

BalticStudyNet 2005 - 2009

Dr. Agnete Vabø

NIFU STEP

NORWAY

Design and effect of BSNs activities

- Branding regions and institutions in HE
- What are the success factors?
- And how can BSN evaluate their activities against these?
- Design, impact, activities, materials

BSN-developing networks

- Define, develop and branding of new area of study; Baltic Sea Region Studies
- BSN contribute to development of network of cooperation between universities in the Baltic region and between this and other countries and regions at a global scale (China).
- Added value: existing networks were weak and/or poorly developed

BSN vs. university rankings - research

- International cooperation and networks are important also in the long term strategies of the universities; For the establishment of more robust institutions in terms of student demand and research intensiveness.
- Considering important criteria applied in university rankings, universities might benefit from participating in BSN

Thus, remember

- As providers of universal higher education one should not only strive for "elite" and "excellence" – top rankings- as such.(Harvard was not interested in BSN anyway...)
- A diversified HE system is needed, and is also an important condition for the development of excellence

Academic or administrative approach

- Establishing institutional cooperation and networks: advantages and disadvantages of using a top down/administrative approach.
- Building on existing cooperation in research, education and innovation between faculty at different universities might also be a wise strategy
- A combined approach?
- Long term – short term strategies

Branding in higher education

- Related to consumerism, New Public Management/ transparency
- Input for comparison between universities
- Used to guide students
- Thus, limitations to "business of branding"

The basis for communication?

- The need to undertake...”studies of the historical and current political, economic and cultural developments in the Baltic Sea Region, national and international co-operation in and among the countries of the region, as well as the regions perspective in the context of European regionalisation and globalisation ”(p. 28)
- The Joint Masters Degree programme in Baltic Sea Region Studies (BSRS)

BSRS

- Cultivating Baltic Study Net through interdisciplinary study program: "a risky business"?
- Interdisciplinary focus and joint curriculum often represent a challenge for both students and participating institutions (academic criteria, funding and other forms of responsibility, division of labor among collaborating institutions etcetera).

On BSRS continue.....

- And what about the learning outcome and career opportunities of the candidates investing and “testing” out this new program?
- The presentation does not convince me (s.28-29 in the BSN cataloge)
- What are the results so far? Number and qualities of applicants, career trajectories etcetera. Should be subject to future monitoring. Also important considering university rankings based on indicators of quality in higher education.

On method applied

- The material provided for this evaluation process says less about impact...
- Some methodological issues to consider in future evaluations:
 - Monitoring activities, basic indicators also considering the criteria in university rankings
 - Evaluation measures suggested so far is not adequate (5. Evaluation and dissemination)!!

Conclusions

- BSN – a great leap forward. Not at least given the barriers to mobility and internationalisation in general and the challenges of the baltic region in particular.
- Informational and promotional strategy
 - more academically- less touristy;
 - Intellectual capital of the institutions involved
 - Impact of the BSRS. Figures as part of the promotion.