

## EM-iDEA Conference Bordeaux - 12 July 2013

### Summary of Parallel Session 2 - How to support Joint International Programmes?

Chair: Prof. Philippe Gourbesville, University of Nice - Sophia Antipolis, member of the EM-iDEA project and of the ProDeJIP Executive Committee

Rapporteur: Mr. Andries Verspeeten, Ghent University, member of the EM-iDEA project

*[to be read together with the accompanying slides containing requested support topics]*

The session was set-up to gather input from the audience, in particular as a starting point of the ProDeJIP Working Group focusing on delivering support to joint programmes. The chair noted down the reactions from the audience into a PPT which was projected during the session as a guide and memory aide throughout the session. Finding priorities was the aim. What to include, what not and why?

At the start of the session inevitably the topic of defining joint programmes was touched upon. In other words, to whom is support to be provided. Participants from Belgrade gave insight into the ever-lasting discussion on this topic which they are confronted with. From their point of view, a clear and internationally widely accepted definition would be most welcome. It would be helpful in the establishment of the legislative framework in Serbia.

Philippe Gourbesville replied that the Association's stance is to take a wide definition, i.e. wider than the fully integrated joint degree programme, also including programmes which limit their ambition to double or multiple degree schemes. The restriction would be that the collaboration has to take place on an international level. The presence of a legal framework clearly allowing for the international awarding of a double and/or joint degree is a condition.

Returning to what is not in scope, the conclusion was made that cooperation schemes which limit themselves to the 'mere' exchange of students, are not the playing field of the Association. A higher level of integration needs to be strived for, in other words there is a wish to integrate more strongly on the pedagogic level. This description was challenged by the audience as being too vague. The opinion was voiced to rather use a reference to the joint development of learning outcomes. However, the joint development of a single course or a Summer School is not within scope as it is too limited: the study programme remains the operating basis.

A member of the audience asked whether interdisciplinarity is a condition for programmes in order to be taken into account by the Association (interdisciplinarity is not self-evident in large parts of Europe where Faculties enjoy great autonomy). This was responded to as a welcome characteristic, but certainly not as a condition.

(Note from the rapporteur: among some participants there appears to be a difference in understanding of double degree programmes, especially if different fields of study are involved. In such cases the aim of a double degree programme is sometimes understood as a mere way to consecutively obtain two different diplomas – even within different fields - in a reduced period of study, i.e. through the exemption of certain courses on the programme of the second study programme involved. This type of collaboration is not what the Association has in mind. An intensive

collaboration and integration of learning outcomes should remain the prime objective, whereby the international component creates added value, i.e. the 'total is more than the mere sum of the individual components'.)

Turning to the more mundane topic of the registration practicalities, which is however closely linked to the degree-awarding topic, the audience was confronted with the question whether participation in a double or joint degree programme also entails compulsory registration in all participating institutions, or merely in one, or rather in those institutions visited by the student? While no direct answer was provided by the audience, the discussion moved to the topic of the coordinating institution. According to the chair, it cannot be demanded that double/joint degree programmes establish an overarching unit for coordinating purposes.

Returning back to the topic of defining the support scope of the Association, the question was asked from the audience whether the Association would limit itself to 'Erasmus Mundus-style' consortia, i.e. with the participation of at least three universities in three different countries. The Chair answered that this would be too restrictive, i.e. that also international partnerships with only two partners are welcome, as these can benefit from the lessons learned by partnerships which are more ambitious in numbers.

To ease discussion a member of the audience called for a clear distinction of the way the degree programme itself is set-up on the one hand and the way it is being managed on the other, even though a cross-over between these two topics is evident and support can be provided to both aspects.

At this point the discussion came back to the topic of interdisciplinarity. The Chair pointed out that the aim of the Association is to look at the concept of joint programmes. It is there for discussing the mechanisms, but will not interfere with the content. However, as pointed out by a member of the audience, the integration of joint programmes, whereas not necessarily demanding interdisciplinarity, does entail complementarity. This brings about a mutual enrichment for both staff and students.

Turning to the point of development and sustainability, a domain in which the Association might play a supportive role, the audience was confronted with the question 'what is needed?'. The predictable unanimous answer from the audience: "funding!" The question why, was widely answered with "for grants". However, a critical voice in the audience brought forward that funding is not the most relevant issue here (aside from funding for scholarships), but institutional integration is: after all, shouldn't all programmes be able to fund the overarching management elements themselves, if necessary through a commitment of the institutions involved?

The Chair also challenged the audience by posing the question whether they see these joint study programmes as projects – i.e. collaborations of a temporary nature - or as a 'permanent' element, like we consider study programmes on a national level? The consensus is to strive for permanent successful collaborations (cf. also the EC's stress on the sustainability of EM projects). This of course has an impact on how support needs to be provided.

Changing the approach, the Chair asked the audience how a joint study programme can be successful. What defines success? The numbers of students registering and graduating are important

indicators, but also their levels of satisfaction and their employability. Excellency and innovation were suggested by members of the audience, but not everybody agreed on that. The involvement of the professional market in the development of the programme was suggested. To avoid a restriction to mere market terms, this was rephrased to 'matching to societal needs'.

[At this point, the first session came to an end. Part of the audience stayed, while others left or joined the session. The discussions in the first session were recapitulated by means of the slides]

It was remarked that increasing the ability in adapting to international environments is one of the added values or success factors of joint international programmes.

