

LIFELONG LEARNING PROGRAMME

International Internship AGORA (I2AGORA)

AGREEMENT NUMBER 2010 - 4993 / 001 - 001

PROJECT NUMBER 511784-LLP-1-2010-1-HU-KA4-KA4MP



I2 AGORA Report and Recommendations as outcomes of Clinique Events: Recommendations to EU policy

Deliverable D5.1.4

WP5. – Synthesis of results-the "Magic cube" of internship programs

WP leader: Open Universiteit Nederland

Compiled by Alfonso Herrero de Egaña – **UNED**

Actual submission date for this Final version: 30/06/2012

Previous version: 31/12/2011

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.



TABLE OF CONTENT

1. Introduction.....	3
2. European Virtual Internships: Main features.....	5
3. Conclusions: Policy recommendations	6



1. INTRODUCTION

International work placements or internships, as they are generally known, are gaining more and more importance in the context of internationalization of higher education and globalization of our (professional) world.

Traditional international work placements, where the learner travels to the company abroad, are not always feasible for all students because of financial, geographical, social or other reasons. For those physical placements abroad that do happen, there are also a number of difficulties to overcome, mainly related to a lack of communication between the student, the foreign company and the institution for higher education.

Virtual Internship Placement (VIP), Virtual mobility, or ICT-supported interaction to realize international collaboration, offers possibilities to address these issues. The three stakeholders that are involved in an international work placement are the higher education institution (HEI), the student and the receiving company or organization.

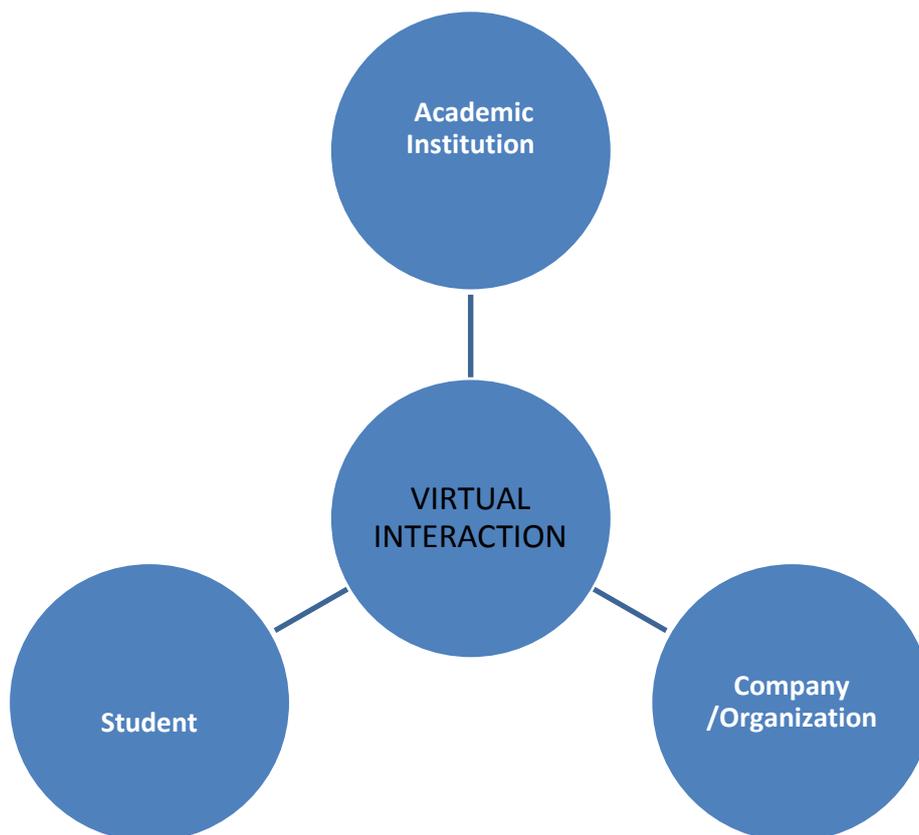


Figure 1. VIP

In the I2AGORA project the Internship 2.0 problem area was analysed through a three dimensional framework which was named the Magic Cube.

