

Workshop Report: IRO Services and Networking and Cooperation

Marrakech, 26th and 27th February, 2012

The following document represents a summary of the work carried out, some major conclusions and outputs of the TIES project workshop held in Marrakech, Kingdom of Morocco, in February 2012.

Day one: IRO Services

INTRODUCTION: The initial objective for this workshop was determined in the agenda as being: "The objective of this Workshop on IRO Services is to examine the correlation between activity and service offering, as well as planning for service set-up and execution. An expected output of the workshop will be a "minimum service set" to be determined by the partners". Most of this objective was accomplished, although the partners still need to agree on a final set of minimum services after the meeting. The workshop laid the groundwork for the partners to understand the strategic importance of their services, the resources needed, understand the function of the IRO within the institution, and undertake development exercises such as marketing. The workshop was conducted in a participative fashion to be able to share experiences, without recurring to hours of presentations and 'speeches'. This new approach seemed to be successful.

SESSION ONE: The workshop commenced with a presentation and speech from the host institution. The Vice-Chancellor made a short welcome speech for the participants, emphasising the importance of cooperation activities as a strategic tool for development plans in universities. He stated that education in developing and emerging countries is in need of assistance, and that cooperation is one of the key pillars of development. He congratulated the designers of the TIES programme for realising such an objective. With a short and interesting presentation, he showed the developmental goals and cooperation policy of his own institution.

Following this, Mrs. Michelle Grindle - workshop coordinator - explained the programme purpose and presented the invited speakers for the meeting: herself, from the Project Management Office at the University of Alicante, Ms. Inmaculada Madera, Vice-Chancellor of the UNAPEC in the Dominican Republic, and Mr. Gaspar Hernández from the University of

Alicante, former Director for Cooperation. She emphasised the importance of the participants' contributions and the intended practical nature of the workshop.

Finally, Prof. Karimba from the ENSIAS school of Engineering presented a detailed case study of a Mobility-oriented service and programme for students. The presentation showed a demand-led service development; demanded by the students and set in motion by the school to meet demand. The successful case study programme demonstrated the power of meeting demand and providing for expectations. Besides, Prof. Karimba also mentioned that this and other cooperation programmes represented a good practice of transferring research cooperation into academic cooperation with Swedish partners. The goal for the programme until 2020 was to reach a 20% level of mobility, and the presentation contained a detailed analysis of the challenges faced, and lessons learned. (*See presentation for more details*).

SESSION TWO: Configuring a vision. Following the introductory session, Ms. Inmaculada Madera took over the workshop facilitation to discuss the process of configuring a vision and mission for the international office with the partners. The mission and purpose of the IRO highly dictates the nature and range of the services offered, as well as how we interact with the rest of the home institution. With a group discussion exercise in which participation was lively, partners suggested different purposes and visions for the IRO, to which an consensual agreement was reached by all. The subsequent common vision created was as follows:

WHAT IS IT ABOUT?

1. Define **goals** and strategy & indicators for continuous improvement;
2. Raising **awareness** of international culture in institutions, integrating it into the institutional mission. We aim to bridge cultural gaps through the work of the IRO;
3. Become a **leader** in international education (national leader in some cases);
4. Create and enhance networking;
5. Establish links with partners of TIES & others;
6. Maintain established relations with agreements;
7. Create a Project Management Office inside the IRO as a service – encourage the participation in projects and raise awareness within the university community;
8. Promote, Increase and enhance mobility of staff and students;
9. Globalisation into internationalisation: Create equality between partners
10. Create conditions for human and institutional capacity building
11. Programme accreditation and international recognition (quality issues) – assist quality unit but not our central purpose.

Once a common vision was configured, the group reflected upon it and we saw that the vision was very centred on the IRO. We discussed that although this is important, the IRO is to be considered as an integral part of the larger institution (HEI) and, as a result, must have a matching and marriage with the overall goals and strategies of the parent institution. We are not only a service for external parties, but a part of the university community's vision and strategy and as such cannot be in conflict with it. Later, the mission was colour-coded according to distinct tasks and levels the component parts reflected, as can be seen above.