Continuing the discussion on support requested/needed, a member of the audience touched upon marketing/promotion needs. His institution is facing difficulties in attracting students from outside the EU. A mere promotion budget increase will not remedy this, but an efficient marketing strategy will. The Chair then turned to the audience with the question who is best placed for this? The EC, the institution, the programme or the satisfied customer? The audience appears to be of opinion that a good-functioning partnership becomes a sign of quality itself. Nevertheless, there needs to be a sufficient institutional backing, reinforcing the integration, according to one audience member.

Sidetracking to the role of companies, the evident remark was made that not all study programmes have industry internships, this being highly dependent on the subject area.

The chair confronted the audience with the question whether the EC needs to promote joint programmes as something typical, something their 'brand' is linked to? The audience feels there is a difference here between the points of view of staff on the one hand and students on the other. Apparently the latter don't care too much whether the programme they're taking is EU-branded or not. Additionally, the Association does not limit its field of play to EU-funded programmes only. It is good if the EU is there, but it isn't a precondition for the setting-up of these programmes. What then about the EU-dimension? Whilst we cannot rely on the EC alone to do our promotion, shouldn't the consortia themselves carry the EU spirit? Two positions appear to be juxtaposed: one is that it was all about joint degrees right from the start when EM was set up - one only has to consider the impact in the national legislations – whereas another ascribes the success merely to the fact that large numbers of grants were coming along with the programme.

This brought back the topic of the grants (as a form of support). According to one member of the audience these are surely needed because part of the student population in the programmes comes from developing countries. Another member of the audience inverted the problem: aren't the tuition fees too high? This is indeed a major issue for the audience, but at the same time it should be acknowledged that it is one which is not exclusively tied to joint programmes. At this point a discussion arose on employability, the recruitment needs in STEM-programmes and global education needs. One audience member warns the Association not to remain too narrow-focused on joint degree programmes, but to always keep an eye on the ever-changing global context. The discussion then made an excursion to the topic of development cooperation. Grants for students from developing countries might be a necessity, but on the other hand the Chair questioned whether it can be defended that students are forced to return to their home country if the study programme of their choice was situated in a field which cannot be applied at home given the socio-economic circumstances. Or does this nevertheless bring an advantage to society?

The Chair brings into memory the origin of the Association and its goals. He restates the question as to what is needed: next follows a round in the audience which brings up most known 'classic' issues related to joint degree programmes, on the academic, legal and administrative level. Some of these issues are taken on board, others are dismissed as too general.

One additional problem raised by an audience member is the difference in salary between teaching staff at various locations possibly involved within one and the same joint programme. The Chair replies that this is a topic which cannot be covered by the Association, as it is too wide an issue.

The representative of ANIE, Mr. James Jowie, brings the point that many of the things which were brought up during the session and dismissed as no issue, are in the African context major issues. The advanced state some of the current joint programmes are in, should not draw away attention from the big global majority of programmes that do not even have the capacity to start up this type of collaboration. He argues that those programmes whose alumni do not return to their home countries, should assist partner institutions in those home countries in capacity building, e.g. through joint programming.

The Chair brings on a sensitive topic: how to assess the quality of your partner university? The audience comments that this is a practical issue in which the Association could consider playing a role in. Questioned about other support needs, the audience comes up with more topics, such as the admission procedures (national level vs. joint programme level), training in international competences and language skills for staff and students (but is this joint programme specific?), and coordinating staff funding. Here the Chair intervenes with the remark that in this case it could well be said that the institution is not taking its task at heart. However, it is a known issue which has come up earlier. A member of the audience states that the amount of support from the university will depend largely on whether the programmes came about bottom-up or top-down. The Chair states that now is the time to reverse the situation, notably that even though past success came through bottom-up initiatives, time has come to make strategic choices in a top-down fashion.

Coming to the conclusion of the session, the Chair asks about the end of joint programmes. Do they die a natural death? How do partner universities separate? Can the end be the result of an evaluation or a re-run of the needs analysis which can play a big role in the determination of sustainability. As a conclusion, a regular thorough evaluation of the opportunities is needed during programme lifetime, just as much as it is before its start-up.

## *Joint programme definition*

- International only (at least 2 countries) - national (may be...)
- Course integration & course coordination
- Registration in at least 2 universities to all universities
- Degrees: from 2 degrees to 1 joint degree
- Partnership agreement
- Identified procedure in each partner institution for managing joint programme
- Legal framework for double/joint degrees
- Accreditation/recognition procedure (mutual recognition)
- Multiple degrees (level 0) to Joint degree (level1)

## *Joint programme needs*

- Increase quality and paradigm shift
- **Institutional integration for joint programmes**  
(Institutional capacity)
- Academic quality assessment (partnership)
- Success: employability
- Programme definition matching needs of society (Market oriented)
- Excellency
- Clear added value (content of programme and adaption to international environments)

## *Joint programme supports*

- Institutional capacity
- Efficient marketing of joint programme (consortium driven , visibility of partnership & happy customers)
- Grants? for developing countries students (employability)
- Best practices/ examples (legal, administrative, pedagogic, DS, visas, ....)
- Dedicated staff
- Specific competences (teaching & administrative staff) – training & language qualification
- Evaluation on opportunity (stop/go)

## *Joint programme supports*

- Increase quality and paradigm shift