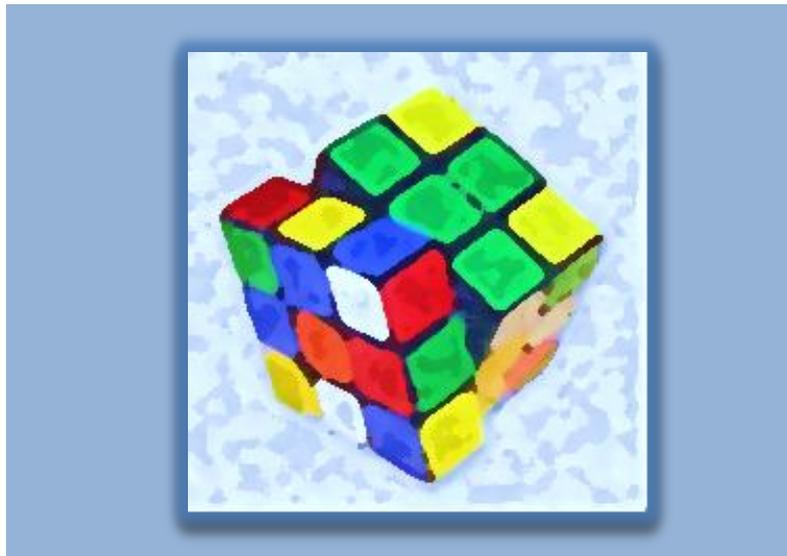


Figure 1. The magic Cube

Magic Cube dimensions were one starting point for evaluation of Internship 2.0. In this report the Magic Cube dimensions were refined: Stakeholders dimension was refined to a multilayer purposeful system, Vertical chronological dimension was refined to Internship Application Stage, Beginning Stage, Internship and Tutoring Stage, Post-Internship Stage, Horizontal dimension was refined to Formal Features, Culture and Competences, Infrastructure and Technology Transfer.

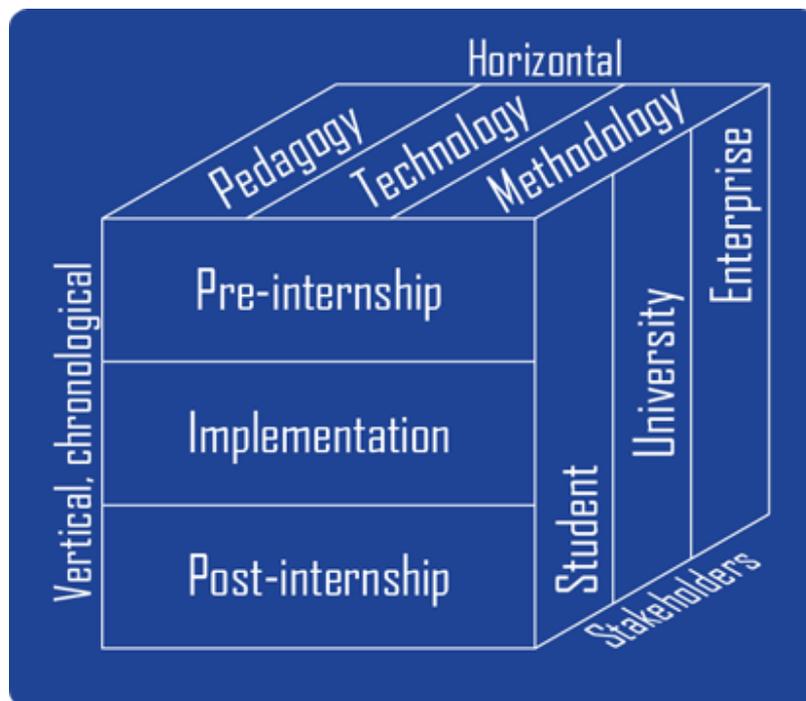


Figure 3. 3x3 model of Internship – the “Magic” cube of VIP

2. EUROPEAN VIRTUAL INTERNSHIPS: MAIN FEATURES

I2 Agora analysed 26 of 60 projects that concerned virtual mobility in international work placements. There are too many parallel actions and projects without connection, and synergy. There is a need to improving coherency and networking of EU projects.

