft Teams being the most popular alternatives.

Using a business communication platform can increase productivity, enhance work communication, improve transparency and even reduce e-mail traffic. Typical challenges in these platforms can be, for example, the lack of flexibility while managing multiple workspaces or insufficient video conferencing features. (E.g. Collier 2017; Johnson 2018; Storyals 2020; Buchal & Songsore 2019.) Some

individuals might also experience difficulties in adapting the new technology for work, typically due to lack of technical skills, personal preference to work offline or general reluctance to change. To mitigate these challenges, it is suggested to start using a business communication platform one feature at a time, educating the users beforehand on how to use the platform efficiently and emphasizing crucial information on separate channels. (E.g. Alabay 2021; Poston, Apostel & Richardson 2019; Montrief et al. 2021; Tuhkala & Kärkkäinen 2018.)

Planning the BRIDGE project started already in 2015, and the first BRIDGE session was held in spring 2019. In hindsight, the BRIDGE project had excellent timing and foresight when considering business communication platforms to be used for multinational project work together with commissioners, coaches and students.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE BRIDGE PLATFORM

Since the beginning of the BRIDGE project, it was agreed that a modern collaboration platform would be used as the essential central technology to facilitate the BRIDGE sessions. The objective of the platform was to enable students, coaches and commissioners work efficiently together remotely, including producing materials and other assets needed for the project outcome. For these purposes, multiple platform alternatives exist, of which the BRIDGE project experimented with three of them.

The first implemented platform was Slack in spring 2019. In addition to channels and file sharing, Slack also featured a mobile application in order to appeal to those who are more accustomed to consumer technology, like WhatsApp. The problems of Slack were mostly related to its pricing model and their policy to store all information outside Europe, which is challenging due to the modern data protection legislations in European Union.

The second alternative after Slack was Mattermost in autumn 2019. From the features point of view, Mattermost is almost identical to Slack. The main difference is the data storage, which in Mattermost can be implemented within the organization's own premises, eliminating the problem with storing the data outside Europe. Mattermost also featured a mobile application, however, its problems with notifications were common during the session among participants.

Finally, Microsoft Teams was chosen to replace Mattermost as the platform for BRIDGE sessions. Microsoft Teams has suited the BRIDGE sessions quite well, the only drawbacks being the difficulties with insufficient notifications (especially on mobile devices) as well as challenges when attempting to include external users from other organizations. The strength of Microsoft Teams has been its seamless integration of group work and video conferences for each student group. (See figure 1.)

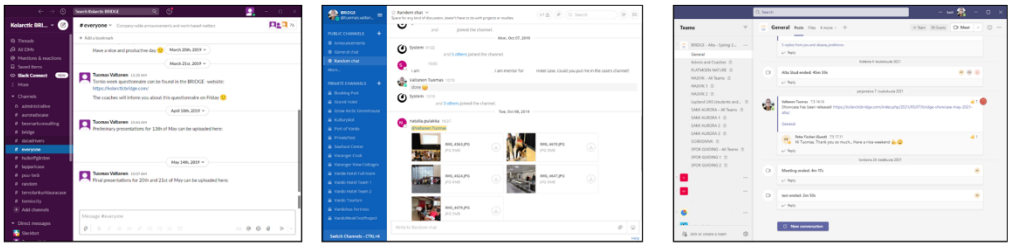

Figure 1. User interface comparison of Slack, Mattermost and Microsoft Teams

SEMESTERS AND SHOWCASES

A BRIDGE session begins with preliminary planning, which involves all participating coaches and technical personnel of the BRIDGE project. This phase is used to create schedules and plans for the session, acquiring and interviewing potential students and contacting suitable commissioners. The pre-planning finally culminates into the remote kick-off meeting, which involves all coaches and participating students. In this meeting, students are educated on how to use the chosen business communication platform (for example, Microsoft Teams), the basic information of the BRIDGE session as well as other essential project methodologies, like Creative Steps (Arkko-Saukkonen & Krastiņa 2018).

The next step is the contact week. Due to COVID-19, the BRIDGE project was forced to organize several sessions totally online, while typically the contact week was meant to be organized face-to-face. The contact week consists of students getting to know each other, further coaching on how to tackle the commissioner tasks efficiently, working in the business communication platform as well as briefings between the commissioner, coaches and student groups. After the contact week, project work continues within each student group's online channel workspace according to their own schedules.

The actual project phase consists of collaboration on documents, creating materials and building the needed outcome for the commissioner, coach and commissioner meetings and planning of future activities. Students also receive further coaching as needed, either from coaches or commissioners. In addition to coaching, previous materials and results produced in earlier BRIDGE sessions could be used.

Each commissioner project is finished eventually, culminating in finalizing the results of the student projects (see figure 2). This includes the final online presentations and materials of each student group project. One of the student groups is selected as the winner of the BRIDGE-se session. Finally, all final presentations and materials are published to the BRIDGE website for later use by anyone, who participated in the semester. All other session publications (articles, news, photos, guides etc.) are also published on the BRIDGE website.

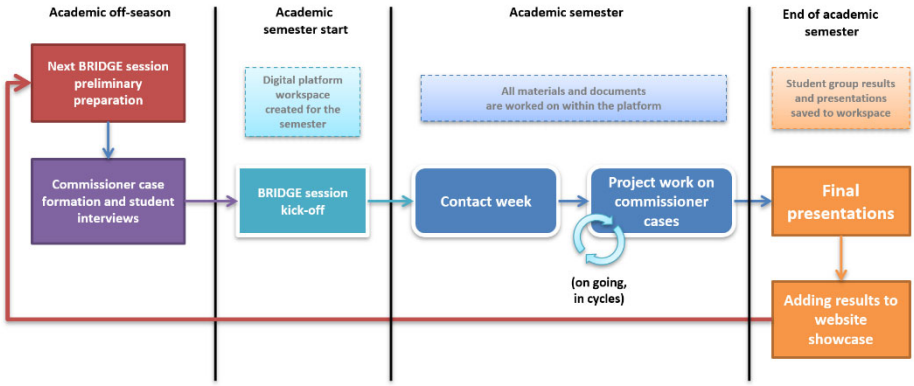

Figure 2. Illustration of the BRIDGE-semester workflow compared to a typical academic semester

THE FUTURE OF THE BRIDGE WEBSITE

To ensure the future of the BRIDGE session format, actions have been taken already during the BRIDGE project. Because of this, the BRIDGE website currently contains a multi-purpose application form, which allows future commissioners to submit their tasks for a certain area's educational institute. Each institute provides a contact person, who is familiar with the area of expertise regarding the proposed task. For example, the task could be aimed towards Finland, and it could be about creating a website prototype, which would result into contacting an ICT teacher at Lapland University of Applied Sciences. The same approach can be used throughout the Barents region, enabling local companies to access a variety of student competences in order to enhance their development activities.

Each proposed task has to be realistic, and therefore instructions on suitable task size and difficulty have been added in the form for the potential commissioner. For example, while prototypes of a website are extremely suitable, a full-fledged reservation system running both on computers and mobile devices are out of the scope of a single BRIDGE session. More complex tasks are more suitable for traditional thesis projects instead.

The last step after the BRIDGE project is to integrate the BRIDGE website into actual school year semesters. This, however, requires curriculum-level work from all participating educational institutes in order to use the commissioner tasks as case study topics within different courses and student projects. That is up to each participating institute to complete on their own, since the working model of a BRIDGE session already exists and has been tested.

CONCLUSION

The recent pandemic most likely increased the usage of business communication platforms worldwide for the sole reason of force majeure; we had to learn them

because of no other choice in order to continue working. During the BRIDGE project, many technologies have been investigated and many practices and experiences have been obtained. It's certainly possible to work efficiently together across multiple nations, if the environment is organized properly and technological platforms are selected correctly. Even in typical working life, digital platforms can greatly enhance productivity, if implemented carefully.

Business communication platforms are most likely going to stay in the working life in one form or another. However, they might still evolve further, since most perceived challenges tend to regard the platforms themselves. Considering all this, the BRIDGE session process has provided the future graduates with new powerful tools in tackling multi-national projects regardless of location, without forgetting other project skills that have been acquired outside the technology. It seems the BRIDGE project's objective "to overcome the gap between the graduates and the modern business requirements of small companies" has succeeded rather well through the years, business communication platforms being in the centre.

REFERENCES

Alabay, S. 2021. Students' views on learning French online with Microsoft Teams during Covid-19 pandemic. African Educational Research Journal Vol. 9(2), April 2021, 333-338. Accessed on 16.9.2021 https://doi.org/10.30918/AERJ.92.21.053.

Arkko-Saukkonen, A. & Krastiņa, A. 2018. Creative Step-by-Step : Creative Steps 2.0 Innovation Workshop. Rovaniemi: Lapland University of Applied Sciences. Publication series C. Study Material 1/2018. Accessed on 29.10.2021 https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/141312/C%201%202018%20Arkko-Saukkonen%20Krastina.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y.

Buchal, R. & Songsore, E. 2019. Using Microsoft Teams to support collaborative knowledge building in the context of sustainability assessment. University of Ottawa. Proceedings of the Canadian Engineering Education Association (CEEA-ACEG) Conference 6/2019. Accessed on 16.9.2021 http://dx.doi.org/10.24908/pceea.vi0.13806.

Collier, S. 2017. 5 Reasons to use Microsoft Teams instead of Email. Medium 8.10.2017. Accessed on 29.10.2021 https://medium.com/@smcollier/5-reasons-to-use-microsoft-teams-instead-of-email-b646b815ee7a.

Gera, I. 2020. What are business communication platforms and how do they work – Explained. Financial Express 20.6.2020. Accessed on 16.9.2021 https://www.financialexpress.com/industry/technology/what-are-business-communication-platforms-and-how-do-they-work-explained/2028907/.

Johnson, H. A. 2018. Slack. Journal of the Medical Library Association Vol. 106(1). Accessed on 16.9.2021 http://dx.doi.org/10.5195/jmla.2018.315.

Montrief, T., Haas, M. R. C., Alvarez, A., Gottlieb, M., Siegal, D. & Chan, T. 2021. Thinking Outside the Inbox: Use of Slack in Clinical Groups as a Collaborative

Team Communication Platform. AEM Education and Training – A global journal of emeregency care Vol. 5(1), January 2021, 121-129. Accessed on 16.9.2021 https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7821068/.

Poston, J., Apostel, S. & Richardson, K. 2019. Using Microsoft Teams to Enhance Engagement and Learning with any Class: It's Fun and Easy. Eastern Kentucky University. Pedagogicon Conference Proceedings 2019. Accessed on 16.9.2021 https://encompass.eku.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1005&context=pedagogicon.

Shah, H. 2021. How Slack Became an $16 Billion Business by Making Work Less Boring. Nira 2021. Accessed on 16.9.2021 https://nira.com/slack-history/.

Storyals 2019. The pros and cons of Microsoft Teams. Storyals 17.1.2019. Accessed on 16.9.2021 https://storyals.com/blog/pros-and-cons-of-microsoft-teams.

Tuhkala, A. & Kärkkäinen, T. 2018. Using Slack for computer-mediated communication to support higher education students' peer interactions during Master's thesis seminar. Education and Information Technologies, 23(6), 2379-2397. Accessed on 16.9.2021 https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-018-9722-6.

Layout element: TOP 3

- A suitable communication platform is essential for effective cross-border online project work.
- An effective online project session requires suitable digital tools, preparation and management.
- For best overall learning experience for students, case commissioners should partake in the session on the selected communication platform simultaneously.

Natalia Pulakka

The Importance of Business Visibility and Ways of Increasing It: BRIDGE Project Case

It is essential for any company to consider visibility if it aims to success in business. If a company can't be easily found online, its potential customers will not know that it exists. It is a mistake to think that just having the best product or service will make a business automatically successful. A company needs to make itself visible to everyone's eye, to get a product out there and in front of the right people.

IMPORTANCE OF VISIBILITY

In business visibility means the overall presence of a company or its product or services. Business visibility refers to how well a company stands out from its competitors. It is a measure of how well a company can be found by its customers. (Reed 2021; Truong 2020.)

The internet has been existing in our lives for few decades and it has already changed the world significantly. According to Datareportal (2021), 4,8 billion people around the world used the internet in July 2021. The internet has become an integral part of human's life. Everything now is on the internet: we are communicating with each other, doing shopping, sharing information and much more. 81% of consumers do online research before making a big purchase (Cortes 2018). That is why online visibility is an important part of marketing strategy for any business.

INCREASING VISIBILITY

There are a wide range of ways to increase visibility of a company, most of them are related to online visibility. For this article I have selected few of the most popular and effective steps, which in my opinion should be taken into action by any company.

1. Establishing and optimizing a website

A website is the online business card of a company, the face of its brand. It is important to have a website, where customers can find information about a company, its products or services. Additionally, the website establishes trust with the customers and adds credibility to the business. (Mittal 2018.) Just launching a website and placing required information is not enough to keep a company's online visibility. It is

important to utilize Search Engine Optimization (SEO) - the process of improving the quality and quantity of website traffic to help it to be ranked higher on search engine and thus to increase its visibility (Patel 2021; Langdon 2020). Optimizing a website with SEO tactics is not an easy process and requires professional knowledge on it. But a good SEO strategy will boost a company's online visibility.

2. Setting up and optimizing social media platforms

According to Datareportal (2021) almost 4,5 billion people used social media platforms in July 2021. Utilizing social media is a crucial for a company, that wants to become more visible. Social media is an extremely powerful tool, that enable companies to reach potential and existing customers, and more than that it is very cost-effective.

There are dozens of social media channels used in the digital marketing. It is not necessary to use all of them. Vice versa it will be better to select just a few of them and put efforts on being active there frequently. It is important to keep in mind that followers consume content differently on each platform. If someone is on YouTube, they're expecting to see video content. However, if they're on Instagram, they might expect to get pictures or stories. (Roos 2020.) Selection of social media channels depends also on the target audience of a company, because different target groups use different platforms. After the selection is done, it is worth to optimize the channels.

- Account optimization, which includes profile picture with a company's logo, username, which can be easily found and detailed information in Bio -section containing focus keywords. A comprehensive Bio -section helps an account to be found. Furthermore, the theme of social media account, or layout also need to be considered. According to Tamble (2019) photos and videos receive more user's attention, that's why it is worth to take notice to visuals especially on Instagram, which is a completely visual platform. Hence a well-planned account layout with high-quality photos will help a business to stand out of crowd.
- Using appropriate hashtags lets a social media post to become searchable by a user. Hashtags connect a post to a particular topic. Followers, who are interested in this topic by clicking the hashtag are able to see the post. (Hatch 2018.)
- Consistent activity. Algorithms of the social media platforms work in the way, that accounts with infrequent activity will not have a good visibility. It does not mean, that publications need to be done every day, but at least it would be good to make posts regularly. (Hatch 2018.) An additional point should not be forgotten while planning posts is posting at a right time, which means posting during the time when the audience is most active online (Salamader 2019).
- Audience engagement, or calls-to-action, is another useful way of boosting visibility on social media. Posts with high engagement are taken as more valuable to metric algorithms and are more likely to show up in users' feeds.

Engagement with the audience can be done by asking questions, creating polls, encouraging them to share the content.

Following these methods of increasing visibility without proper analysis will not let a company to reach its goal. It is important to track the progress in order to see for example where the social media accounts optimized properly. Therefore, a better strategy is to measure the efforts with the right metrics, evaluate them, adjust actions and implement successful ones again. (Mittal 2018; Salamader 2019.)

3. Using customers' reviews and word of mouth

The importance of product reviews can be understood by the fact that 90% of the consumers read online reviews before making a purchase and 72% of the consumers will be prompted to take an action after reading positive reviews (Saleh 2021). A company should encourage customers to leave reviews about its products or services. Good and positive feedback will help to build trust with prospective customers and encourage them to continue purchasing the products. Negative reviews are also welcome, especially if they are constructive, as they will lead to understanding what needs to be improved and it will help to make a business better. Word of mouth also might work as a way of increasing visibility. 92% of people trust the recommendation of their nearest. (Entrepreneur handbook 2021.) Providing positive experience to customers will help to spread information about a company and will bring new ones.

4. Public appearance is another way to boost a company's visibility

Publishing articles in newspapers and magazines, participating in exhibitions, trade fairs and other well-attended events, appearing on TV stations; all these will add accumulate a company extra point on being visible (Entrepreneur handbook 2021).

VISIBILITY ACTIVITIES IN THE BRIDGE PROJECT

Although BRIDGE is a project, not a business, its visibility is also very important and plays a crucial role in the project success. The goal of the visibility strategy of the BRIDGE project is to make the project and its activities visible as wide as possible, trying to reach the target group and other stakeholders. With the visibility strategy BRIDGE aims to raise public awareness of the objectives, activities and outputs of the project; to make people to understand why the project is important and what impacts on society it makes; to encourage people to get involved.

The target audience of the BRIDGE project includes higher education institutions, lecturers and students, small and medium sized businesses, and organizing authorities (for example, financiers) from the Barents region.

The project established the website on a domain of its own on the site https://kolarcticbridge.com. The website has been used for collecting information about the BRIDGE's sessions and sharing news and outcomes. Development of the website for the future utilization as an educational platform connecting businesses and students has been done during the last months of the project. (Kolarctic BRIDGE 2021.) Due to the specific of the project and its goals, the website SEO was not

considered as the main activity for the improvement of the project's visibility. Instead of this, the project concentrated on reaching the audience through social media.