The different colours represent: Blue (Strategic Planning), Orange (Day-to-day activities), and Green (Cultural, community and capacity-building actions).

Following this, we discussed the 'size' of the vision. We saw that for some partners, their national context was more influential and they aimed to be a national leader in international affairs. We determined that, in most cases, to be internationally recognised, we must first be renowned and leaders in our own contexts. We cannot jump to the front of the international stage without being leaders in our own educational systems, and the two go hand-in-hand. One question raised by the workshop leader was how we see ourselves: Who are we? Where are we from? How can we position ourselves? One participant stated that they see themselves as a citizen of the world first, whereas another placed herself as a 'missionary' for the institution towards the outside world (as member of an IRO). We discussed if our institutions' attitudes reflect our own attitudes to our purposes, and so started a discussion of the purpose of the IRO within the institutional context. There was a lively discussion regarding the changing global context and position of the university, and IRO, within this context. We looked at the ideas of Edgar Moran, renowned author, on the positioning of the HEI within global conditions, including concepts such as teaching understanding and establishing relevant and useful knowledge. We concluded that the IRO should have a purpose much wider than just its component services like Mobility, or networking. It should be considered as a part of the machine of world change.

The poetic ideas above, however, are underlined and undermined by reality. This is that HEIs need to be sustainable, need to have research, to compete, to have funding, to conduct the accreditation of courses, etc. There are many constraints and duties. The partners were asked about other challenges and stated: We have to fight for resources. We need intelligence,

awareness. We need strategies – international strategies, strategies that link this poetic vision with the actions and policies that allow us to respond to it. We need to have visibility. When we were defining goals this is the difference between an ordinary IRO and something which changes institutional culture.

SESSION THREE: IRO Purposes

An example of the multidimensional key role of the IRO was shown. It included for example trend observation, relation building, process design etc. This example can be seen in the powerpoints. With regard to this, we discussed the systemic management of the IRO. In reality the direction of academic affairs is distinct and not influenced by the IRO in many institutions. The IRO can see itself as being part of that cycle, but the 'other' university functions do not see the same approach because of a lack of international culture. By "systemic", we defined that we are taking about a strategy that is "omnipresent". However, in reality, in most modern HEIs, academic affairs will be reluctant to allow IRO to intervene. Things have been defined internally and set with indicators, as well as common areas for work, so there is a link between the two worlds.

Through discussion we found that there is no Vice-Chancellor for International Affairs in most institutions, and Algerian / Tunisian partners have a different system to other partners also. In their case, the IRO is a small unit with no dependence upon a Vice-Chancellor above. They discussed the establishment of an international system for the 3 countries: Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia – they have a different vision based on culture, language and history. This is the region-within-regions approach.

There were comments that the vision mentioned on the powerpoint and developed by the partners earlier during the day is good in theory, but in practice it is difficult. The current structures of the HEIs do not allow it. We have to stop seeing things as compartments. We have to see the bigger picture & whole role of the IRO.

We did an exercise to see where we all come from (our origins) and what we are aiming to do. As a result, many partners explained the functions of our offices. For example, the Beirut Arab Uni mentioned:

- Projects such as Tempus
- Support quality assurance

- Improve scientific research: organise meetings and consultancy committee
- Academic cooperation through agreements
- Support to students
- Fundraising: National and international, US Aid, CNRS, etc.

Following the more 'poetic' and theorhetical vision, we did a tour de table exercise to see the reality of each partner country partner: which purpose the IROs have, if they are well positioned, and the proposal they have to improve or change it. The results were:

BENI SUEF – Wants to start a new programme to promote exchange between students and staff, including for example IT courses and language courses. BNU is implemented and recognised by the uni, the IRO. It is partially active.

MANSOURA – created IRO in 2010, the office is under the president and is working with 4 staff members. They have advised to change curriculum, and has nominated contact person in each Faculty. Have e-learning centre, and many international relationships but these relationships have come about more via the efforts of faculties. They consider the office is well positioned and working well, and their main future proposal is to market themselves as a service better.

UM5S – Their IRO is included under the vice-president for research and partnership. They think they are currently working well, but need to define relevant services and publicity for the IRO.

