

Case Studies Networked Virtual Business Planning: Tallinn University Case

Sirje Virkus
Tallinn University
Tallinn, Estonia

Entrepreneurship Training

- Virtual Entrepreneurship training was integrated into DILL Master Programme in Tallinn University
- DILL is an Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Programme on Digital Library Learning

DILL

- DILL has three partners:
 - Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences, Norway (coordinator)
 - Parma University, Italy (partner)
 - Tallinn University, Estonia (partner)

DILL

DILL students are in Tallinn University in their second semester and take 2 modules:

- Information & Knowledge Management (15 ECTS)
- Human Resource Management (15 ECTS)

Entrepreneurship Seminar on European Virtual Venturing (EVV)

- A virtual collaboration initiative called *European Virtual Venturing* (4 ECTS) was organized between Tallinn University in Estonia and *Ecole supérieure d'Informatique, réseaux et systèmes d'information* (ITIN) (Cergy-Pontoise) in France

EVV seminar aimed

- to develop knowledge and skills that would help to understand the value, nature and current practice of entrepreneurship
- to improve students' awareness of and competence in virtual teamwork
- to enhance students' intercultural understanding.

Course Organization

- EVV was delivered within HRM Module
- took place in March and consisted of ten sessions during ten days
- Each session consisted of :
 - a synchronous cross-university video lecture of two hours (teachers from France and Estonia) and followed by
- four hours students' teamwork per session.

Course Organization

- During students' teamwork sessions teachers were available for face-to-face consultancy in France and Estonia for local students and via Skype for partners as well.
- Student teams were built according to the principle that every team should consist of 6-7 students – 3-4 from ITIN (France) and 3-4 from DILL/TLU (Estonia).

Technology

- The Polycom VSX 7000 was used for video conferencing; that combines top-quality audio and video in a single set-top system that's easy to use and manage for anyone.
- For group work students used mostly Skype, MSN and e-mails as communication tools.
- Moodle was used as the virtual learning environment for the delivery of course materials.
- Wiki was used for joint project work.

Final Product

- Students applied knowledge and skills acquired during the seminar into the final product – a comprehensive business plan.
- They prepared the business plan in teams during three week period.

Final Product

- The business plan consisted of
 - a presentation of the idea of a company
 - product/service description with a marketing and HRM plan
 - a financial description.
- The final product was presented in a virtual classroom for the fellow students and teachers who were acting as possible investors during the final session in France and Estonia.

Final Product

- Student teams came out with eight companies (Food2Home, Remind´Я, Libadus, Colorblind, GravityNews, Cookoo, Virtual Dressing, Diin) and developed marketing and HRM plans for these companies, including product/service and financial descriptions.

Students' Feedback

- A survey using simple questionnaire was used. The questionnaire consisted of 63 questions/focus group interviews
- A survey covered different aspects of the seminar (objectives and content, assignments, assessment, learning process, tutoring, pedagogical approach, learning environment, international collaboration, technical support, management and the seminar in general).

Results

- Generally the EVV seminar was well received
- Most students declared that they have learned new skills
- Most topics were regarded as relevant, some students found financial aspects as less relevant

Problematic Aspects

- Some students indicated that their previous knowledge or no knowledge in that field was an obstacle being active partners in the team
- Some topics like finance seemed to be too complicated for some students
- The time was a bit too short and the work during three weeks too intensive – caused by the way of working of ITIN

New Aspects

- Virtual mobility was integrated into the regular course and students earned credits (4 ECTS)
- Very diverse student group participated in this initiative (students from 15 countries)
- Joint product development in interdisciplinary teams
- Integration of different media and technology

Lessons Learned

- More reasonable time management
- Integration of Entrepreneurship topics better with DILL programme
- Better preparation of DILL students before the seminar