The management of the project has chosen four social media channels, which are the most useful and popular among representatives of the target groups: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube. The last one has mostly been used for publishing videos about the project activities. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions on implementation of the project activities was turned completely into online format, that made it impossible to create any attractive and engaging content for this channel.

Twitter has been oriented towards interacting with official organizations, such as financiers, education institutes, international associations etc. Instagram was selected as a platform for reaching younger audience and providing appealing visualized materials; via Facebook the project has been targeting more older audience. The greatest number of posts on social media channels were related to presenting the main actors of the project activities – students, commissioners, coaches; additionally, the content was diluted with educational, entertaining and informative materials. Although most content on these channels has been repeated (duplicate), the interaction with the target groups varied. (Uksusov 2021.)

During the project period the social media channels were partly optimized. Thus, social media accounts were portrayed in a common style and design (figure 1); hashtags were listed and updated; Instagram account layout was updated in order to make it more attractive (figure 2, figure 3).

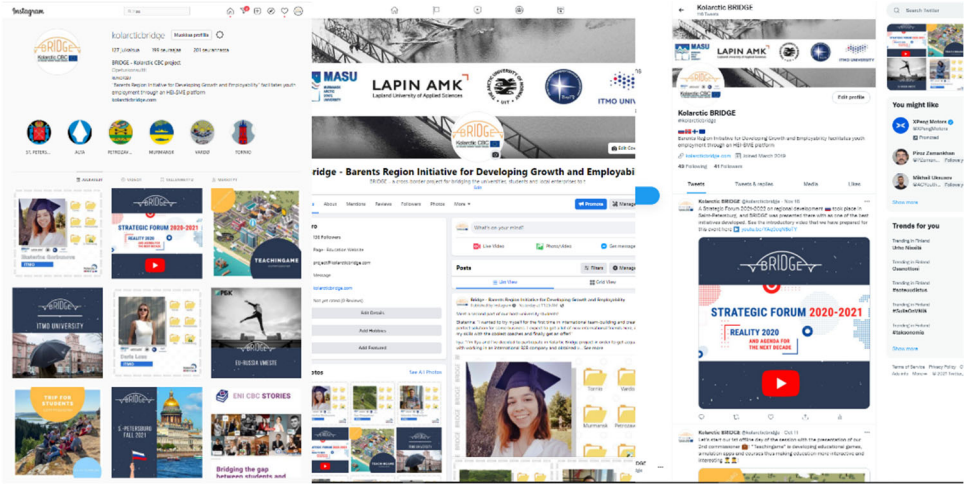

Figure 1. Social media accounts in the BRIDGE project

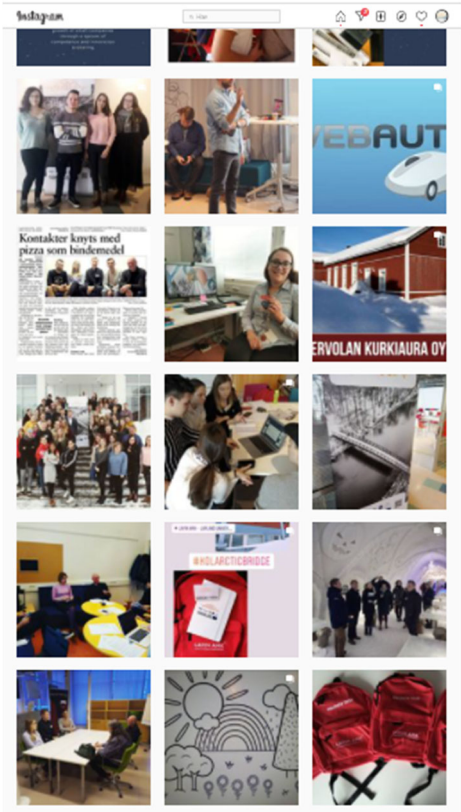

Figure 2. BRIDGE's Instagram account 2019

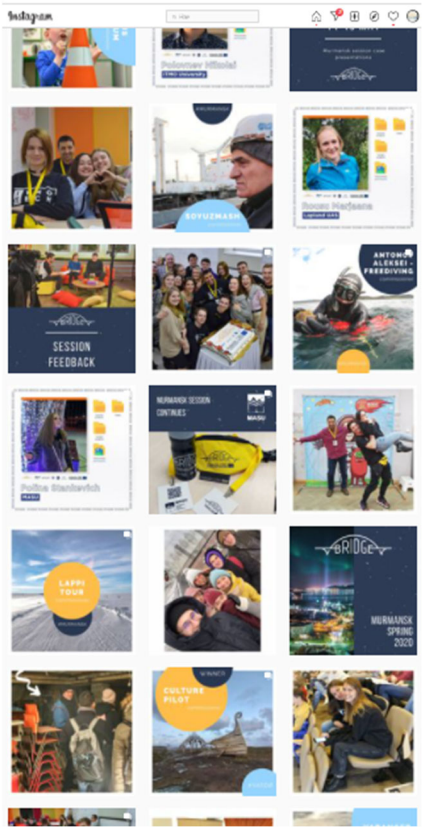

Figure 3. BRIDGE's Instagram account 2020 (HUOM! Nämä kolme kuvaa asetellaan taitossa järkevästi tekstin yhteyteen, eli niitä ei esitellä keskellä tekstiä tällä tavoin peräkkäin.)

Despite the fact, that initial optimization of the social media channels was made at the beginning of the project activities, the further tracking and analyzing were not made properly. Furthermore, posts were not made regularly, that led to the loss of audience. It would be worth creating a content plan in advance with a use of content planner tool, which allows to schedule publications and post them automatically. (Uksusov 2021.)

In order to utilize participants reviews the project conducts feedback surveys after each session. Additionally, project partners have been promoting the BRIDGE through own digital channels such as websites and social media platforms; project team members and students have been sharing their experience through own networks and encourage others to participate in the project activities.

According to the visibility reports provided by the visibility manager of the project, the following communication and visibility activities were carried out (Table 1):

Table 1. Communication and visibility activities (1.1.2019 – 31.10.2021)

Type of activities	Result
Publications on websites of the project and project partners	70
Press-releases	8
TV news	2
Promo video production	6
Academic papers	4
Posts on the project and project partners social media platforms	263

Project team members have been actively participating in different events, taking an opportunity to promote the project widely: the 5th Korean Arctic Academy (Busan, South Korea), CBC Kolarctic projects get-together (Luleå, Sweden), High North Dialogue conference (Bodø, Norway), High-level online meeting under the Norwegian Barents Euro-Arctic Council Chairmanship, Strategic Forum 2021 – 2022 (Saint-Petersburg, Russia), EU-Russia online exhibition "Vmeste" (Russia) and others. Additionally, in 2020 in the category of "Arctic entrepreneurial spirit" the BRIDGE won Arctic Awards 2020 – the competition for projects under such Arctic programmes were Northern Periphery & Arctic Programme, Interreg Botnia – Atlantica, Interreg Nord, Kolarctic CBC programmes, and Karelia CBC programme.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, visibility is an essential part of the marketing strategy of any business and projects as well. The process of increasing visibility is not easy and requires a lot of resources and efforts. Additionally, it is an ongoing process and needs constant tracking, analyzing, progressing. In general, due to the specific of the case, visibility strategy of the BRIDGE project lightly differs from the postulates of traditional visibility strategy used in business world. Still, some basic methods can be and must be successfully implemented in order to reach a wider audience.

REFERENCES

Cortes, L. 2018. What is online visibility (and why does it matter)? Rebelfish local 1.8.2018. Accessed on 10.9.2021 https://rebelfishlocal.com/what-is-online-visibility-and-why-does-it-matter/.

Datareportal 2021. Digital around the world. Accessed on 10.9.2021 https://datareportal.com/global-digital-overview.

Entreprenerus Handbook 2021. Top 60 ways to promote your business. Updated September 23, 2021. Accessed on 10.11.2021 https://entrepreneurhandbook.co.uk/how-to-promote-your-business/.
Hatch, C. 2018 8 ways to increase your brand visibility on Instagram. Imageworks 13.4.2018. Accessed on 28.10.2021 https://blog.imageworksllc.com/blog/8-ways-to-increase-your-brand-visibility-on-instagram.
Kolarctic BRIDGE 2021. About the project. Accessed on 10.11.2021 https://kolarcticbridge.com/.
Langdon, S. 2020. What is SEO? The beginner's guide to search engine optimization. Highervisibility 22.2.2020. Accessed on 26.10.2021 https://www.highervisibility.com/blog/what-is-seo/.
Mittal, S. 2018. 5 secrets to get more visibility for your business. Business 2 community 12.11.2018. Accessed on 28.6.2021 https://www.business2community.com/marketing/5-secrets-to-get-more-visibility-for-your-business-02137987.
Patel, N. 2021. What is SEO (Learn how to do it in 5 minutes). Neilpatel. Accessed on 26.10.2021 https://neilpatel.com/what-is-seo/.
Reed, G. 2021. What it means to get visible online. Digitalwebavenue. Accessed on 11.11.2021 https://digitalwebavenue.net/thevisibilitymethod/visible-online/.
Roos, D. 2020. Increasing visibility in digital marketing – 10 steps to follow. Mediaboom 20.10.2020. Accessed on 28.6.2021 https://mediaboom.com/news/increasing-visibility-in-digital-marketing/.
Saleh, K. 2011. The importance of online customer reviews (infographics). Invesp 11.4.2021. Accessed on 10.11.2021 https://www.invespcro.com/blog/the-importance-of-online-customer-reviews-infographic/.
Salamader, G. 2019. 10 ways to optimize social media. EClincher 22.5.2019. Accessed on 28.10.2021 https://eclincher.com/10-ways-to-optimize-social-media/.
Tamble, M. 2019. 7 tips for using visual content marketing. Social Media Today 20.2.2019. Accessed on 28.10.2021 https://www.socialmediatoday.com/news/7-tips-for-using-visual-content-marketing/548660/.
Truong, H. 2020 Business visibility definition and 4 ideas for management. Plum pos 1.12.2020. Accessed on 28.6.2021 https://plumpos.com/brick-and-mortar-business/business-visibility-definition.html.
Uksusov, M. 2021. Interview with the BRIDGE visibility manager 11.11.2021, 15.11.2021.

Layout element: TOP 3

- Visibility is very important to be successful in business.
- There are a wide range of methods and tactics for increasing company visibility.
- The process of increasing visibility is ongoing and requires a lot of resources.

CHAPTER 2: Employability of HEI Students

Yulia Shestova

Development of Intercultural Competence: by Short-term Academic Mobility BRIDGE Project as an Example

Many authors agree that intercultural competence which is important for all university graduates is best developed through international academic mobility (Aba 2015; Matei 2020). This article discusses the impact of short-term study abroad programs on the development of intercultural competence based on the example of the project "BRIDGE: Barents Region Initiative for Developing Growth and Employability". The article reports the findings of the feedback questionnaires of international students of the program, as well as the results of the study administered to Russian students participating in the project.

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN THE ACADEMIC MOBILITY DOMAIN

In the epoch of globalization it has become obvious that intercultural competence (IC) will contribute to student's future employability (Busch 2009; Kumpikaite & Duoba 2013). Thus, educators are facing the challenge of creating conditions for students to gain intercultural competence needed to work effectively in the integrated and multicultural world.

Intercultural competence is defined as a set of knowledge, attitudes and skills needed to perform effectively and appropriately in the multicultural context (Deardoff 2009). Different authors include different elements in the concept of intercultural competence. Our study includes:

- Knowledge: cultural self-awareness, knowledge of cultural worldviews;
- Attitudes: empathy, curiosity, openness;
- Skills: multicultural teamwork skills, verbal and non-verbal communication.

Development of interculturally competent students is one meaningful outcome of internationalization efforts, including student academic mobility. Traditionally, student academic mobility has referred to students in higher education moving to another institution inside or outside of their own country to study or teach for a limited time usually for a semester or one year. A distinctive feature of higher education internationalization today is the expansion of academic mobility schemes, which are no longer limited to studying at a foreign university for one or two semesters, but can also be implemented in the form of joint courses and programs lasting from one week to one semester, summer and winter schools, virtual exchanges. In recent years, in an

attempt to intensify the educational process universities have experienced a significant growth in short-term mobility programs which are more attractive for economic, organizational and psychological reasons. Numerous studies have been carried out in the field of intercultural competence development by academic mobility, at the same time very few studies address the impact of short-term (from one week up to 3 months) mobility on intercultural competence. (Shestova 2020.)

DEVELOPING IC: BRIDGE CASE

The present study makes an attempt to provide a meaningful judgment of the university students' opinion of how short-term programs abroad influence the development of IC based on the program "BRIDGE: Barents Region Initiative for Developing Growth and Employability", the structure of which consists of the online kick off meeting, weekly online meetings with coaches, 1 week off-site session followed by final online presentation. The off-site program included guest speakers, company site visits, meetings with coaches and travel to local cultural sites. In addition to providing its own unique learning opportunities, the project incorporates *pedagogical principles* needed for developing students' competences:

- increasing motivation to study the course through participation in new educational activities that are interesting for students,
- reliance on students' independent work,
- implementation of interdisciplinary connections,
- rejection of the rather rigid (Russian) scheme of teacher-student relationship,
- the process of student-coach co-creation.

The BRIDGE project employs a set of *active teaching methods* such as: interactive lectures, the study of practical examples (case method), the method of interdisciplinary projects, the method of group training, the method of working in multicultural teams; obligatory presentation of the results of work in the form of presentations, visits to local and foreign enterprises and organizations. Such methods make it possible to improve the quality of education and ensure the educational needs of each student in accordance with his or her individual characteristics. It is worth noting the high level *of methodological and technical support* of the program (using MS Teams, BRIDGE website, social media, demonstration of material in the form of presentations, Creative Steps, winner prizes). In addition, a serious emphasis is placed on the independent work of the program participants. All this makes the BRIDGE project an effective pedagogical technology.

Academic mobility is first and foremost experiential in its nature and through the BRIDGE project students come into contact with new locations, systems of education, teaching methods and approaches, new cultures, customs and traditions; they reflect on these experiences and make new concepts which they try in new concrete experience.

The overall effect of this program was revealed using questionnaire methods (N=134) and interviews (N=24 MASU students) with program participants. A

feedback questionnaire was administered to all students after the program. The respondents noted the growth of international skills, the improvement of teamwork skills, English language skills, an increase in the level of knowledge in the field of cross-border business. When asked to assess the overall effect of the project the students mentioned that “great experience in multicultural ways”, “share experience”, “networking with other countries”, “openness towards other cultures”, “international work”, “multicultural mindset personality”. Some of the students noted that participation in the program helped them to get rid of anxiety and prejudices against people from other cultures. These indicators are the criteria for the development of intercultural competence of students.

A deeper study involved only Russian students from Murmansk Arctic State University (MASU) and Petrozavodsk State University (N=32) participating in the Tornio and Vardø sessions (the study is limited to sessions where off-line teaching took place). In this study a questionnaire was used before and after the students’ participation in the program. Its purpose was to identify the impact of short-term academic mobility program on the development of intercultural competence. The questionnaire was structured on seven dimensions that are most substantial within academic mobility domain: cultural self-awareness, knowledge of cultural worldviews, multicultural teamwork skills, verbal and non-verbal communication, curiosity, empathy, openness. The value of each component of intercultural competence was determined using a special ordinal scale that made it possible to compare and visualize the dynamics of the development of the components of intercultural communication. Based on the experimental data, a conclusion was made about the development of all assessed components of intercultural competence. The increase in the indicators of the intercultural competence components formation is shown in the table 1.

Table 1. IC components development in BRIDGE project (HUOM! Kaikkien kuvioiden ja taulukoiden yhdenmukaisesta visuaalisesta ilmeestä vastaa graafinen suunnittelijamme Pia Keränen.)

	Component	Level	Pre-test	Post-test
Knowledge	Cultural self-awareness	Low	35%	18%
		Average	40%	43%
		High	25%	39%
	Knowledge of cultural worldviews	Low	32%	21%
		Average	34%	40%
		High	34%	39%
Skills	Multicultural teamwork skills	Low	46%	21%
		Average	28%	46%
		High	26%	33%
	Verbal and non-verbal communication	Low	22%	9%
		Average	47%	56%
		High	31%	35%
Attitude	Curiosity	Low	38%	28%
		Average	35%	45%
		High	27%	27%
	Empathy	Low	6%	6%
		Average	75%	74%
		High	19%	20%
	Openness	Low	38%	31%
		Average	35%	40%
		High	27%	29%

The table shows quite a high degree of IC components already in the pre-test. However, participation in the project had a positive impact in almost all dimensions. The "skills" component stands out as component with most gains in terms of intercultural competence: teamwork was highly developed through the RIDGE project which complies with other studies about short term programs, which tend to be very well structured and team oriented (unlike longer one or two semester term programs where students might pursue more independent experiences). The next IC component to be enhanced during the BRIDGE experience is the "knowledge" component with considerable gains in the cultural self-awareness dimension. Thus, the BRIDGE project can provide a framework for understanding different cultures, acquiring culture-specific information and appreciating the cultural worldviews of students and teachers from different cultures. The "attitude" component turns out to be the most resistant to change that can be explained by other research according to which transformation of the affective component of intercultural competence is a complex and time-consuming process (Chernyak 2016).

CONCLUSION

To conclude, the BRIDGE project equips students with the competences, knowledge and skills that employers would require from university graduates to work effectively in the multinational environment: multicultural teamwork skills, knowledge of different cultural worldviews, cultural empathy and others. This project is a unique,

memorable experience enhancing intercultural competence of students as it exposes its participants to other cultures and worldviews, provides opportunities to actively interact with different cultures and reflect on this experience. The results of this study would be useful for university teachers, educators, international coordinators, administrators of international cooperation at higher education institutions. The proposal for future study could be the influence of different tools (IC training courses, pedagogical support) that would guide students' intercultural development and help them make meaning out of these multicultural experiences.

