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TOOLKIT

**BEST PRACTICES IN THE MANAGEMENT OF AN
INTERNATIONAL PROJECT**

UNIVERSITY OF PERADENIYA

May 5th 2021

PROJECT INTRODUCTION



PROJECT TITLE: The INNOTAL project (Integrating Talent Development into Innovation Ecosystems in Higher Education)

- The INNOTAL project is implemented in the framework of the Erasmus+ Programme, Action: Capacity Building in Higher Education.
- The duration of the project is 36 months, starting in November 2017 and ending in October 2020.

FUNDING SCHEME

The INNOTAL project (ref. no.586227-EPP-1-2017-1-BG-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP) has been funded by the European Commission.

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PROJECT INTRODUCTION



PROJECT CONSORTIUM (PARTNERS & NATIONS)

- The project partnership involves 5 EU partners (from Bulgaria, Greece, Finland and the UK)
- 10 Partner Country universities: 4 from India, 2 from the Philippines, 2 from Nepal and 2 from Sri Lanka



PROJECT INTRODUCTION



MAIN OBJECTIVE

- The INNOTAL project aims to build the capacity of universities in the Philippines, Nepal, Sri Lanka and India to embed graduates' employability in their core activities and to facilitate the development of student talent through co-curricular and extracurricular innovation activities involving key stakeholders, with a view to contributing to youth employment, inclusive growth and sustainable development.



PROJECT INTRODUCTION



SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

- To support the uptake and mainstreaming of entrepreneurship education and innovation training in Partner Country universities and to promote the integration of talent development into research and innovation activities in collaboration with external stakeholders (enterprises, non-profits, public sector)
 - To create sustainable institutional structures and ICT tools enabling student co-creation in research and innovation and stakeholder co-creation in talent development
 - To build Partner Country universities' capacities for delivering innovation and entrepreneurship training in view of building students' employability skills
- Capacity building intervention



CHALLENGE & SOLUTIONS ADOPTED



Aspects	factors /actors/ causes, programme regulation	Solutions Adopted	Process used to address the solution
Time management and proper scheduling of activities and task	There were many reports to be submitted. Some of the project team members didn't contribute in time. Some Delays occurred.	Getting the help of a fulltime staff member to write some reports.	The staff payments allocated in the project were pooled together and that was used to pay the salary of the fulltime staff member recruited
Accomplishment of objectives and deliverables	There were issues with respect to final work packages (2020) as students were not in the university	Ongoing student activities related to the proposed project were linked with the INNOTAL and addressed the issue.	The Career Guidance unit has an annual graduate entrepreneurship project and the same was used as the INNOTAL project outcome
Communication difficulties with project partners	Could not participate only in one online meeting due to heavy thundering, lightening and power failure	A briefing was requested through Whatsapp.	Whatsapp briefing session with the Project leader.

CHALLENGE & SOLUTIONS ADOPTED



Aspects	factors /actors/ causes, programme regulation	Solutions Adopted	Process used to address the solution
External events preventing the accomplishment of main project 'objectives and implementation of its deliverables	Serious issues were there with respect to establishing a Laboratory Facility within the university using university approvals and own funding	The IRO made a proposal to use its own savings as the source of funding. Especial meeting was organized by the IRO director with the VC to get the approvals quickly.	Approvals: Pending approvals were granted by the Vice Chancellor to expedite the process. Construction was done but still there was a significant delay in completing the lab construction.
Equipment purchase	Long delays due to non-availability of selected items in the country and delays occurred due to import delays under pandemic.	This could not be prevented and requested extensions	Project time frame was extended.



CHALLENGE & SOLUTIONS ADOPTED



Aspects	factors /actors/ causes, programme regulation	Solutions Adopted	Process used to address the solution
Management of funds and budget	Regulations used by the University Finance Department and EU project were different. University never deviated from its own regulations due to auditing issues. Always delays happened.	We reached some of the officers who are good in advising easy ways of doing procurements.	Some delays were minimized by getting the approvals directly from the VC by limiting the total cost to the limit that VC can grant his permission.
	University Finance division never allowed us to call quotations (initiate procurement) without having sufficient funding/account balance.	We stopped claiming staff costs and saved that money for procurements to minimize delays.	Delayed the staff cost payments and used that money for priority procurements
	Change of Government's approval procedure at the middle of the project	Applied under new guidelines. But could not find a fair solution	A meeting with high level administrators in the government was held by the IRO to discuss the concern

SOLUTION ADOPTED



Lesson learnt	Whether the solution is the best practice	How it is explained
New projects should be started only after getting formal government approvals	This is the only legal way to get foreign funding for any project. Funding comes to the central bank of Sri Lanka will not be transferred to the university without the formal approvals.	This is the most critical point for all future projects. The process consume lot of time and acceleration is the challenge of the IROs. <u>Still struggling!!</u>
Incompatible project team members	There should be a mechanism to drop and add team members from the partner universities as some of them do not perform their work as expected.	If any team member is not contributing to the project as expected better to replace them with alternative members after proper communication.



SOLUTION ADOPTED



Lesson learnt	Whether the solution is the best practice	How it is explained
Project having building construction or developing physical spaces using local funding as a project component	Always look for available spaces and funding	Inclusion of new infrastructure development by the university as a component of a project is almost impossible within a short time frame. Always the team should plan to get the approvals to use an existing facility rather than building new.
Procurement delays	A dedicated officer from the financial admin should be requested to work on IRO projects to minimize delays.	After allocating one staff member from the Financial Management division, most of the procurements could be done without significant delays.





•"Let our advance worrying become
advance thinking and planning."
~ *Winston Churchill.*

THANK YOU.

•"It's a bad plan that admits of no modification." ~ Publilius
Syrus.