HEI is the only group interested in virtual internships, they are forced by law to organize practical placements for students.

Students will profit of VIP because they could work with companies not established in their geographical area. In any case, internships are included in the student's curricula.

According to Madrid Clinique findings, only small companies answered in a positive way to virtual work placements, large organizations were reluctant. Large Spanish companies use the same methods of USA companies; they are not going to be pioneers in this field. When virtual internships become a standard in USA firms, Spanish companies will organize them.

The responsible people of human resources do not usually understand the concept of virtual teams; they are misled with concepts like Telework. Virtual Team Management is a technique. Besides the theoretical concepts behind the virtual work placements and the explanation of the way of organizing a VIP, organizations will only learn this technique by doing.

Where to place a virtual internship, is a question to solve, because there are so many parallel actions and projects, organizations will not know where to place a demand for VIP.

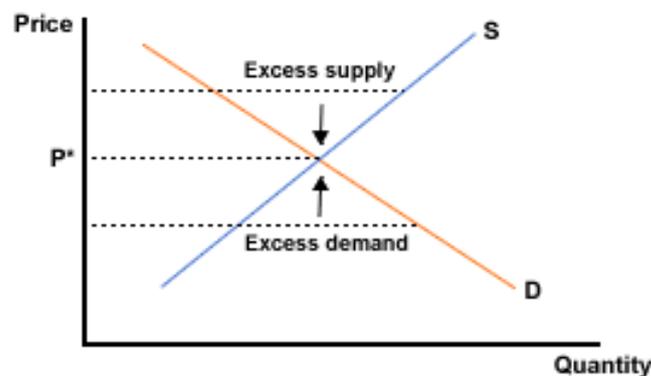
There are four main findings:

- 1) Only small companies are interested in VIP, large organizations are reluctant and do not understand the concept of VIP, virtual team management is usually misled with telework. There is lack of offer of VIP from companies and organizations.
- 2) Universities and students are interested in VIP because internships are included in their curricula. There will always be demand for VIP, because universities usually offer a wide variety of studies and companies need not to follow the same geographical distribution. There is demand, which exceeds the supply of VIP.
- 3) Universities, student's, and organizations need to know where to place a demand or an offer for a VIP. There are too many projects, portals, without connection, these circumstances lead to inefficiency of efforts and funds allocated to work placements by EU.
- 4) Universities and organizations need to have advice on the pedagogy, methodology, and technology of a VIP. The chronological dimension Pre-internship, implementation and Post-internship, should not be forgotten.

3. CONCLUSIONS: POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

These findings could be summarizing in two:

1) There is an excess of demand, because internships are compulsory within university curricula.



2) There is lack of knowledge of the stakeholders about the insides of VIP.

To solve the problem of companies and other organizations that are going offer the VIP, professional organizations (chamber of commerce, employers' associations) seem to be best option to solve the problem. They will be the best strategic partners, as they are subject oriented, they have strong connection with industry and they have established respect and confidence between professionals. This will solve the main problem, because professional organizations could help to assure the increase of supply of VIP.

To solve the inefficiency problem caused by the existence of too many parallel actions, there is a need to start a Long-term strategic partnership between HEI, students, and professional organizations, which should be supported as Work Placement Consortia. The Consortia will centralize the wide variety of parallel actions and projects funded with EU funds. A unique Portal, part of the Consortia services, will help to reduce the uncertainty of the different stakeholders about where to place a virtual internship announcement, among other things.

The Consortia could provide services in order to solve pedagogical, methodological, and technological problems of VIP in the different stages of the chronological dimension.

The design of the European Work Placement Consortia, (EWPC) its geographical distribution, country members goes far beyond the scope of this study.

Private initiative should be allowed to participate in the scheme. There is a need to reach an equilibrium between supply and demand. Specialized firms could act as brokers between HEI and Organizations. As a matter of fact, there are some firms specialized in this field, but their existence has not solved the problem, at least at a European level. We believe this is also a reason to stress the importance of the creation of the EWPC.