REFERENCES

Aba, D. 2015. Towards an Intercultural Communication Competence Tool for Academic Mobility Purposes. Journal of Intercultural Communication, Issue 39, November 2015. Accessed on 24.1.2020 http://www.immi.se/intercultural/nr39/aba.html.

Busch, D. 2009. What kind of intercultural competence will contribute to students' future job employability?, Intercultural Education, 20:5, 429-438. Accessed on 5.7.2021 https://doi.org/10.1080/14675980903371290.

Chernyak, N. 2016. Intercultural competence: History of Research, Definition, Models and Assessment Methods. Moscow, Flinta.

Deardoff, D. 2009. The Sage Handbook of Intercultural Competence. Thousands Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Kumpikaite, V. & Duoba, K. 2013 Developing Core Competencies: Student Mobility Case. Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, Volume 99, 6 November 2013, Pages 828-834. Accessed on 15.3.2021 https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.10.554.

Matei, F-L. 2020. The importance of intercultural competence in the context of academic mobility training needs. International Journal of Social and Educational Innovation, Volume 8, Issue 15, 2020.

Shestova, Y. 2020. Short-term international academic mobility as an innovative project (on the example of the international program "BRIDGE: Barents region initiative for developing growth and employability"). Problems of Modern Teacher Education, (68-4), 283-287.

Layout element: TOP 3

- Intercultural competence that requires living and working effectively in the multicultural world can be developed through academic mobility programs.
- The BRIDGE project is effective in developing students' multicultural teamwork skills, communication skills, cultural self-awareness and openness to other cultures.
- Special training or pedagogical support/guidance can be employed in future projects to enhance students' intercultural development and help them make meaning out of the multicultural experience.

Anthony Okuogume

Development of Student's Business Development Skills in the BRIDGE Project

In the BRIDGE project's approach, students work in international multi-university groups to solve various types of companies (commissioners) business problems with professors acting as coaches. The idea is to develop students' business knowledge and most crucially, their business development competences to improve their employability by equipping students with the right competences that meets working life requirements. This article is about exploring the development of student's business knowledge and business development skills during their participation in the Bridge project. Therefore, the metrics used here is a simple business competence and business development metrics designed solely for this current analysis which was sent as a questionnaire to students who participated in the BRIDGE project. The core target group are those who participated in the project's Alta's session in spring 2021.

INTRODUCTION

The combination of the Internet, the new generation of learners, the demands of the global knowledge economy, and the shock of the current economic crisis is creating a perfect storm for universities, and the storm warnings are everywhere as indicated by Prof. Matthew Patrick James Lynch during the kick-off of the autumn 2021 session that there are lots of businesses and world's problems. Students who come into work life are supposed to solve these business and societal problems using innovation and, entrepreneurial skills and actions.

This view was reinforced by Bryan and Joyce (2005) that young new talents to the workplace are expected to be innovators, with the primary task of innovating company's "business ideas that makes it possible for companies to compete in the uncertain and dynamic business environments of today". They are also to be able to manage a company's assets for their effective exploitation for value creation in the company's respective industries (Bryan & Joyce 2005.) These new talents are seen as professionals who are endowed with the responsibilities of driving growths in service businesses and create value through various forms of innovation methods. Therefore, entrepreneurial and innovation skills plus other business and business development knowledge are crucial skills to be developed during the student's education.

As the 21st century education is based on lifelong learning, business education in universities and UASs should lay the foundation for students to develop broad knowledge of business as well as specific skills in their chosen specific fields that can

be transferable and put into good use to advance their employability (because they are assets to organizations). In addition, such business education should be an introduction to the world of business as especially most students may not have any prior business experience before their university education. Therefore, it will provide them with the right business insights, which can prove to be invaluable in the application of academic theory to real-life business situations that will help advance students employability at graduation.

THE WORK APPROACH IN THE BRIDGE PROJECT

The BRIDGE process is completed through practical work exercises made by students of diverse nationalities in groups of 2-4 persons from five different universities from Finland, Norway and Russia. Therefore, collaborative learning is the basic work approach. The students work face-to-face during the contact week and collaboratively through the project digital platform, a preferred work mode because it "embraces discovery" (Tapscott & Williams 2010) and provides a "model of learning in which students are encouraged and supported to work together to create knowledge: to invent, to explore ways to innovate, and, by so doing, seek conceptual knowledge needed to solve problems rather than recite what they think is the right answer" (Bates 2015). This embraces discovery and creation of new innovations as well as developing the developer.

The teachers and professors act as the coaches. There are kickoff workshops where training on innovation and entrepreneurship and team building are provided to kickstart the process and equip the participating students with the necessary startup skills. The coaches continue to guide the students' groups through duration of project work (3-4 months). The basic pedagogical approach is problem-based and where thinking -by-doing and practice-based experimentation is the norm. This helps the students to develop a practical and experiential way of creating innovations through various stages of experimentation and development that progresses from success to failure, frustration, and then again to success and enthusiasm until a final product or solution is created.

WHAT IS A BUSINESS KNOWLEDGE?

Business knowledge is an important strategic asset. Entrepreneurial and innovation knowledge are crucial business knowledge that should be coupled with some broader business knowledge that falls into three levels; understanding customers segments and needs (value proposition and to whom?), value creation and delivery (how value is provided) and value capture (how companies make money and capture all forms of value). Business knowledge – from a student's context – is about the understanding of key concepts of business or business management.

Success in the development of the student's business competences will depend on the successful conversion of that knowledge into competence. And this happens only in the practical application of those knowledge. It is the interaction between the knowledge and competence development-based learning in the BRIDGE project that the competencies of students are developed, and which enable them to further develop

business development competences that are exploited to propose innovations for the case companies to improves the latter's performance.

BUSINESS COMPETENCE METRICS

For students in the BRIDGE project, business competence is gained during the project participation when analysis of the case firm is done to understand the theory for doing business. This is explained at three levels: firstly, the company's assumptions about their business environment, secondly, assumption of mission and thirdly, their assumptions about the competences for accomplishing the missions. Assumptions about their business environment shape a company's business decisions and actions. Assumption of mission is about business priorities and targets and core competencies is about the key resources and competitive advantages for sustaining the business profitably (Drucker 1994). By carrying out intensive analysis of the case company of the BRIDGE project, in a nutshell, students, while interacting and reviewing the case company, work to understand current situation and performance to determine areas for development, designing different solutions including product and service prototypes and propositions of practical business solutions, students develop these key business competencies (Mvoi Mwakio 2018; VCE Business Management 2017).

Key business competencies are:

- Define, describe and applying relevant business management concepts
- Understanding of how business operates
- Research and strategic analysis skills.
- Communication skills (oral and written)
- Interpersonal relationship – especially managing relationship with the customer
- Analytical and critical thinking
- Problem solving
- Decision making
- Presentation
- Project management
- BM analysis
- BM innovation
- product and service innovation
- review of key performance indicators
- Acquisition and interpretation of business information
- Evaluating the costs and benefits of strategies for business
- Proposing and justifying practical business solutions.

THE BUSINESS DEVELOPER: BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT COMPETENCE

Business development activities carried out by the students are made through an intensive analysis of the company's current situation, such as, management positions and assumptions on the problems they currently face and their assumptions on what it takes to solve those business problems. In addition, the student's analysis on the

company's customer value proposition, market analysis (including benchmarking the competitors) and this is made to generate sufficient data needed to accurately define the problems faced by the case company and, to define actions (solutions) to propose to company. This may include the followings, the proposition of different practical business solutions, product and service prototypes. Through this, students develop key business development competencies.

Identified key business development competence metrics are (Mvoi Mwakio 2018; VCE Business Management 2017):

- Analytic skills
- market analysis
- Company analysis
- Collect the data for an accurate analysis
- SWOT analysis
- Industry analysis
- Return on investment (ROI) analysis
- collaborative skills
- Case analysis
- Data interpretation
- Negotiation & Persuasion skills
- Project Management Skills
- Creative problem solving skills
- Recognize & exploit opportunities
- Business model Canvas analysis and design
- Presentation
- Business development proposal

STUDENT'S KNOWLEDGE OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT BEFORE AND AFTER THE BRIDGE PROJECT

There were 24 students participating in the in the spring 2021 Alta session. 2 students from Vietnam, 5 from Germany, 2 from Finland and 15 from Russia all of whom belonged to the BRIDGE project partners universities. Metrics were designed to measure the students' knowledge of business and business development before and after the project session through a questionnaire sent to students who participated in the Bridge project. Unfortunately, only two students responded and that was not enough to conduct the empirical aspect of the research. To complete the research, other alternative data had to be used. For instance, students' feedbacks from the spring session, assignments from the commissioning case companies, students' project work presentations and deliveries, commissioners' feedbacks. With this data analysis, the students' business knowledge and business development skills prior and after the BRIDGE project participation, was made.

The first data investigated is the basic pedagogical approach of the BRIDGE project. This is based on the problem-based learning where thinking-by-doing and practice-based experimentation is the norm. In this learning process, the students develop a practical and experiential way of creating innovations through various stages of experimentation and development that progresses from success to failure,

frustration, and then again to success and enthusiasm until a final product or solution is created. This as noted, develops the actual innovation and as well as the developers (Bates & Poole 2003). Therefore, by going through this learning process the right learning outcomes is guaranteed to be achieved (see figure 1).

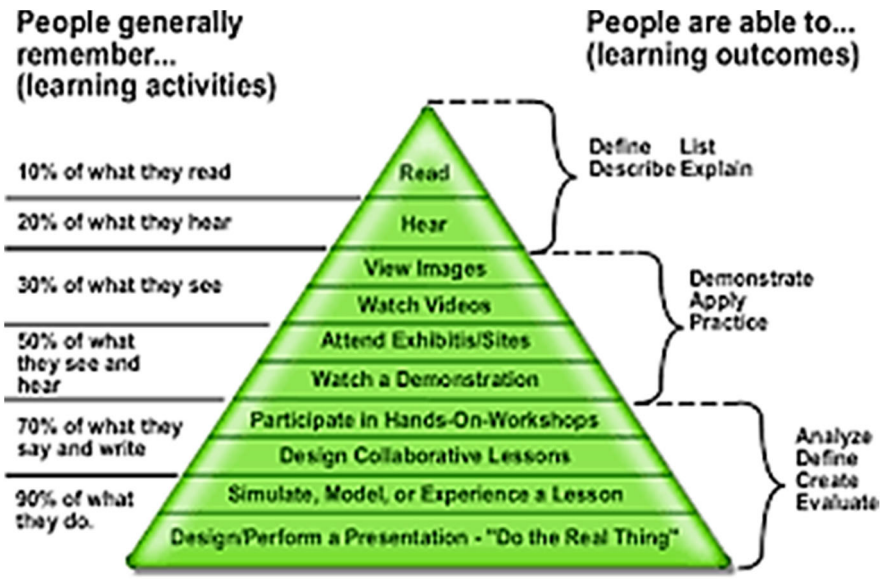

Figure 1. The Learning Pyramid (modified from Learning pyramid 2021)

“Practice by doing”, a form of "Discover Learning", is one of the most effective methods of learning and study. This method of study encourages students to take what they have learnt into practice and thereby facilitating a deeper form of learning. Therefore, ‘practice by doing’ makes the student’s learning more personal and meaningful to develop competence. (Education corner 2021.) This is further strengthened by the Learning Pyramid (Learning pyramid 2021).

When asked what they personally learnt from the project general business knowledge, business development skills, presentation skills, collaborative and cross-cultural skills featured prominently in the students’ feedbacks and strengthens the views of students' acquisition of business and business developments skills in the BRIDGE project. The next to be investigated is the commissioner’s assignment as summarized below. To be able to deal with these assignments students had to work hard to develop their business knowledge and business development skills, without which accomplishing the tasks would have been impossible.

Commissioner’s assignments were:

- How to attract new customers
- Customer persona research
- Finding potential business partners
- How to sell through High-end sales channels
- Mobile APP development

- Competitor's analysis
- New service process designs
- Product and service testing
- Customer experience analysis
- Developing a script for customer journey mapping
- Experience design
- How to co-create with our clients.
- Needs to guarantee a highly satisfied customer.
- Specifications and modification products
- Designs of new and efficient processes and solutions
- Customer segmentations

ASSIGNMENT'S OUTCOMES AND THE ADOPTION OF PROPOSED IDEAS

Analysis of all the feedbacks from the commissioners from the Alta session shows an overwhelming satisfaction of the outcomes of the students' deliveries by the commissioners. On the adoption of students' innovation proposals by the commissioning case firms, the feedback indicates also that majority of the commissioners will implement all the proposals while a few indicated that a partial adoption of those proposals will be made. These results also proved that through learning by doing based pedagogics, the students were able to solve given commissioners' problems or tasks while at the same time, developing their business and business development skills.

CONCLUSION

This article's goal was to explore the development of student's business knowledge and business development skills from participating in the BRIDGE project. Irrespective of the challenges of not reaching the original empirical goals of the research due to poor responses to the questionnaires sent to the students, the research was able to reach its empirical goals by exploiting alternative data from the student's feedbacks, assignments from the commissioning companies, students project work presentations and deliveries and as well as commissioners' feedbacks. With these data analysis on the development of student's business knowledge and business development skills in the project was successfully accomplished. The outcomes of the research greatly demonstrated that the project's pedagogical approach for developing students' business and innovation skills is an excellent apparatus for upskilling students' competences that will boost students' employability to being a source of innovations to local companies and, a good example of education delivered through inter-universities collaborations in the Kolarctic region.

REFERENCES

Bates, A.W. 2015. Teaching in a digital age. Tony Bates Associates Ltd.

Bates, A. & Poole, G. 2003. Effective Teaching with Technology in Higher Education: Foundations for Success. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Bryan, L. & Joyce, C. 2005. The 21st-century organization. The McKensey Quarterly 2005 Number 3.

Drucker, P. 1994. Theory of the business. Harvard Business Review, September-October 1994.

Education corner 2021. The Learning Pyramid. Accessed on 27.10.2021 https://www.educationcorner.com/the-learning-pyramid.html.

Learning pyramid 2021. Wikipedia 20.7.2021. Accessed on 27.10.2021 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Learning_pyramid.

Mvoi Mwakio, E. 2018. Business skills and entrepreneurship development training and planning manual for potato producer cooperatives and youth groups. Peru: International Potato Center.

Tapscott, D. & Williams, A. D. 2010. Innovating the 21st-Century University. Educause Review, January / February 2010.

VCE Business Management 2017. Business management study design.

Layout element: TOP 3

- The BRIDGE project's pedagogical approach for developing student's business and innovation skills is an excellent apparatus for upskilling student's competences and for boosting student's employability in the Kolarctic region.
- The project was a source of innovations for local companies in the regions for those who participated.
- The project is a good example of education delivered through inter-universities collaborations in the Kolarctic region and international digital cooperative learning practices successfully implemented in practice.

Oksana Prokhorova

Case Method as a Tool of Practice-oriented Learning in the BRIDGE Project

The experience of the BRIDGE project demonstrates well that case technology can be easily integrated into international educational projects. The example of the BRIDGE project is a more advanced level in solving business cases, since not only economic problems are solved, but also soft skills and cross-cultural communications of students are developed. The case method is especially successful if the project participants actively use such modern tools as storytelling, digital marketing, video materials, as well as mobile applications for group interaction (Microsoft Teams, Slack, Trello, Wunderlist, etc.).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY OF THE CASE METHOD

The “case method” (case study) technique is based on the analysis of a situation that is as close as possible to a real-life situation, as a rule, which does not have a single solution. The introduction of case technique into the educational process began with the Harvard Business School (HBS) in Boston. The teachers of this university in 1908 abandoned traditional lectures. Instead, they put a discussion of specific cases from economic practice at the center of learning. Since then, HBS has amassed a wealth of case study material, developing this technology into a stand-alone learning concept. Therefore, the "case method" technique in the literature is often called the Harvard method. (Dautova 2017.) The history of the case method in Russia is to a certain extent connected with the support of international educational funds and programs. For example, training of a large number of specialists in the case method technique was carried out within the framework of the project “Development of Education in Russia (Secondary Education)”. The project was implemented with the support of the J. Soros Foundation.

"Case method" refers to interactive pedagogical learning technologies. The main goal of the "case method" technique is to develop the ability of students to make informed decisions. Application of the case method poses the following tasks (Surmina 2020):

- development of skills of analysis and critical thinking;
- linking theory and practice;
- presentation of examples of decisions made;
- presentation of examples of the consequences of decisions made;
- presentation of different points of views;

- formation of skills for assessing alternative options in conditions of uncertainty.

"Case method" integrates such methods of cognition as: modeling, systems analysis, problem method, thought experiment, methods of description, classification, game methods. As a rule, the case includes (Borisova 2019):

- Situation - case, problem, real life story;
- Context of the situation - chronological, historical, context of the place, features of the action or participants in the situation;
- Questions or tasks to work with the case;
- Applications (charts, tables, articles, Internet resources, statistical reports, internal company reporting, etc.).

