

STUDY AND INTERNSHIPS ABROAD: TOOLS TO DEVELOP THE FRENCH SECTION OF A THAI UNIVERSITY

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Abstract

Since the new millennium, the number of foreign exchange students worldwide has increased significantly. A study published by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2014, p.344) shows that, between 2000 and 2012, this number increased by 114%. At the same time, international exchange programs and internships abroad have continued to expand. As Bian (2013, p.451) noted, "for a student, the principal purpose of mobility is to enrich one's knowledge, broaden one's worldview and prepare for a future professional life." Furthermore, with these experiences abroad, the majority of students will further develop their language skills.

The aim of this article is to share our experience regarding three different programs developed in partnership with French institutions, and the steps we took to both implement and improve them.

In the first part of the article, we shall introduce the context of our study. Then, we will describe the three main programs: summer language trip, exchange programs and internships. We will explain how partners were selected, the obstacles we encountered, and the solutions implemented, as well as the benefits and limitations of each program. Finally, we will attempt to demonstrate how these programs have had positive effects on the French section of our university.

Conclusion: The study & internship programs implemented between MUIC and France during the last 10 years have had identifiable positive effects on our students; they learned to be more independent, more responsible and became more open to the world. Thanks to these programs, they improved their language skills and were encouraged to continue their French studies. These programs directly contributed to increasing the value of the French language at our college.

Keywords: exchange programs, internships abroad, language study.