PHILADELPHIA UNI – IRO is very important strategically. The Director is well-known and respected. The uni is working on a strategic plan. Has joint programme and language learning services, international conferences, and high president is interested in international cooperation and wants it to be a prime objective. Problem: to coordinate all activities through this IRO. They need to systematise the functions.

PSUT – IRO has a grand and difficult objective of making belief in, and promoting internationalisation culture.

Beirut Arab Uni – has full support from the president, so the IRO is very well positioned. They have many challenges, their most important is to do with institutional and programme accreditation.

Sidi Mohd. – IRO is part of department of RTD and cooperation and is a well organised structure. Their main proposal is to allow the university to be present in international cooperation projects. They would like to be able to diversify to Latin America and Asia, Middle East and Africa.

Bejaia Uni – IRO is a service in Vice Chancellorship of cooperation. Their proposal is to diversify cooperation networks, and aim to be the bridge between different markets, proposes plan and strategy.

Tunisian institutions spoke together about their common and particularly challenging situation. They have an office in IRO in the institution. However, to do international activities they have to seek permission from the Ministry to conduct mobilities, etc. Even for conventions, they have to ask permission because autonomy is a problem. After the revolution, autonomy will be on the agenda. It will be discussed with the Ministry, and the future years are positive for this. Representative from UM5S mentioned the importance of financial autonomy, if you have control of funds, then you can do other activities.

Tzizi Uni – They have good structures in place, their problems are internal. This main problem is to raise awareness of the importance of the international activities for the whole university community. The academic elements of the institution need to understand the situation better. The president of the university is present and he reiterated the fight for academic quality, and highlighted this is part of his role to discuss with the Ministry. He gave a very encouraging message for the Tunisian partners about the benefits of greater autonomy and information dissemination is key to getting the objectives. It was suggested by the project Coordinator's representative (M. Grindle) that partners should take advantage of such advice, share common problems and see how such problems were solved in similar contexts as their regional neighbours.

MUBS – IRO is seen as part of the knowledge management process. It is implemented and working. They aim to convert tacit information into explicit.

Kairuan Uni - One of their specific objectives is to promote and improve the participation in Tempus and European projects.

SESSION FOUR: CREATING CONDITIONS

Following this discussion, we stated that it was time to close the gap between "vision" and "reality", and one of our instruments to do so is via the SERVICES an IRO offers. What services can we determine to match the vision? Or not just services, but processes. We need to see what is needed, but also the resources. What do we want? What can we do to make it possible? What do we need to do it?

Inmaculada showed the UNAPEC model: dividing services into strategic, core, and support types. Planning is strategic services, policy and budgeting are also strategic services. Core activities and services are the business end, things they do day by day. She reminds that if we do not have an internationalisation culture in the institution, you can have many great services but it won't matter. Support categorised services are communication, events. Horizontal activities which support the core business. Her resources were considered to be items such as people, infrastructure, etc. At the close of day, we set an exercise for all partners to think about their IROs vision and purpose, and bring the list of services offered by the IRO to tomorrow's session.

Day Two: IRO Services (Continued) and Networking

SESSION ONE: CASE STUDY

As a first warming up exercise, Michelle Grindle (UA) explained the marketing of Spanish courses for foreigners at the UA. This is one of the integral services offered by the UA's internationalisation approach and IRO, which is self-financing. The partners were interested in the competitor's analysis done by UA, and the tailor-made approach of the courses as a diversification strategy from competitors. Following a good question and answer session, we decided to use the commercial approach presented by UA to consider the service offer and the minimum service set.

SESSION TWO: DEFINING A SERVICE SET BASED ON PURPOSE

The morning session were therefore devoted to discussion to determine the services set-up using the purpose, services and the needed resources. The results can be seen in the table below, and from this partners can establish a minimum service set.