"Case method" technique could include the following 7 stages (Prokhorova 2013):

1. Construction of the case by the teacher. The goal is to prepare material on a specific practical situation. Out-of-class technique stage.
2. Acquainting with a specific case. The goal is to understand the problem situation and the decision-making situation. Out-of-class tec technique stage.
3. Information processing. The goal is to learn how to find the information needed to find a solution and evaluate it. Out-of-class t technique stage.
4. Discussion: discussion of the possibilities of alternative solutions. The goal is to develop alternative thinking. Classroom technique stage.
5. Resolution: finding a solution in groups. The goal is to compare and evaluate solution options. Classroom technique stage.
6. Dispute: small groups defend their decision. The goal is a reasoned defense of decisions. Classroom technique stage.
7. Comparison of Outcomes: Comparison of the decisions made in the groups with the decision that actually occurs. The goal is to assess the relationship of interests in which individual solutions are located. Classroom technique stage.

A reasonable question about how the results of using the "case method" technique can be assessed. As a criteria for the effectiveness of the use of the "case method" technique the following can be considered:

1. The quality of the answers (presentations) of the students.
2. Activity, involvement of students.
3. The attitude of students to the studied topic (case).

In the pedagogical practice of the author, the effectiveness of the "case method" technique is determined with the help of such methods as: analysis of questionnaire, the method of observation and express-survey of students and commissioners.

APPLICATION OF THE CASE METHOD WITHIN THE BRIDGE PROJECT

The overwhelming majority of cases solved within the BRIDGE project were aimed at increasing customer flow and finding new sales markets. The application of the case method in the BRIDGE project has proved that real companies, in order to be competitive, should implement a set of marketing tools. In particular, the combination

of digital marketing and storytelling allows companies to significantly improve their business results (increase conversions, the degree of engagement and loyalty of a lead) through personalized offers to consumers.

As an example, the first time this request from the commissioner was implemented in the course of solving the case by an international interdisciplinary team of students of the Finnish travel company Kemi Tourism Ltd. As a result of a marketing research conducted by students on digital channels, an excursion and a meeting with representatives of Kemi Tourism, the team proposed an action plan for promoting Kemi Tourism Ltd in the Internet environment, including revitalizing communication with Instagram users, using an event calendar on the website (see Figure 1), creating a staff section on a web page, attractive mascots to interact with customers through the website, introducing new traditions (e.g. Kemi Day), improving website navigation and creating a mobile app, attracting influencers and popular travel bloggers.

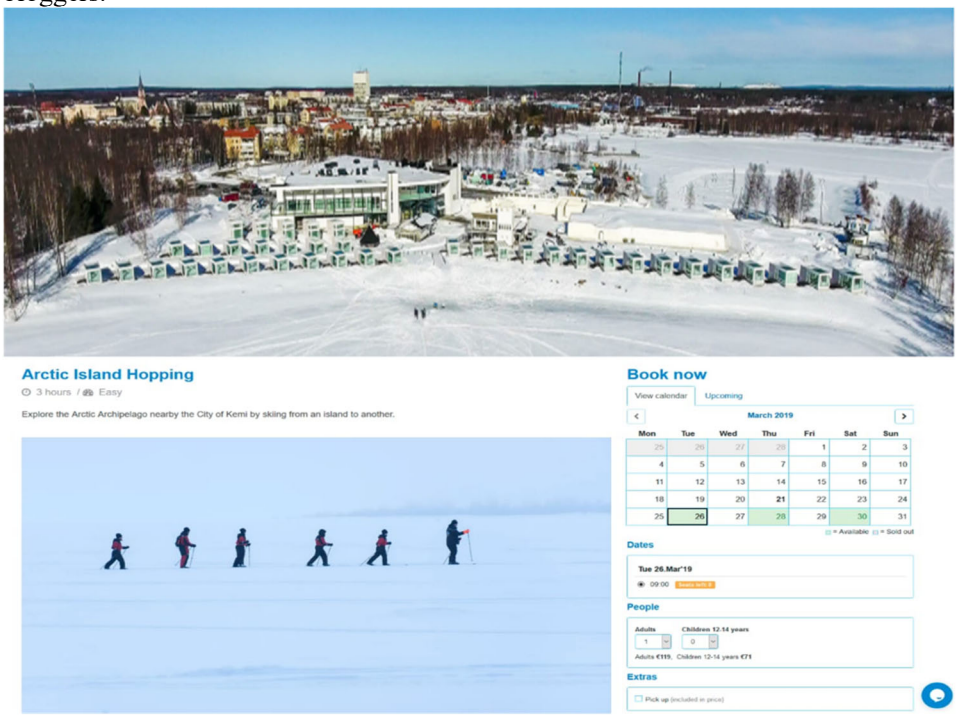

Figure 1. Visualization of the booking system and calendar of events for Kemi Tourism

Another example of a case is the Murmansk travel company Lappi-Tour LLC. When solving this case, the international team of students applied and implemented such tools as: the Business Canvas model, prototyping the interface of the new version of the corporate website and the Instagram social network, a landing page, compiled a content plan, a list of potential partners in the European Union and a commercial proposal option for mailing to foreign agencies, offers for contextual advertising and targeting (see Figure 2).

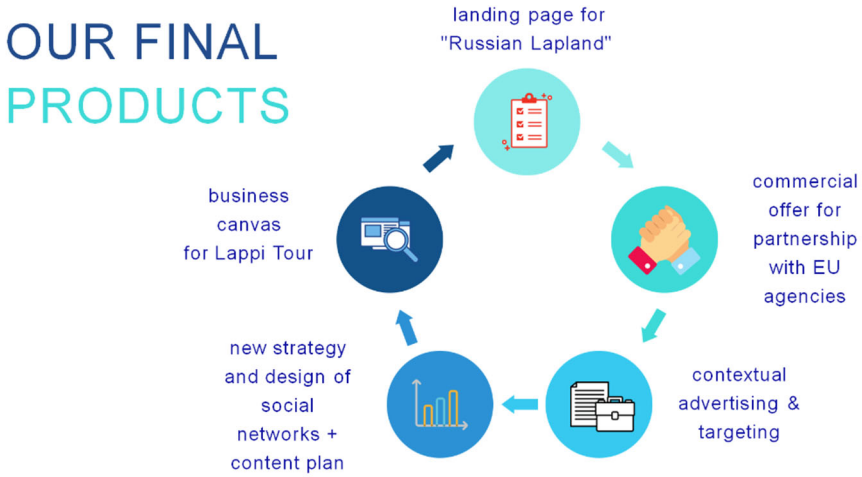

Figure 2. Results of solving the case ”Lappi Tour”

According to the results of a survey among 25 students of PetrSU, participating in five sessions of "BRIDGE", they noted the following advantages of the "case method" technique:

- A good way to test theory in practice and understand what skills you need to improve;
- Develops the ability to think creatively, search for business ideas;
- Received new information about the business environment in Finland and Norway;
- Active group work and invaluable experience in international cross-cultural communications;
- Motivation to improve the quality of your present and future life.
- Disadvantages of technique noted by students were:
- Lack of additional involved business experts;
- Lack of theoretical knowledge.

During each BRIDGE session it was noted that the best results in the decisions made were achieved by those teams led by strong team leaders, with a clear distribution of functions and responsible implementation of the work plan and rules. The insight of participation in five sessions of the BRIDGE project became for the author the understanding that it is important to focus not on the transfer of knowledge, but on the development of soft skills and on the comfortable psychological well-being and attitude of students. Therefore, it is important for a coach to understand how a student perceives information or a phenomenon in order to become a kind of dispatcher of the co-creation process. And the main task of the coach is to help create a favorable atmosphere and establish communication within the group, so that students find themselves in a state of mental freedom.

CONCLUSION

The experience of the BRIDGE international educational project demonstrates the versatility and effectiveness of "case method" technique, especially by implementing modern marketing tools (storytelling, brand ID, digital marketing, SMM, etc.) and the technical capabilities of teamwork (MS Teams, Google Docs, Padlet, Trello, etc.). It can be concluded that it is advisable and possible to integrate "case method" technique into various international projects in order to improve cross-cultural communications. BRIDGE project can be considered as an active working instrument of cross-border cooperation between the north-western Russia, Finland and Norway.

REFERENCES

Borisova, G. 2019. Modern teaching technologies. St.Petersburg: Polygraph-S.

Dautova, O. 2017. Workshop on teaching technologies of a modern student. St.Petersburg: Institute of vocational education of the Russian Academy of Education.

Prokhorova, O. 2013. Methodological recommendations on the use of case technology in the system of higher professional education. Collection of scientific articles of the VI regional scientific and methodological conference, 22-23 November 2012. Petrozavodsk: PetrSU, 105-113.

Surmina, Y. 2020. Situational analysis or anatomy of the Case method. Kiev: Center for Innovation and Development.

Layout element: TOP 3

- "Case method" technique can be easily integrated into international educational projects.
- Today it’s important to focus not on the transfer of knowledge, but on the development of soft skills and on the comfortable psychological well-being and attitude of students.
- BRIDGE project demonstrates the versatility and effectiveness of "case method" technique, especially by implementing digital marketing tools and teamwork platform.

Ani Ruusila

Digital Communication in BRIDGE Teams from Student's Perspective

Digital communication in BRIDGE project was essential, especially when participants were not working on the same premises. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic all communication has been held online with digital communication tools. The tools have varied between teams and several digital communication tools have been used for online meetings, chat and sharing documents, images, and videos. To find out what are the most popular digital communication tools in the BRIDGE project, a questionnaire has been executed to the students based on how they have experienced the digital communication tools.

DIGITAL COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS IN GENERAL

As can be observed nowadays young people use digital communication tools more and more to communicate with each other, as they are familiar and used to the mobile environment. In fact, it is assumed that students have certain digital reading skills, which helps them search for information and use it efficiently in studies (Makkonen 2019). In the BRIDGE project we were also interested in the students' willingness and ability to use different digital communication tools, especially during Covid-19 situation. This situation has increased digital studies and learning enormously during the past year (Hyypiö 2020).

Essential digital communication tools for collaboration and communications in workplaces and businesses are Dropbox, Google Workspace, Microsoft 365, Microsoft Teams and Zoom to mention a few. All these tools have centralized workspace for different purposes, such as documents, online meetings, etc. The accessibility of different apps is easy within these digital communication tools. (Rauv 2021.)

According to Sharp (2020) in an article of Communication Tools for Distance Learning it is noticed that different people need different tools for online teaching. It can be pointed out that the purpose of digital tools varies. The most popular tool in teaching was Adobe Connect, since it is highly customizable, and it has private and group chatrooms.

STUDENTS' DIGITAL COMMUNICATION TOOLS IN BRIDGE PROJECT

To find out what are the most popular digital communication tools in the BRIDGE project among students, a questionnaire was sent to the students during spring 2021.

The main goal of the questionnaire was to find out which digital communication tools were appropriate, easy, and popular with students' work within the project. Other goals were to find out how much time did the students spent on meetings and was the quality of digital connections good enough to communicate with all participants. Because of the Covid-19 pandemic the project was carried out digitally. All communication with coaches, students and commissioners was through digital communication tools. At this point it is relevant to mention that students were highly recommended to use Microsoft Teams environment, since the project organizer and coaches were using MS Teams. But it is important to find out what other digital communication tools were used by students.

The questions were sent via Webropol to 27 students, where 17 answered (63%) at the end of the project session. There were 3 questions and one open question. The first question examined what digital communication tools the students used in the BRIDGE project, when they communicated with coaches, other students, or commissioners. The tools in question were MS Teams, Discord, WhatsApp/Signal, Email, Phone calls, FaceTime, SMS (Text Messaging), Google hangout, Mattermost and Slack. The students also had an alternative of other if they used something from the afore mentioned. The students had the possibility to select how often they used the communication tools: Once a week, 2-3 times/week, 4-5 times/week, over 5 times/week and Never. Results to this question are presented in figure 1.

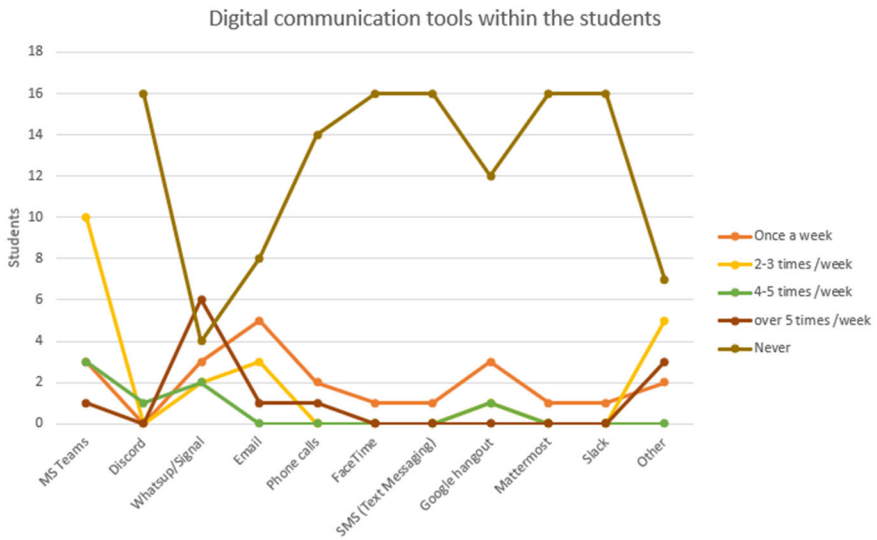

Figure 1. Digital communication tools used by students

As can be seen from the results the most used digital communication tool is Microsoft Teams, since it was recommended to be used during the project. As Linnamo (2020) has found out in their study that the Microsoft Teams is the most popular digital communication tool in organizations. All the students used the tool at least once a week, 10 out of 17 used it 2-3 times per week and 4 out of 17 used it more than 4 times per week. WhatsApp/Signal, Email and Google hangout are the next most

used tools. The popularity of WhatsApp was probably that it is instant, and it is easily in use all the time on mobile phones. Email (9 students) is used by the coaches and commissioners, that is why it is used by students as well. Google instead has global popularity and is known for its digital tools. Two digital communication tools were mentioned as Other tool: Instagram and Telegram, interestingly, these digital tools (which were not on the list) seemed to be quite popular in the BRIDGE project.

The second question aimed to find out how long students' online meetings lasted on average. The alternatives were 10 minutes, 30 minutes, 1 hour and longer than 1 hour (figure 2).

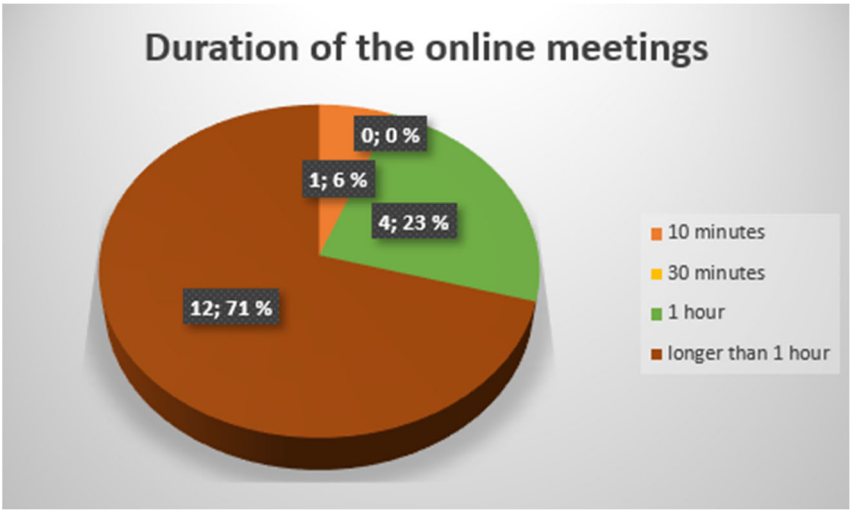

Figure 2. Duration of the online meetings

A good finding in the study was also the time spent on the meetings. The students were committed to the project since most meetings took more than an hour (71% of the alternatives), the second duration length of time spent was an hour (23% of the alternatives).

Third question was to find out how the students felt about the quality of the connections. The connections measured were students own connection, other students' connections, coaches' connections and commissioners' connections. Quality parameters were Poorly, Fairly good, Good or Perfectly. The results are presented in figure 3.

Figure 3. Quality of the connections between students and other participants

The interesting part was to find out how students thought the digital connection quality appears. The students thought the connections were good. The students appreciated the quality of coaches' connections, 14 students out of 17 thought the connection was perfect.

The last question gave the students the possibility to give free comment, as the students' opinion matters. The students' comments were enlightening. Because of the pandemic situation they felt comfortable to communicate remotely. But since there can be problems in the connections, written form was suggested.

Because of the pandemic situation, I already had experience of working remotely, and I also have the main classes remotely, which did not pose any problems with organizing meetings with the team. Of course, it would be great to meet with my team, but I think that in the digital format we did an excellent job too.

It could be great to have all the necessary announcements, tasks and questions repeated in written form in the chat as well because sometimes you can just lose the connection, misunderstand something etc.

WhatsApp was popular and convenient, but as a platform MS Teams and Google tools were also used.

WhatsApp was much more useful than MS Teams, for example I could not upload pictures in MS Teams, and WhatsApp is much more convenient and common.

MS Teams is a very convenient platform for collaboration just like Google tools.

CONCLUSION

The questionnaire was targeted to find out what would be a useful communication tool in future to guarantee fluent communication between participants. Specially to make sure that students can study without problems.

Digitally native young people, as our students are, have been born into the digital world and they are used to different digital communication with each other. Since students have a lot of options, they use the tools that they prefer, and they feel comfortable, and those tools may not be the same as teachers or coaches use. The selected tools usually also work fine and without problems.

As a conclusion it can be said that the students have been committed to the BRIDGE project, since they have been using different digital tools quite frequently during the spring Alta session. The study did not consider the nationality of the students. It would have been interesting to find out what digital communication tools are popular in diverse cultures. The digital communication tools may vary between nationalities. Only speculations can be made about which tools are popular within different countries.

REFERENCES

Hyypiö, A. 2020. Miten korona muutti opiskelija-arjen? Kokemuksia kerätty kyselyillä, jo julkaistujen tulosten mukaan etäopinnot kasvattaneet työmäärää. Oulun ylioppilaslehti 19.5.2020. Accessed on 21.9.2021 https://www.oulunylioppilaslehti.fi/miten-korona-muutti-opiskelija-arjen-kokemuksia-keratty-kyselyilla/.

Linnamo, N. 2020. Digitaalisia työkaluja riittää – mutta mihin niitä hyödynnetään? North Patrol 7.9.2020. Accessed on 22.9.2021 https://intranet-ostajanopas.fi/2020/09/07/digitaalisia-tyokaluja-riittaa-mutta-mihin-niita-hyodynnetaan/.

Makkonen, J. 2019. Digimaisema opettajan ja opiskelijan näkökulmasta. Digiaskel – hanke, Turun Ammatti – instituutti Autumn 2019. Accessed on 21.9.2021 https://www.koulutustakuu.fi/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Digimaisema_selvitys.pdf.

Rauv, S. 2021. 15 Essential Collaboration and Communication Platforms And Software to Use. Elcom 15.6.2021. Accessed on 21.9.2021 https://www.elcom.com.au/resources/blog/15-essential-communication-platforms-and-software-to-use.

Sharp, S. 2020. Communication Tools for Distance Learning. Campuswire 3.4.2020. Accessed on 21.9.2021 https://medium.com/campuswire/communication-tools-for-distance-learning-f07b43d3a6e7.

Layout element: TOP 3

- Online communication was the only communication between students, commissioners and coaches.
- Online connections can be a challenging part of the communication.
- Students' communication with online tools is natural.

Minttu Merivirta

Enhancing Student Employability and Teamwork Skills through Multicultural Cooperation in BRIDGE: Students' Perspective

In developing teaching, the aim is to achieve better quality. In higher education institutions (HEI), student feedback as well as feedback from other interest groups are vital for quality assurance and quality development. (Hirsto 2013, 147-148.) In the BRIDGE project we had two main target groups: the student who took part in the process and the company representatives who were involved as commissioners. Feedback from both parties was a key factor in developing the BRIDGE workshop model, but in this article the focus is specifically on the student feedback that was on-going during the project timeline.

FEEDBACK GUIDES THE DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

One of the main objectives of the BRIDGE project was to facilitate youth employment and economic growth. This was done by building a joint education platform, where HEI students and the local companies from the Barents region could come together and jointly develop businesses. Students worked as international groups and solved, for example, different kinds of product or service innovation tasks for the commissioners. (Kolarctic BRIDGE 2021a.) During the project period (2018-2021), a total of six different workshops were organized; one in Finland, two in Norway and three in Russia (Kolarctic BRIDGE 2021a; 2021b).

From the very beginning, the feedback gathering was considered as a central factor in developing the BRIDGE process and providing the participants, i.e. students, a better learning experience. The first workshop was organized in Tornio, Finland, and at that time the project team in collaboration designed a specific feedback questionnaire in order to find out students' views on how to develop the process in the future. This questionnaire was then further developed in the upcoming workshops.

The first questionnaire focused mainly on the following aspects: teamwork cooperation, coaches' role, commissioners' cooperation and feedback, cultural and international interactions and online platforms. In teamwork cooperation, we wanted specifically to know how student teams worked together, could everyone utilize their own expertise in a team and were the process clear for all. Concerning the coaches, it was important to find out if the teams felt they had enough support and help for the

progress of the case in hand. From the commissioners' point of view, the questions were mainly directed to fluent communication and student commitment towards their commissioners. In cultural and international interactions, we challenged the students to reflect on had their attitude changed during the process towards their own culture or other cultures. Finally, in online platforms, the questions were targeted to which online channels students used and which were the main challenges regarding teamwork in online platform.

To understand how the workshop process developed during the project timeline, in this article the focus is on comparing the results of the first questionnaire (Tornio spring 2019) and the latest questionnaire from Alta, Norway gathered spring 2021. The comparison will provide a chance to highlight not only the general feedback but also the development process of online learning in the BRIDGE project.

It must be taken into consideration, that the COVID-19 pandemic had an impact on international higher education for example in a form of decreased international student mobility. It however also created new opportunities for the digitalization of international education and learning international online collaboration competencies. (Kolm et al. 2021.) For us in the BRIDGE project it meant that we had to adapt to new ways to enhance teamwork online, as we faced, for example, travelling restrictions. In comparing the student feedback results, it however must be remembered, that in the first session in Tornio students had a chance to meet each other face-to-face. After the second session in Vardo during autumn 2019, we were forced to facilitate the process fully online.

SELF-MOTIVATION ENHANCES COMMITMENT

According to Kolm et al. (2021) international online collaboration competencies include the following six competence domains: ICT, intercultural and cultural, communication and language, self-management and organization, collaboration, and domain-specific competencies. In their study Kolm et al. concluded that effective online collaboration benefits clearly from self-motivation of students to work effectively and respectfully with diverse teams, shared responsibility and common goals as well as valuing each team members' individual contributions.

After the first BRIDGE session in Tornio, the feedback showed that the self-motivation indeed was the key factor in teamwork. Some students felt that they or their team members were not motivated enough and therefore the commitment for teamwork was lacking. It was also noted that the commitment was largely based on whether the students were participating voluntarily or because the course was a part of their curriculum. This can be a common challenge that HEIs must tackle. Insufficient language skills in teams was also raised up in the feedback. This problem was answered in later sessions of BRIDGE by improving the application system by adding obligatory interviews with the applicants in order to ensure sufficient English language skills. In the Alta session during spring 2021 it was interesting to find out, that 88% of the participants thought that they felt comfortable using English with other students. It was also pointed out, that the collaboration improved students' language skills.

WORKING IN MULTICULTURAL TEAMS WITH DIFFERENT COMPETENCES

In a study in the Dutch university environment, it was argued that the group composition affects the group collaboration processes and group performance. It was noted that if only one member of the group is from another nationality than all the others, it may cause significant challenges specially in the communication among the members of the team. On the other hand, equally distributed nationality groups were observed to have better distribution of conversations in their group meetings, fewer task-related disagreements and higher levels of trust and group belongingness. (Kleingeld, Taconis, Ping & Rispens 2021.) In the BRIDGE project it was the starting point that all teams should consist of students from different nationalities. Of course, in teams there still were students also from the same country, which probably meant that some participants also could rely on using their common language i.e. their native language.

Overall, the students' assessments of teamwork have been relatively positive from the beginning. After Tornio session in spring 2019, 63% of respondents agreed that they could work according to their personal knowledge and skills, and 48% felt that team members' different knowledge background was important for their learning process. However, at the same time 26% pointed out that there had been many conflicts during teamwork. Little lower evaluations were also given to the team members' understanding of the next steps in the working process and their clear concept of what's to be done in different parts of the development task. Coaches' support was considered quite good, and the communication with commissioners was mainly fluent.

Feedback from the Alta session during spring 2021 shows, that 62% thought they had the same approach to working in multicultural teams as they would have in their home university. Additionally, teamwork in general was valued with remarkably high numbers. In comparison with the previously mentioned results from Tornio, in Alta 73,5% of the students agreed that the information from their team members with a different competence was useful. Also 76,5% agreed that they thought their own experiences and competences were useful for the team.

TEAM RULES AND TEAMS' DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Dillenbourg (2002) has argued that as free collaboration doesn't necessarily produce learning, one chance to enhance effectiveness in teams is to provide structured and well-defined scripts for student interaction. One challenge can be to promote collaboration itself in an online environment in a way that facilitates all domains of international online collaboration competencies (Kolm et al. 2021). In the BRIDGE project sufficient support for successful teamwork was provided by a designated main coach and a co-coach for each team. It was, however, the most important part of the process, that the coach is not a teacher, who tells the team what to do, but especially a coach and a mentor, who guides the way but facilitates the students find the right path.

One quite tangible objective for teamwork development can be considered creating team rules. In the feedback gathered after Tornio session, this was raised in one open

answer that highlighted a need for common communication rules. In the first questionnaire we didn't ask specifically about the team rules, but this was changed in the next feedback questionnaires. It was pleasing to find out from the feedback from the Alta session that only 12% of the respondents said they didn't create any team rules. 3% created their team rules before the workshop week, 53% at the beginning of the week, 26% during the week and 6% at the end of Alta workshop week. The importance of self-made common team rules was seen especially when working online with people who were not previously familiar to each other. This provided an understanding of commitment inside the team and general consensus of the common goals.

CONCLUSION

As discussed in this article, feedback has a central role in development. In a project like BRIDGE, where the goal is to enhance cooperation between students of HEI and local companies and thus create chances for better employment for the youth and vitality of the Barents, it is even more important to listen to the target group itself, i.e. students. According to the feedback gathered throughout the BRIDGE project, it is apparent that the need for developing one's teamwork skills and especially international teamwork skills are considered important when contemplating general working life skills that are needed now and in the future. Motivation to take part in international projects is a one key to succeeding in a career and to become employed for a job that corresponds with student's education.

REFERENCES

Dillenbourg, P. 2002. Over-scripting CSCL: The risks of blending collaborative learning with instructional design. In P. A. Kirschner (Ed.) Three worlds of CSCL—Can we support CSCL? Heerlen: Open Universiteit Nederland, 61-91. Accessed on 10.9.2021 https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.457.9255&rep=rep1&type=pdf.

Hirsto, L. 2013. Palautepohjainen opetuksen kehittäminen ja laatu. In: J. T. Hakala & K. Kiviniemi (eds.) Vuorovaikutuksen jännitteitä ja oppimisen säröjä – Aikuispedagogiikan haasteiden äärellä. Kokkola: Jyväskylän yliopisto, Kokkolan yliopistokeskus Chydenius, 147-162. Accessed on 12.11.2021 https://jyx.jyu.fi/bitstream/handle/123456789/48383/978-951-39-5376-8.pdf.

Kleingeld, A., Taconis, R., Ping, C. & Rispens, S. 2021. Effective learning and student collaboration in the international classroom at TU/e. 4TU.Centre for Engineering Education. Accessed on 10.9.2021 https://www.4tu.nl/cee/innovation/project/13191/effective-learning-and-student-team-collaboration-in-the-international-classroom-at-tue.

Kolarctic BRIDGE 2021a. About the project. Accessed on 11.11.2021 https://kolarcticbridge.com/.

Kolarctic BRIDGE 2021b. Cases and companies. Accessed on 11.11.2021 https://kolarcticbridge.com/index.php/cases-and-companies/.
Kolm, A., de Nooijer, J., Vanherle, K., Werkman, A., Wewerka-Kreimel, D., Rachman-Elbaum, S. & van Merriënboer, J. J. G. 2021. International Online Collaboration Competencies in Higher Education Students: A Systematic Review. Journal of Studies in International Education 31.5.2021. Accessed on 9.9.2021 https://doi.org/10.1177/10283153211016272.

Layout element: TOP 3:

- Asking for feedback and reacting to it provides a basis for the successful development process.
- When working in multicultural teams, students' self-motivation and language skills are vital aspects.
- Multicultural teamwork has challenges and opportunities for personal growth, and this can be supported by sufficient coaching as well as by giving students freedom to guide the process themselves.

CHAPTER 3:
Institutional interactions

Peter Fischer

Creativity Framework – Institutional Essentials for a Cross-border Learning Environment

BRIDGE is a learning environment addressing three main goals. First, enhanced employability of university graduates through practically solving business problems; second, support of local industry through cooperation between students and companies, and third, the developed learning environment itself to ensure continuation of BRIDGE after the expiration of the project funding. The objective of the article is to propose institutional prerequisites that enable departments at Higher Education Institutions (HEI) to more effectively design projects like BRIDGE. We argue that the degree of project integration into a HEI affects the quality and use of this kind of interactive learning environment.

This article is based on project lessons learned and theoretical insights into entrepreneurship education and the concept of employability (Fayolle 2010; Owens & Tibby 2014; Perrin, Hancock & Miller 2021; Soares, Dias, Monteiro & Proença 2017). The process of incremental adaption of the learning environment to practical requirements sheds light on strengths and weaknesses of project-related institutional structures. However, the article does not assess the individual partners. The intention is to merge appropriate elements from each of the institutions into a supportive set of recommendations for BRIDGE-like projects. It follows a description of gradually implemented adaptations. Critical institutional areas are identified that have or could have supported this process and suggest improved conditions for similar learning environments.

ORIGINAL PROJECT DESIGN – AND LESSONS LEARNED

In the context of this article, a learning environment means the totality of personnel and technical resources and settings, for instance workshop weeks, to achieve the goals of BRIDGE. The cornerstone of this environment has been a system of responsibility rotation between partners. Their different units made decisions and managed the implementation. In some cases, there were departments of research and internationalization or business schools, in other faculties or distinct departments.

Partners cooperated as equals on a daily basis, discussing team building, defining case assignments and evaluating the quality of outcomes. They selected their students for each session. In various ways they integrate the project into a student's individual study program. For each of the six semester-long sessions, one partner oversaw contracting its local companies, defined assignments for students, and hosted a workshop week, either face-to-face or, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, virtually, during which students meet teammates, coaches and case companies. Apart from the workshop weeks, teams and companies cooperate online and students present their proposals to the companies online at the end of each session. Participating teachers act as coaches for several teams and assignments over time. One partner was responsible for the BRIDGE online platform. Visibility and result dissemination have partly been managed by a department of another one.

Needs for modification emerged very early in the project: The main challenge proved to be communication at all levels. A minority of students, although highly motivated, lacked enough English language skills. For others, the opportunity to travel was obviously their main motivation to participate. Apart from internal team communication, inaccessible busy company commissioners could make the process more difficult. After the first session, the original admission procedure was supplemented by interviews conducted by teachers from different universities. The interviews aimed at language skills, individual motivation, and previous teamwork experiences. Another one of the early changes was the implementation of an alternative online communication platform that made cooperation more effective for students, coaches, project administrators and company commissioners. Each project session started with user instructions and training.

A further significant improvement was the gradual introduction of a toolbox for innovation practice. Early in the project it was evident that students, but also coaches from different disciplines and particular educational backgrounds lacked a common understanding of innovation practice. It was not enough to rely on individual expertise. Two of the partners could include additional teachers who teach students and coaches in basic methods of innovation as a regular part of each session. This amendment to the learning environment had beneficial effects on coaching, for the integration of increased teaching staff with case-specific expertise, and for a more suitable evaluation of student teams.

INSTITUTIONAL AREAS THAT INFLUENCE PROJECT OUTCOMES

Partners agreed on improvements to the learning environment with clear consensus. Yet, individual contributions depend on institutional structures and strategies. Formally, strategies for internationalization and for innovation, and the relationship with industry and regional communities are standard for all partners. Practically, the implementation of the project is determined by its relationship to study programs (independent or embedded), the associated allocation of institutional resources, especially of faculty staff, of internationalization management, public relations,

technical support, and the nature of cooperation with companies. Following are the experiences in these fields for future cross-border and multidisciplinary collaboration.

Program integration into curricula

The BRIDGE experience argues for the integration of similar projects into existing study programs. BRIDGE provided an excellent learning opportunity for students who requested to participate without expecting formal credits. Yet, to make projects a lasting tool for the university itself, project designers ought to establish strong relationships between project activities and skills and competencies to be achieved by study programs. That requires project integration as a mandatory or elective course, as an alternative to regular internship, or for example, for groups of students looking for cases for their theses.

Rather than an informal evaluation of teamwork results or granting a certificate of participation, integration into curricula will provide students with formal academic incentives, such as credit points and contribute to stronger motivation and commitment to teamwork. Because self-assessment is a key factor of learning (Hjorth & Johannisson 2007), exam-like self-evaluations can complete the work in addition to outcome presentations to the companies.

For project coordinators, recruiting participants will become less random. For heads of departments, curricula-related criteria facilitate the formation of flexible teams of coaches over time, and the teaching staff will benefit from applying practice-relevant work methods. According to partners where the project language English is less common, the involvement of their language departments could be considered. Language classes (interpreters) could practice their skills and participate as team supporters.

Allocation of human resources

Self-determined teachers are the most valuable power source for achieving the goals of BRIDGE. Experience suggests that institutions, which use the project as an integral part of curricula (mandatory or elective) are more capable of balancing a teacher's project-related workload. Rather than an addendum, participation in projects is part of the contractually assigned teaching and R & D work. Furthermore, project coordinators could more easily incorporate additional teaching expertise required for a specific case work. The combination of study program and projects can facilitate flexible and self-steered resource management across faculties. It can contribute to a teacher's commitment to further training, for example, in innovation practice. Without linking programs and projects, participation might remain a temporary experience.

Furthermore, faculty staff and departments can more profoundly evaluate a project based on academic criteria, and with reference to further development of own strategies. One partner's instrument to be recommended is a central filing of project activities. The archive is open to employees of the entire school. The material consists of grant applications, contracts, work plans, partnership networks, list of participants, and feedback from students and companies. The archive serves for research,

publication, and for developing competencies in project management at the institution.