PURPOSE	SERVICES	RESOURCES
Visibility	International Publicity and Marketing (web & media).	Resources for all intended services
	Membership of Associations (Regional or International).	include:
	Organisation of conferences.	- Technical staff (ie. IT) - Cooperation Staff
Internationalisation Abroad 1) Mobility 2) International Projects	International recruitment.	- Website
	Exchange programmes.	- Financial resources
	Scholarships.	- Communication Skills
	Joint Research & Academic Programmes.	- Equipment – ICT (e.g. broadband)
	Networking (International partners & organisations).	- Contact information and databases
	International Mobility Support Services (e.g. welcome, admin, accommodation, Consultancy and good practice exchange).	- Activity reports and information – history
	Protocol Service.	- Translators and

	Aid, assistance and consultancy missions to other HEIs.	languages - Institutional support and commitment - Quality assurance – expertise and access.
Internationalisation At Home	Networking (e.g Chambers of commerce, other HEIs, embassies, local international organisations).	
1) Extracurricular Activities	Curriculum design and implementation – support activities to this task (e.g strategy and informative tasks to depts).	NB: Not a resource <i>per se</i> but some partners wanted to reflect that we need institutional autonomy also.
2) Teaching and Learning Processes	Needs assessment.	
3) Promoting Cultural Awareness	Promotion via capacity building courses of further skills (languages, communication, ICT).	
4) Mobility	Internal faculty representatives or committees (task force). Internal Evaluation and feedback exercises.	
Regional Cooperation: Networking	Networking (Partner search, agreements, etc.). Aid, assistance and consultancy mission to other HEIs.	

SESSION THREE: NETWORKING

We did an exercise to link together participants by their likes and characteristics, by using coloured yarn. We saw that it was difficult to pass the yarn, and it showed that cooperation is a joint approach; We must help each other to get things done. The yarn represents people who have the same interest, or participate in the same activity. For example, we linked people with orange yarn who worked in the IRO, and people with green yarn who like music. These people have common ideas. Therefore, we have a professional and a social network. What can we do to keep together without the yarn? We need a medium: website, linkedin, facebook, projects, etc. Materials provide support.

We discussed inviting other people to the networks... how do we do it? We have our links, we know someone else who works in the same area. How could we invite them? We can encourage them by selling the virtues of the network, establishing projects and having them as partners.etc. It is not enough to just be linked, we need effectiveness, control, activities, objectives, focus groups, other active participation.

We looked at the basic concepts of the theory of Networking. They were the same as the ideas the TIES group discussed above through the yarn exercise. Besides, we looked at the importance of maintaining a correct behaviour, respecting different ways of thinking and culture. We should learn to communicate with each other. We discussed that truth is the basis of effective networking, sincerity and self-critique and offer what we have and not what we cannot give. One concept was "Valid linking" - we clarified that it is a genuine linkage which is not easily unlinked. Reliable methodologies, and a linkage which is active. The participants stated that a valid linkage should start with the assignation of an underpinning element: e.g. an agreement, project or plan. We should also ensure that the link is between mutual interests of benefit to both and all partners. The importance should be placed on "fully functional" linkage, with activities.

We discussed the importance of the skills of networking for the persons working in an IRO. Besides, we discussed the internationalisation culture, "internationalisation at home" through a model. If we do not have an international culture, we can struggle to find internal networks for example to participate in specific activities. We identified it is necessary to have institutional projection, as well as internal capacities.

One partner proposed a structure or process:

- 1) create a network**
- 2) sign an agreeemnt**
- 3) establish actors**
- 4) know and build your capacities**

In terms of selecting partners and negotiating projects, we looked at the meaning first on the slides. One participant mentioned that the word 'selection' implies there is a big choice available when in reality they find the construction of partners difficult. We clarified that we mean "choosing", not being "selective". It is a case of options. We discussed the issue of

personal networking. If we don't know partners to be able to select, the chances are our partners or contacts DO know someone. For example, we talked about the the idea of Six Degrees of Separation. This theory suggests that no one person is more than six degrees (persons) away from another via linking. We can also think of the right departments or centres to help us. For example, a difficult partner to contact (like Harvard) could be contacted through our particular department of interest even though we want another department as partner.

Folllowing the above discussions on networking concepts, methods and ideas, we tried out a speed networking exercise being commonly applied in different contexts, inclduing the higher education community in international fairs. The partners commented that the exercise was interesting, but perhaps not entirely in line with Arabic culture or the culture of some partners.

Michelle Grindle

Alicante, 6th March, 2012