Project coordination, Internationalization and R&D

The degree to what international offices or departments of R&D participate in the project is another area of optimized resource allocation. In the case of BRIDGE, some partners' international offices did not only contribute to prepare necessary agreements. They are jointly responsible for the contextual match between project objectives and strategic goals of the institution. They are empowered to engage faculties, even recruit participating teaching staff and to lead the overall communication with partner institutions. Even better proved to be a merge of administration and teaching when employees of the international office or R&D managers act as project coordinators and / or active teachers. The closer the personal contacts of administrators to project activities on all levels (student, companies, coaches), the more connected they are to public relations work and dissemination of project results. It is an invaluable advantage when International or R&D divisions own resources for media communication and can engage staff for dissemination of project outcomes as well.

Technical support units

The institutionalized practice of departments running joint projects made it less complicated to allocate technical resources as well. BRIDGE can strongly recommend entrusting one of the partners with the responsibility for the complex online communication between team members, coaches, administrative staff and companies. Proprietary rights to operate the platform and a competent technical staff are essential for problem-free project work. The allocation of project-related working time enabled introductory training for new participants, and the team also created and maintained the project website as a visibility and dissemination window for BRIDGE.

Relationship with local businesses and communities

Partners shape cooperation with local industries and communities differently. Some cultivate more formal cooperation managed by the administrative staff. Others, whose cooperation with local industry is based on project-related learning curricula, build long-lasting personal relationships to owners of small companies and integrate them frequently in projects or even in class. The latter seems to be the more suitable way to develop mutual expectations and shared goals over time. Assignments to students should be elaborated by companies and directly involve teachers.

Rather than a simple request to firms, closer personal relationships between teaching staff and company representatives is critical to elaborating specific tasks, for effective communication and useful feedback. Furthermore, such long-lasting individual relationships guarantee a more realistic assessment of client satisfaction and subsequent performance (Henry, Hill & Leitch 2007; Sidhu, Johnsson, Singer & Suoranta 2015).

Evaluations need post-project communication, and they require mutual trust. Trust can also be strengthened using detailed agreements between HEI and companies. The formal design of an agreement might depend on regional and national (business) cultures (i.e. acceptance of handshakes to written contracts). However, the clarification of contents, goals, resources available, risks, and methods of cooperation will give both parties a more sustainable project foundation.

CONCLUSION

Although the enthusiasm of teachers is fundamental to the success of BRIDGE, in order to optimize the process and to enable continuation after the externally financed period of the project, institutional support is critical as well. Not all the five partners might collaborate in a BRIDGE-like mode in the future. Yet, being aware of the most adequate organizational structure and elements from each of them would increase the effectiveness of the learning environment. The optimized setting can even better provide students with major characteristics of their future work life: solving business challenges multidisciplinary and remotely as members of international teams.

REFERENCES

Fayolle, A. (ed.) 2010. Handbook of Research in Entrepreneurship Education: International Perspectives volume 3. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Henry, C., Hill, F. M. & Leitch, C. M. 2007. Evaluating entrepreneurship education and training. Implications for programme design. In: A. Fayolle (ed.) Handbook of Research in Entrepreneurship Education, Volume 1. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 248-260.

Hjorth, D. & Johannisson, B. 2007 Learning as an entrepreneurial process. In: A. Fayolle (ed.) Handbook of Research in Entrepreneurship Education, Volume 1. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 46-66.

Owens, J. & Tibby, M. (eds.) 2014. Enhancing employability through enterprise education: Examples of good practice in higher education. The Higher Education Academy, November 2014. Accessed on 12.11.2021 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275830422_Enhancing_employability_through_enterprise_education_Examples_of_good_practice_in_higher_education.

Perrin, D., Hancock, C. & Miller, R. 2021. Internal Knowledge Transfer: Professional Development Programmes and Embedding Real World Learning for Full-Time Undergraduates. In: D. A. Morley & M. G. Jamil (eds.) Applied Pedagogies for Higher Education. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan. Accessed on 12.11.2021 https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-46951-1_2.

Sidhu, I. S., Johnsson, C., Singer, K. & Suoranta, M. 2015. A Game-Based Method for Teaching Entrepreneurship. Applied Innovation Review, Sutardja Center for

Entrepreneurship & Technology, University of California, Berkeley. Issue 1 June 2015, 50-64.
Soares, I., Dias, D., Monteiro, A. & Proença, J. 2017 Learning Outcomes and Employability: a case study on management academic programmes. Conference Paper · March 2017. 11th International Technology, Education and Development Conference, INTED2017 Proceedings. Accessed on 12.11.2021 http://dx.doi.org/10.21125/inted.2017.1518.

Layout element: TOP 3

- The article emphasizes the value of international project-based learning environments into curricula.
- Deep integration of flexible projects has the potential to optimize resource allocation at HEI.
- Integrated projects are the prerequisite for stable partnership between HEI and local businesses to enhance graduates' employability.

Teresa Chen

Universities Partnering in the BRIDGE Project – Collaboratively Achieving Common Goals

Universities partnerships bring academic communities and related stakeholders together to share vast knowledge and skills, and gain from such diverse collaborations. For effective outcome of partnerships mutual understanding of goals, objectives and processes is a pre-requisite. This in effect means having appropriate knowledge of partners involved with the common understanding of sustainable gains and tackling any challenges that may arise on the way. (Mehling & Kolleck 2019) With similar resolve the BRIDGE project set out to benefit from a cross-border collaboration involving the partners from across the Kolarctic region: UiT – The Arctic University of Norway, Murmansk Arctic State University (MASU), Petrozavodsk State University and ITMO University St. Petersburg from Russia, and Lapland University of Applied Sciences in Finland.

INSIGHTS

Universities seek partnerships to combine resources in terms of fund and expertise in order to deal with common challenges in producing knowledge sustainably. The key is to use resources efficiently through collaborative efforts from all parties involved to narrow any existing knowledge gap. Especially, when the collaborations involve various expertise, for instance, teachers and lecturers of various fields and competence areas join force for mutual benefit. Such a collaboration seeks to create platforms that provide opportunity for innovative sparring to facilitate new ideas. (Rasool 2017.)

The main principle behind partnerships is that partners involved are mutually gaining from joint collaboration. This then necessitates that the partners are well versed with the practices that cater to fruitful interactions among them. For instance, partners should understand the peculiarities that exit in partners' individual organisations especially those partners who originates from across borders where legal setups and requirements may vary, and organisations function accordingly. It is equally important for partners to discern roles and responsibilities clearly to avoid any ambiguity resulting in misunderstanding. Obviously, if the partners already have common history of collaborations, it would ease any future partnership. (Mehling & Kolleck 2019.)

It is quite natural that predicaments and pitfalls could occur when there are uncertainties in practices of the partners involved. What works well in one university may not be so in others. Even if one is well-versed in international practices there might be certain nuances that may elude even an expert. Various institutional fundamentals may pose as a hurdle unless attention is paid to "the complexity of working together" with the understanding that such must be addressed in the pursuit of knowledge creation. (Eddy 2010.)

BRIDGE PARTNERSHIP

The project partnership involves higher education institutions (HEIs) from across borders in Finland, Norway and Russia. The partners collaborate with the aim to "facilitate youth employment and economic growth" where the collaboration has created a network of regional stakeholders. The HEIs involved in the cross-border partnership mobilise their students and the regional enterprises with the aim to bridge the knowledge gap of the former and address resource deficiency of the latter especially among micro and small enterprises. The students benefit from theoretical applications of their studies in real enterprises cases rather than class simulations. The enterprises on the other hand acquire research and study outcome from students' work to further their own interests.

All the HEIs partners involved has had some form of history of collaboration among them which aid in narrowing down any ambiguity or challenges that may emerge among new partners (Eddy 2010). The BRIDGE partnership was sealed by a legal agreement at the onset of the collaboration which set the rules of the game clearly for all entity. The HEI partners understood and recognised their roles and responsibilities. There was a common understanding among the partners that they were in the project to collaboratively create a niche for their students by providing knowledge from experts of various fields.

GAINS

The obvious advantages of the BRIDGE project partnership are the vast variety of knowledge pool and experiences provided by teachers and lecturers from all HEIs who functioned as coaches. The students involved has had the opportunity to learn from international coaches and students from across borders. They acquire knowledge of subjects beyond their own curricula while working with students and coaches from various disciplines. Such rare opportunity is not frequently accessible. The international nature of the project service the students' international profile and support in broadening their mindset simultaneously creating an international network of colleagues. The network could easily serve as a source of professional contacts for any future endeavour that would be launched. The students learn to become comfortable in dealing with international clientele that would surely aid in their career prospect. Cross-cultural competence is a must-have for professionals to thrive in a very globalised world.

The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us one thing that we are all capable of switching to alternative ways of working. With the online platform and tools along with expertise offered by Lapland UAS, the project collaboration smoothly shifted to online activities. The students gain additional competences with discipline that come along with working online. Such discipline is essential in the current global work climate where business deals are undertaken online. The youth today are savvy to digital tools but during the project team's collaboration the students learn to master the art of tackling the challenges of complexity arising from teamwork consisting of members from various nationalities who have not met each other previously. This supply ample opportunity for the students to develop the knack to customise their teamwork skills to match the arising needs.

The project involving regional enterprises that provide case-assignments for students to work on are the commissioners who with minimal resource investment (mostly with time) profit by gaining from the results of students' research and collaborative teamwork. Those results could be incorporated into the commissioners' ongoing ventures wherever they see fit. A commissioner commented that "we got some new valuable ideas we didn't think of ourselves before." Sole entrepreneurs, especially, who do not have ample resources, if at all, but would like to seek opportunities to grow, for them the project is a path to find answers. There are businesses that seek opportunity to fulfil their social cooperate responsibility and by supporting university students through project collaboration is one of the ways. Further, a strategic duty of universities of applied sciences in Finland particularly is to work on meeting regional entrepreneurial needs which is fully matched in this project activities.

Informal discussions with BRIDGE partners reveal that for the HEIs involved in international projects, it is a channel to create international networks and broaden expertise areas through knowledge transfer and knowledge exchange. Each country has its own internationalisation strategy for its universities as one of the partners, ITMO informed that the project fits perfectly in meeting the requirements of the government where "industrial partners are involved in developing local economy". For the Norwegian partner, UiT's perspective "we got wide range of cases and business cultures involved" and that the project provides an insight into how commissioners from a country view the markets abroad and how industry partners approach business, "it was interesting to learn how Russian commissioners think of western markets". According to MASU, international project collaboration is also an "instrument of financing mobility and an effective tool to reach the necessary target set by the ministry as a key performance indicator". The prospect of partnering with regional industries and building universities network, involving enriching collaboration, is also what Lapland UAS aims for in any project partnering.

PAINS

The BRIDGE project is no exception to challenges since the main stakeholders, students, coaches and commissioners face cross-cultural challenges during

interactions which could lead to communication ambiguity. For instance, some students would easily take the initiative and get started on tasks at hand, simultaneously there are students who would expect instructions at various stages. This could cause unease in a mixed team of international students. The credits award system differs from country to country which could cause the challenge in recruiting motivated students for the project. For instance, UiT has integrated the project in their mandatory curricula, Lapland UAS offers elective credits or the opportunity to accredit any similar studies in the student's curricula whereas in ITMO and MASU participation in the project is a voluntary extra curricula activity.

The project being international in nature has a common language, English, to facilitate the seamless interaction among partners. Both ITMO and MASU have alluded to challenges in recruiting students with appropriate language skills. As a consequence of the legislation in Russia, according to MASU, for the coaches involved, the project participation is an "extra workload" in addition to the "normal" duty which could pose as a burden. This may further affect the flexibility of how partners operate and, in their decision-making process. Additionally, during the pandemic, despite the smooth functioning of tools, working online added to the stress level, especially when the interactions are necessary between people who have never met and are unfamiliar with each other. This resulted in requiring additional effort from both the students and coaches working in international teams.

AN OBVIOUS INFERENCE

Despite the ups and fewer downs, the BRIDGE project should be recognised as a successful network of universities partnering to engage regional stakeholders to make a difference. When the project makes its full term, it would have involved over 21 nationalities including more than 200 students, 56 enterprises (including municipalities) and, about 15 coaches and mentors. The objectives of the project matched the activities executed. One of the main stakeholders, the regional commissioners, have benefitted from the students' work output with minimal resource investment. The universities partners have established a congenial relationship and set the foundation for future academic collaborations. There have been discussions on joint thesis and joint programmes or courses collaboration, and even externally financed joint projects, to illustrate a few. The intension of the partners is to seek ways to continue the partnership beyond the current project time span to benefit from the multi-disciplinary nature of the collaboration and to continue the pursuit of knowledge creation in the future as well.

REFERENCES

Eddy, P. L. 2010. Partnerships and collaborations in higher education. School of Education Book Chapters. 38. Accessed on 14.10.2021 https://scholarworks.wm.edu/educationbookchapters/38.

Mehling, S. & Kolleck, N. 2019. Cross-Sector Collaboration in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs): A Critical Analysis of an Urban Sustainability Development Program. Sustainability 2019, 11(18), 4982. Accessed on 14.10.2021 https://doi.org/10.3390/su11184982.

Rasool, Z. 2017. Collaborative working practices: Imagining better research partnerships. Research for All, 1 (2): 310–22. Accessed on 14.10.2021 https://doi.org/10.18546/RFA.01.2.08.

Layout element: TOP 3

- Project partnerships are undertaken for mutual gains.
- Collaboration for knowledge creation to address knowledge gap that exists among freshmen.
- Multidisciplinary expertise is a beneficial tool for young graduates.

Alla Raspopova

Coaching in the BRIDGE Project

The BRIDGE project consists of 6 modules, each lasting about 10 weeks, during which 10 groups of students develop assignments proposed by commissioners, representatives of small and medium-sized businesses. Each group consists of 3-5 students from different universities and 2 coaches from different countries. Thus, *international interaction* within each team appears on different levels:

1. between students inside a team;
2. between coaches working in the same team;
3. between coaches and students;
4. between students, coaches and the commissioner.

This article focuses on the second and third points: interactions between coaches and between coaches and students.

INTERNATIONAL INTERACTION BETWEEN COACHES AND STUDENTS

The BRIDGE project is primarily designed to support and develop small and medium-sized businesses in the Arctic region, as well as to assist in the employment of young people. A coach in this project is, first of all, a teacher who specializes in business development or a specific industry, who knows the methods of project activities. The difference between coaching and other methods is that it aims to extract knowledge from the student, helps based on his own skills and the ability to increase efficiency (Niculina, Berezina & Shashkina 2018, 240).

Coaching is one of the most effective methods for goal achievement. The curriculum process is approached from a few steps, exactly:

- setting the goal, recognizing its reality;
- analysis of necessary components of success, available opportunities;
- determination of the paths of attaining the goal;
- choosing a strategy of actions aimed for the attainment of the goal, monitoring of its attainment and analysis of results (Niculina, Berezina & Ushakov 2019, 166).

A coach is not only able to unite a team of students from different universities, different countries, assign roles, build communications, help participants comprehend the problem, set a goal, outline a work plan, but also understands the pain of the business (figure1).

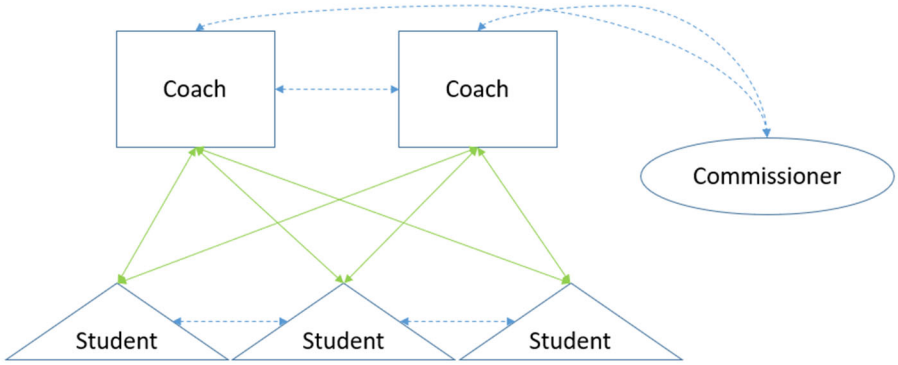

Figure. 1. International interaction between caches and students in the BRIDGE

Often during a project, we are faced with the fact that a small business did not understand what its problem was. The commissioner's opportunities are always limited, while the aspirations are ambitious. Business must grow and develop, otherwise in a competitive environment it will quickly go bankrupt. BRIDGE's commissioners included family business representatives and aspiring entrepreneurs who had just started their own companies, who had neither the means nor the physical ability to do everything that the students wanted to offer them. The peculiarity of the student team is that the starting specialists know the theory well. Most have already studied marketing, management, investing, know how to develop a business correctly, are ready to form a business plan, develop a marketing strategy, a plan for promoting a product or service on the Internet. Awareness of the limited capabilities of the commissioner in most cases frustrates and disappoints students. They will not be able to apply all their knowledge, give the customer a beautiful, well-drawn up action plan, as written in the textbooks. The coach's task is to motivate the disappointed students, to encourage them to find maybe a slightly simpler solution than they would like, but which the commissioner can definitely apply, implement right away, and not sometime in the boundless future.

Another challenge that the coach faces, and this is a very serious challenge, is not to do the task yourself. Honestly, I was often tempted to do everything myself, but there was no sense in it. I had to hold back with all my might. When students have more urgency in choosing an outcome, or even a pathway to an outcome, the onus of control begins to shift (Heinrich, Louson, Blommel & Green 2020, 359). After all, our main task was to offer the students an opportunity to go this way independently. Any problem solution that the teams presented to a commissioner was exactly the students' solution. The students put forward the ideas themselves, conducted research, developed a plan to achieve the result. The final presentation recorded the result achieved in 10 weeks of painstaking collaboration.

Even though the theoretical basis for the project approach is the same for everyone, our main tool is Creative Steps 2.0 Innovation Workshop, the actual application in

practice is carried out in different ways, primarily due to the emphasis. For one coach, the main thing is discipline, a strict schedule of meetings, and attendance control. Another coach provides students with freedom and connects only when difficulties arise which students cannot solve on their own. Whatever the approach, it is important that it suits both the coach and the students, and most importantly, to get a result that solved the commissioner's problem.

INTERNATIONAL INTERACTION BETWEEN COACHES

Each team has 2 coaches on each module. One coach is from Russia, the other from Finland or Norway. Coaches choose cases on their own, focusing primarily on their professionalism, which fields are closer to their research work, in which area they are more experienced. Some tasks directly intersect with the coach interests, some indirectly. Thus, the formation of pairs of coaches is always random, it can repeat from module to module, but rather as an exception. Coaches must independently decide which of them will be the lead (main) coach and who will help. The lead coach sets the rules for interacting with the team: assigns roles, schedules meetings, distributes tasks, and controls their implementation. The second coach is more likely to play a consulting role: helps with the selection of materials, acquaints students with unknown tools that can be used in their work, prompts, criticizes, and praises.

I was both the lead coach (4 times) and the co-coach (2 times) in the BRIDGE project (see table 1). Both roles were interesting and useful to me. Each time we had international team with representatives from Finnish (Lapland UAS), Norwegian (UiT) and Russian universities (MASU, ITMO, PetrSU). The combination of coaches changed every time.

Table 1. My experience of international interaction in cases

Module	**1. Tornio**	**2. Vardo**	**3. Murmansk**			**4. Petrozavodsk**
Case	PUU TERÄ J. HALONEN	GRAND HOTEL	ALBION	AMA KIDS	FREEDIVING	HOLOD SLAVMO
Lead coach	Anthony Okuogume (Lapland UAS)	Alla Raspopova (MASU)	Alla Raspopova (MASU)	Alla Raspopova (MASU)	Peter Fischer (UiT)	Alla Raspopova (MASU)
Co-coach	Alla Raspopova (MASU)	Peter Fischer (UiT)	Teresa Chen (Lapland UAS)	Esa Jauhola (Lapland UAS)	Alla Raspopova (MASU)	Mika Saloheimo (Lapland UAS)
Students	Lapland UAS	Lapland UAS	Lapland UAS	Lapland UAS	Lapland UAS	UiT
	Lapland UAS	UiT	PetrSU	MASU	UiT	ITMO
	MASU	UiT	ITMO	ITMO	ITMO	MASU
		UiT	MASU		MASU	PetrSU
		ITMO				
		MASU				

The first option as a **lead coach** is to demonstrate your own organizational skills. All students went through a multi-stage selection: first, an interview at their university, according to the results of which applicants were admitted to the second stage. At the second stage, interviews with students were already conducted by

representatives from other universities. Only after that, the final lists of participants were drawn up, distributed according to the cases of the commissioners. All students were motivated, familiar with the case, ready to work on solving the stated problem. The most important thing was to agree, choose a solution that would suit all team members, correctly assign roles and tasks, and timely monitor their implementation. It was not about our teamwork, as Dolgov (2020, 38) described: “the team members are focused on the leader in the singular, who sees a goal in front of him, when protects the team from the "external environment" and bears personal responsibility for organizing an effective interaction. The team, in this case, performs the function of assistants, at best, the followers.” All the steps in our teamwork were made upon communication and agreement. The help of a co-coach has always been essential and meaningful.

The second option as a **co-coach** is rather more familiar to the working techniques of partners from Finland and Norway. For me, it is more important from the point of view of improving my own skills, since as a result of such work, I managed to look differently at the organization of the student team's work, see different approaches and accents. This is an invaluable experience, and this is the strength of the international project.

Both options did not cause any difficulties, since all **relations between coaches** were built exclusively on a voluntary basis, in compliance with the interests of each side. In fact, all decisions were made by agreement. The coaches did not even have to coordinate their actions separately from the students. The advantage of agile technologies is in open design work. When all issues are resolved in a general meeting (team members and both coaches), this saves time greatly.

CONCLUSION

Being a coach in an international student team is a positive experience, thanks to which it was possible to work out institutional interactions related to the fact that both coaches and students were gathered from different countries. Despite the common goal that unites all representatives, each nation has its own cultural characteristics and peculiarities of the project approach in working together. That is why the cooperation of two coaches from different countries per team was a useful decision, which allowed **increasing professional skills** of all parties.

REFERENCES

Dolgov, M. V. 2020. Defining the concept and attributes of a team. Model 5F: scenarios for transforming a group into a team. Personality: resources and potential (2020) 06:34-44. Accessed on 25.8.2021 https://science.potentiales.ru/content/issues/2020.06/issue2020.06_art13424156.pdf.

Heinrich, W., Louson, E., Blommel, C., Green, A. 2020. Who Coaches the Coaches? The Development of a Coaching Model for Experiential Learning. Innovative Higher Education (2021) 46:357–375. Accessed on 24.8.2021 https://doi.org/10.1007/s10755-020-09537-3.

Niculina, N., Berezina, S. & Shashkina, M. 2018. The Use of Coaching in the Educational Master Program. Economic Security Bulletin (2018) №3:240-243. Accessed on 23.8.2021 https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/ispolzovanie-kouchinga-v-obrazovatelnoy-magisterskoy-programme.

Niculina, N., Berezina, S. & Ushakov, I. 2019. Essence and Role of Coaching in Education. Education. Science. Educational frames (2019) №3: 165-169. Accessed on 24.8.2021 https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/suschnost-i-rol-kouchinga-v-obrazovanii-i-vospitanii/viewer.

Layout element: TOP 3

- A coach is able to unite a team of students from different universities, different countries, assign roles, build communications, help participants comprehend the problem, set a goal, outline a work plan, and understands the pain of the business.
- The coach's task is to motivate the disappointed students, to encourage them to find maybe a slightly simpler solution than they would like, but which the commissioner can definitely apply, to be implement right away, and not sometime in the boundless future.
- The cooperation of two coaches from different countries per team was a useful decision, which allowed in increasing professional skills of all parties.

Petri Hannula

Digital Communication in BRIDGE Teams

Digital communication tools made teamwork possible in the BRIDGE project. We had ideas for teams from companies, which were located in the BRIDGE -project region. Multinational and multitalented teams created proposals which were presented to companies. Teams met a couple of times but most of the work was done online from each team members home location. That is the main reason digital communication tools were mandatory and important part of the BRIDGE project. We had multinational and multitalented teams also in coaching and organizing things. From the beginning we had sharp vision, that teams should be able to continue working together from beginning to end even though team members are all over the BRIDGE project region.

In the BRIDGE project communication between teams and team members was crucial. Each team member brings into the team their own special expertise. To make the best result and use of talent, the team must have common meeting place during project work.

In 2021 a huge amount of digital communication tools are made available on market. Communication tools make it possible to communicate and work on real-time as a team. Team members can share their thoughts and ideas and work together for the team goal. But when the BRIDGE project started, there was different toolset in use, than in 2021. During the BRIDGE project journey, we have tested several digital communication tools and systems on market to make communication between team members as effortless as possible.

While finding best solution for communication we noticed several problems that needed to be solved. Schools and countries have different communication tools in daily use. Users used to communicate using some certain tool and would rather stay with the tool they have used, rather than change it to something else. Some users use Whatsapp, Viber, Telegram, text messages, Teams, Google meet, Zoom, Mattermost, Adobe Connect, etc. Sometimes even laws and regulations cause waves, that needs to be taken into count when selecting solution for communication. First coaches meeting was organized on Skype (Figure 1), which was familiar to all members.

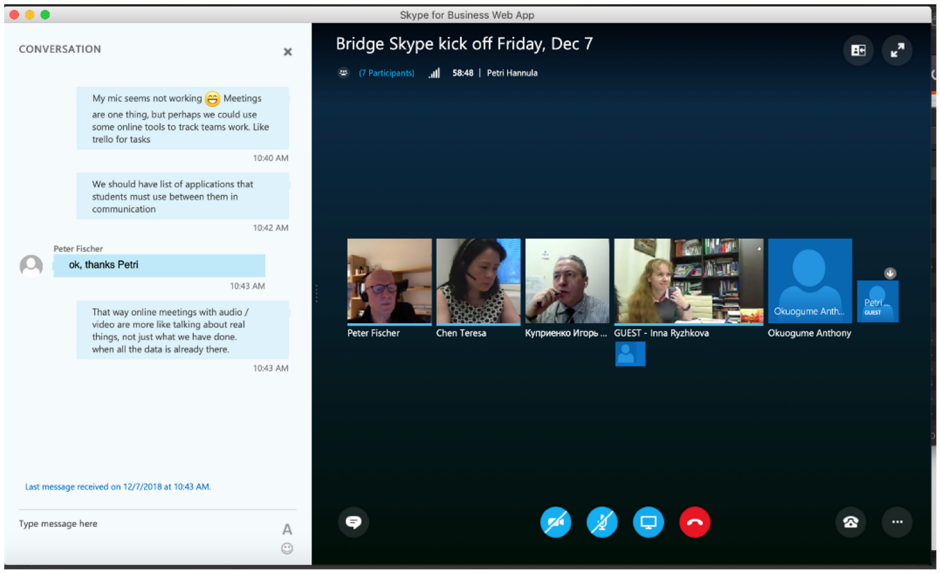

Figure 1. At beginning of the BRIDGE project common ground was found from Skype

DEFINING NEEDED FEATURES

Communication between people in the BRIDGE project appears in several forms. Team members need to talk among themselves, teams need to communicate between other teams, coaches need to communicate to teams, teams need to communicate to coaches, teams talk with commissioners, commissioners talk to coaches...etc. There were so many needs and many of those needs needed to be answered. Instead of long planning phase we decided to start testing tools one by one to find best solution that fulfills most of the needs. Coaches first met via Skype. But Skype was already at end of its path. We needed to find other tools to be used.

FINDING CORRECT COMMUNICATION TOOL

The first tool we tested with project groups was Slack. Slack was easy to learn. The problem was that voice audio and video was not possible to use for communication. In Slack we could create channels for teams. Slack had quite an easy learning curve for students, coaches and commissioners. Slack is used by quite many companies and organisations. That is why we assumed, that Slack would be perfect solution in the BRIDGE project as well. There were quite many positive things. Adding users into project was simple, defining teams was a quick process, intuitive to use. On the negative side we found out that audio and video communication was an essential feature for teams to communicate efficiently. With Slack we also found it quite difficult to meet all criteria related to data owning. GDPR conditions must be satisfied. With Slack we weren't sure who has access to files, discussions, and meeting details. We needed to know where data is located. This security issue was a drawback that lead us to find other solutions.

The next tool we took in use during second project session was Mattermost (Figure 2). Mattermost is an open-source tool that can be installed to organizations server. This makes data management much easier compared to Slack. With Mattermost we know who has access to data, when data is accessed and most importantly we know where data is stored.

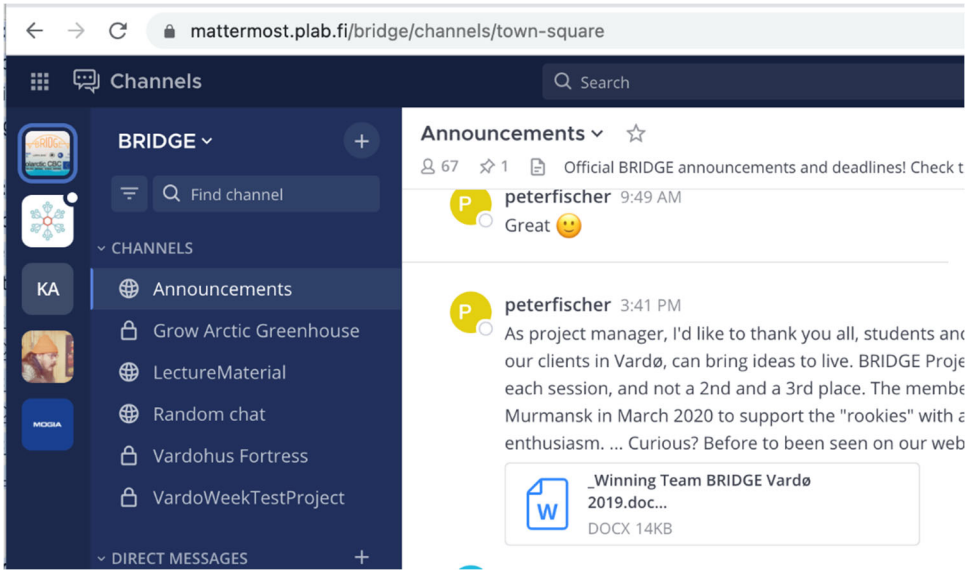

Figure 2. Mattermost was tested second digital communication tool. It was running on our own server.

But with Mattermost one of main problems still existed. There was no effortless way to initialize communication between team members to use audio and video during sessions. Users could talk via chat messages, they could share files, images, even videos, but if there was a need to talk with audio or video connection, the user needed to jump to other tools (phone, Google meet, Skype, etc). With Mattermost the learning curve was a lot higher than with Slack. Coaches had challenging times to find teams, find discussions between teams and topics. Even signing in was sometime problematic.

While testing Mattermost we noticed all our users wanted to be able to use their mobile phones as well. Mattermost is supporting mobiles quite well, but installing and configuring everything was taking too much effort from technical support team. Almost everyone had some sort of difficulties.

After second exhausting testing period of tools, we finally had quite a decent list of features that we absolutely wanted from a communication tool.

MS TEAMS AS SOLUTION

Now when we know what we needed, we just listed all features. Comparing to solutions became a lot easier. Slack and Mattermost did not provide usability and features, that were mandatory for the BRIDGE coaching teams and students. At this point Microsoft Teams was in use at Lapland University of Applied Sciences. Lapland UAS coaches had some experience with MS Teams, and we felt that this might solve most of the problems we were facing with other solutions. There was even agreement about data management, so we actually know where data is located.

MS Teams is a handy communication tool which provides huge amount to possibilities. We could have one team for all projects and participants. We could divide them into different groups (Figure 3), but we could still talk with everyone. With MS Teams it was possible to have quick voice/video meetings and organize meetings using calendar. We could record lectures and students had one tool where they could keep their files and work together at same time. One of great benefits is that MS Teams could organize meeting and work at the same time with PowerPoint, or word document; together.

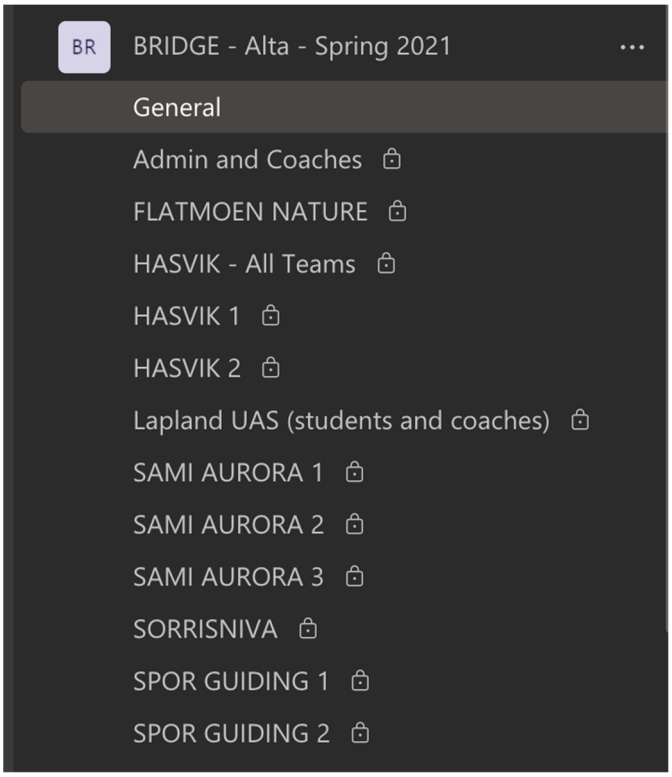

Figure 3. Students had general team channel available for all and private team where only team members and coaches had access. Admins and coaches had their own private meeting area.

Coaches' meetings were well organized inside teams. All coaches' meetings were inside the same team channel which was private. In the same way as students' teams were in their own channels.

Slack, Mattermost and MS Teams had exellent statistic views (Figure 4). Via analytic tools it's possible to follow how and when students are actually working with the project. Basically this gives good opportunity to contact teams in early phase if they are facing problems. One of most common problems between project teams is lack of communication.

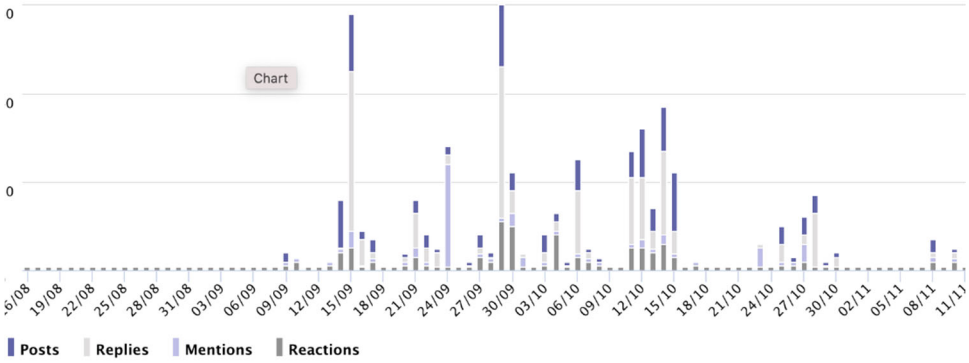

Figure 4. Following team activity is possible using analysing tools

MS Teams was decided to be one of our main tools for the rest of the project. Next, the focus was to put the best tool in use. We needed to train students, coaches and commissioners to use teams. Even if the tool itself is quite intuitive and self-explanatory, still there is a need for tutorials. Technical team created normal MS Teams meeting and we recorded and explained how all features work (Figure 5). The benefit of the video is that it's usable at any time. We didn't want to have separate lecture sessions, because teams might need those tips at some specific time.

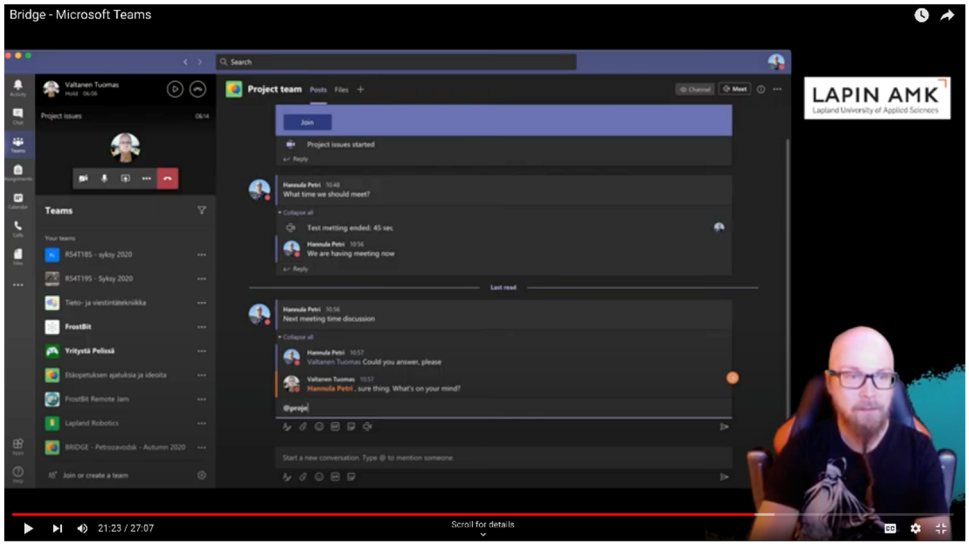

Figure 5. Teaching Teams in 27 minutes using YouTube intro video

CONCLUSION

Communication is a key element to succeed in teamwork. Testing based communication tool selection process is quite a challenge for all participants, but it leads to good end results. All coaches are quite well trained to use MS Teams efficiently. Plenty of experiences are gained about good and bad features in communication tools. The important thing is that we were all part of the selection process. MS Teams was able to handle most of the feature needs that we had as a project. Based on student feedback, we have developed through BRIDGE project, and we were able to find excellent solution to establish communication between team members.

Layout element: TOP 3

- Communication is key to success in teamwork. When working in various locations teams need tools, that everyone can use efficiently. In BRIDGE project there was several teams like coaches, students and commissioners.
- All teams are unique, and all projects have their own unique communication challenges. If digital communication tool tackles most of them, then it's usable.
- Testing based approach leads to good knowledge about tools, their strengths and weaknesses and it leads to better selection than long specification about all needed features.

Peter Fischer
Minttu Merivirta

Conclusion

The central intention of BRIDGE was to make competence and innovation brokering through university partnership a permanent and daily available option for small companies, especially in rural areas. Did the project achieve this goal? The answer is yes, partially. The learning environment developed by BRIDGE, including the online communication platform, was described in articles of the publication. It has proved to be an excellent tool for collaboration at all levels, between companies, teachers and administration, and students.

SUMMARY OF THE RESULTS

This publication consists of articles written by the key members of the BRIDGE project group. They represent expertise in various areas and have highlighted their knowledge and experience each in their own article, consequently sharing very valuable insight on designing and organizing multicultural and multidimensional online learning platform. We want to summarize the central findings and best practices presented in the different articles.

Benefits for the HEI students

Yulia Shestova addressed the issue of developing students' intercultural competences by short-term academic mobility programs such as BRIDGE. She noted that the BRIDGE project has been effective in developing students' multicultural teamwork skills, communication skills, cultural self-awareness and openness to other cultures. Thus, Shestova highlighted that projects like this equip students with the competences, knowledge and skills that employers require from university graduates to work effectively in the multinational environment. These skills were still developed although the actual mobility was partly canceled due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Anthony Okuogume also pointed out that BRIDGE as a project is a good example of education delivered and implemented in practice through inter-universities collaborations and international digital cooperative learning. According to Okuogume, the idea was to develop students' business knowledge and most crucially, their business development competences, and this would improve employability as students are equipped with the right competences that meets working life requirements. He further states that the BRIDGE project was a source of innovation for participating local companies of the Barents region.

In her article, Oksana Prokhorova presented the "case method" technique as a central learning method in the BRIDGE project. It is very suitable for more advanced level business case solving, not only tackling economic problems but also developing

students' soft skills and cross-cultural communication skills. Prokhorova states that this kind of "case method" technique could be easily integrated into international educational projects such as BRIDGE. As an example, she mentions this technique's versatility and effectiveness in implementing digital marketing tools and teamwork platform.

Minttu Merivirta discussed the importance of getting feedback and improving processes according to it. In the BRIDGE project, feedback from the participants was asked after each session, and Merivirta focused on the student feedback in her article. This feedback showed that multicultural teamwork has challenges and opportunities for personal growth, and this can be supported by sufficient coaching as well as by giving students freedom to guide the process themselves. Students' self-motivation and language skills proved to be vital aspects when working in multicultural teams online. The characteristics developed within the project could be essential in students' future employment.

Learning outcomes concerning online communication

In Tuomas Valtanen's article, the starting point was that suitable digital tools and platforms are necessary in providing students, coaches and commissioners an efficient, remote working environment. As Valtanen has been in charge of developing the online business communication platform during the BRIDGE project, his article covered widely different aspects that has to be considered in organizing technical functionality of this kind of platform. He therefore states that an effective online project session indeed requires not only suitable digital tools but preparation and management as well. For gaining the best overall learning experience for students, Valtanen noticed that it's important to involve also case commissioners to simultaneous discussions in the chosen platforms.

Ani Ruusila raised up issues concerning digital communication with students in general and especially students' digital communication tools from the perspective of the BRIDGE project. According to her research results, the students used mostly MS Teams in their digital communication. Also WhatsApp/Signal, Email and Google hangout were used quite frequently. Furthermore, Ruusila noted that student commitment for the project was good, as most of them used more than an hour for meetings at time and most at least half an hour per meeting. However, she also highlighted that despite students' communication with online tools is natural, online connections can be challenging – especially when in most of the sessions online communication was the only communication between students, coaches nd commissioners.

As Petri Hannula concentrated on the selection process of the of online communication tools used in the BRIDGE project, his main observation was that testing based approach leads to wider understanding of variety of different tools and hence leads to a better choices in selection. He further noted that all teams are unique and have different communication challenges. Although a digital communication tool does not tackle every challenge, if it solves most of the, then it's usable.

Benefits of the institutional cooperation

Teresa Chen described in her article how common goals were collaboratively achieved by successful universities' partnering in the BRIDGE project. This enabled vast knowledge and skill sharing of different stakeholders in the project. Chen highlighted that this multidisciplinary expertise provided by HEI cooperation was beneficial tool for young graduates as well as the collaboration for knowledge creation was helpful in reducing possible knowledge gap that exists among freshmen.

In her article, Alla Raspopova talked about the coaching system that was introduced in the BRIDGE project. Raspopova explained how international interaction could be seen in different levels: between students inside a team, between coaches working in the same team, between coaches and students and between student, coaches and commissioners. She mainly focused on the interaction between lead coach and co-coach as well coaches and students, and pointed out that the coach's task is to motivate, encourage and guide a student team. Raspopova further noted that the cooperation of two coaches from different countries in one team allowed all parties to increase their professional skills.

Natalia Pulakka brought out that visibility is not only essential part of businesses' marketing strategies but projects as well. Data concerning the BRIDGE project's communication and visibility activities from 2019 to 2021 showed that most of the marketing has been done online, either in social media or websites. Pulakka also noted that there is a wide range of methods for increasing company visibility and the process is ongoing and requires a lot of resources. In a project like BRIDGE, these kind of communication activities are usually part of the central tasks demanded by the financier, which gives better resources and opportunities to analyze the results and develop marketing.

Development of the Barents region

Esa Jauhola demonstrated that the BRIDGE project has built a wide network including universities, teachers, companies, students and regions. He concluded that "positive attitude, curiosity, and effective communication skills are the key to succeed in the future working life". This same view was an overall theme of this publication throughout the articles which aimed for encouraging different stakeholders (HEIs, students, SMEs) to actively take part in international development projects. Jauhola further highlighted that it's vital for the Barents region that especially young generation wants to know the regional and business cultures of the area, and furthermore, want to build networks within it. Jauhola calls for a joint, sustainable hub i.e. ecosystem that will continue the development work in the future. His vision is a joint/double degree or at least a joint module which covers all three focus areas of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council's agenda (environment, youth and education, logistics).

Tatiana Tokareva and Igor Kupienko also talked about regional development and focused on good practices and lessons learned in the BRIDGE project concerning

academic cross-border cooperation. They state that the key word for future cooperation is motivation, and this motivation includes all stakeholders i.e. companies, students and universities. Tokareva and Kupienko concluded that future employers may not primarily seek academic knowledge but practical skills and soft skills, which the participants of the BRIDGE project were able to acquire and develop while working in interdisciplinary, inter-university and international student teams.

Peter Fischer's article emphasized the value of having international project-based learning environments in the universities' curricula. He pointed out that integrated projects are the prerequisite for stable partnership between HEI and local businesses, which ultimately leads into enhancing graduates' employability. Fischer's article summarized the overall objects of the BRIDGE project and stated that institutional support is needed in enabling the continuation of these kinds of projects after the externally financed period. It's important, that HEIs recognize the possibilities that this kind of international cooperation can provide for the institutes of the Arctic Barents region as well as the individual students.

NOTES FOR THE FUTURE

To make firms aware of this resource-saving access to new knowledge and creativity, marketing measures need to be made. For this reason, at least one of the BRIDGE partners is already testing an appropriate distribution channel. The meeting platform, which must be accessible from both sides (HEI and SME) should become a subject of frequent practice.

The project structure of BRIDGE allowed only a one-time participation of the companies. Therefore, the objective to generate economic growth by BRIDGE remains a valuable approach yet must involve firms continuously in order to achieve lasting results. Universities must create stable relationships with local firms and invite them to collaborate regularly.

As demanded by companies, many of the participating exam candidates and pre-graduates have achieved a more realistic insight into job opportunities, not only in large cities. Some students continued their work for case companies after the design session was closed, especially in smaller communities in the region. A few others participated in several sessions to deepen their project-based learning experience.

Moreover, students have had valuable experience with regard to common challenges in business life. The most active ones could undoubtedly enhance their qualification as future employees. They could learn that effective communication with a variety of partners is not a matter of course. They understood that they must develop ideas in accordance with customer requirements. And in addition to many challenges, they experienced the joy of successful interaction with peers from many cultures.

WHAT'S NEXT?

BRIDGE has been a development project. We improved the learning environment, new quality features were added, and general challenges were revealed. So which

traits ought to be considered in comparable projects? Which ideas are worth being implemented in a BRIDGE-like enterprise? We can highlight some relevant findings. First, embedding the project work into curricula can increase the commitment of participants and facilitate the project management within university departments.

Second, BRIDGE involved a large number of companies in order to gain a variety of insights. It is recommended to limit the number, yet to cooperate with firms regularly. Mutual awareness of each other through frequent consultations for example, on appropriate business challenges is one possible approach. Another one to be considered is the implementation of individual student assessments by companies. Graduate candidates can benefit from such a kind of employability evaluation.

Third, in order to increase the quality of business proposals, projects must focus more on the preparation of participants. Training sessions are probably only one method among others.

Furthermore, the quality of suggested business solutions argues for offering the project only to bachelor's during their last year of study or to master students. Their higher level of basic knowledge can cause a more sustainable and self-reflected learning outcome and one can assume an advanced degree of personal motivation related to future employment. Elements of competition and cooperation between teams working on the same assignment will also increase the benefit for companies.

Finally, small companies in the northern periphery depend on global connectivity. Among them are tourism firms, smart city networks, movie makers, and sports event management. Communication, even in virtual meeting rooms, was still too analogue-like in BRIDGE. Working simultaneously in the cloud requires a different mental state. Students will learn to create and fail under the eyes of their partners. In this sense, creative teamwork has great development potential.

AT THE FINISH LINE

Numerous innovation platforms worldwide bring together companies and students. Most of them work for post-graduates. They apply direct competition targeting complex products and service solutions. BRIDGE, on the other hand, is effective at a novice level for undergraduates. Yet, BRIDGE also addresses the complexity of internationalization, multidisciplinary practice, remote teamwork, and self-efficacy concerning future jobs.

The Covid-19 pandemic forced the project to limit teamwork to pure online communication. However, what has proven to be a downside made aware of opportunities. The lack of physical encounters over several project sessions saved resources and costly trips. For short-term collaboration in problem solving, this "slim" version seems even more realistic.

In line with global trends and considering our experiences and institutional relevant conclusions from the BRIDGE experiment, similar projects can undoubtedly be carried out with lower use of resources and with less impact on the environment in the future.

Authors

Teresa Chen is a Senior Lecturer at, and coordinated the BRIDGE project for, Lapland University of Applied Sciences. She also functioned as a coach throughout the project and hosted the Tornio session during spring 2019.

Peter Fischer is an Assistant professor at UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Department of Tourism and Northern Studies. He has been teaching Entrepreneurship and Innovation studies and was the BRIDGE Project Manager and Lead Partner representative. He coached students in BRIDGE and was responsible for two Norwegian BRIDGE sessions in Vardø and Alta.

Petri Hannula is a fulltime lecturer at Lapland University of Applied Sciences. His main expertise is in game technology. He was a coach in the BRIDGE project and guided in programming and technical solutions. In the project he also worked with digital communication tools.

Esa Jauhola is a Principal Lecturer at Lapland UAS. His main responsibility is the coordination of a master degree programme in Digital Business Management. He has been active in several educational Barents projects since 1990's, including the BRIDGE project.

Igor Kuprienko, Head of Project Development Division, ITMO University. Igor was one of the designers of the BRIDGE project and actively involved in the mentoring of students' teams. He specializes in drafting and implementing the interdisciplinary projects. His division is a part of Technology Centre of ITMO University, which is contributing to the entrepreneurial activities of the university.

Minttu Merivirta is a Senior Lecturer of Finnish language and communications at Lapland University of Applied Sciences. She has worked in national and international projects as an editor of publications, which was her role in the BRIDGE project as well.

Atufe Anthony Okuogume works as a Senior Lecturer in Digital Business Management at the Digital Solution Unit of Lapland University of Applied Sciences. He is a digital technology enthusiast and has key interests in digital business, digital customer experience, innovation and digital entrepreneurship and startups.

Oksana Prokhorova is an Associate Professor of Economic Theory and Management Department at the Institute of Economics and Law at Petrozavodsk State University, teaches and conducts research in the fields of marketing, project management, microeconomics and cross-border cooperation. She fulfilled the roles of the BRIDGE Project Coordinator from PetrSU and the Coach or Co-Coach of international student teams in solving cases. She was responsible for the 4th BRIDGE online session in Autumn 2020 hosted by Petrozavodsk State University.

Natalia Pulakka, Project Manager at Lapland UAS, Digital Solutions Expertise Group. As assistant in the BRIDGE she was responsible for promoting the project within Lapland UAS.

Alla Raspopova is an Associate Professor of the Economics and Management Department, Head of the Youth Center for Technological and Social Entrepreneurship at Murmansk Arctic State University, teaches Finance and Project Management, conducts research in Entrepreneurship Development, and was the coach of the international students' teams in the BRIDGE project.

Ani Ruusila is a Senior Lecturer of information processing at Lapland UAS. She participated in BRIDGE project as a coach and instructed in technical areas and digitalization.

Yulia Shestova is the Head of International Cooperation Office at Murmansk Arctic State University (MASU). Her research interests include internationalization of higher education, student academic mobility and intercultural competence development. She has worked as a BRIDGE project manager at MASU.

Tatiana Tokareva, Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Technological Management and Innovations, ITMO University. She is leading the international cooperation and project management at the Faculty. The education and training processes of the Faculty are practice-oriented and include the cooperation with Russian and international partners from the business community, government bodies, public organizations and other Institutions.

Tuomas Valtanen is a Project Manager at FrostBit Software Lab, Lapland University of Applied Sciences, who manages, designs and implements web and mobile software projects as well as educates on various subjects related to software development. He was responsible for managing the selected communication and collaboration platforms throughout the BRIDGE project in each semester.

Takakansiteksti

The BRIDGE project's objective has been to facilitate youth employment and economic growth. The goal was to develop a learning environment as a sustainable platform for the interaction of local companies and HEI which benefits both innovating business and education.

Over three years, 2018-2021, teachers and staff from five universities in Russia, Finland and Norway established bonds for innovation and education in the Arctic North of Europe. More than 50 small private and public firms participated assigning around 250 students with business life challenges.

In this publication the BRIDGE project team shares their knowledge and experiences gained through the years. The focus of the articles is on the main three goals of BRIDGE: 1) Growth development of businesses in the Barents region, 2) Employability of the students, and 3) Institutional interactions.