



## Research on the Role of Cross-Border Academic Projects: A Case Study at FPT University

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### ABSTRACT

**Background:** The outbreak of COVID-19 was a wreaked disaster throughout the world and education system was the one got affected more. SWOT analysis can be used to recognize the favourable and unfavourable factors and conditions in offline and e-learning system and solve the problems in a targeted manner.

**Objective:** To evaluate the understanding and perception of students about the strengths weaknesses opportunities and threats related to online learning system.

**Methods:** It was a cross sectional study carried out after getting Institutional ethical committee approval. The pre formed questionnaire using google form was sent to the students. The five point Likert scale was used for analysing the data.

**Results:** The online leaning has the benefit of attending the classes from anywhere at any time with their convenience and flexibility. The greatest challenges of online learning was sitting at one place and concentrating on the screen for long period of time and also a higher chance of getting distracted by social media or other sites. Opportunity of this method enables a single platform for teachers and students to learn from distant places. Overall health disturbance cybercrime and network cost was documented in threats.

**Conclusion:** Challenges of Covid-19 is harnessing the technology for teaching learning and adopting flexible learning approaches. From the experience of pandemic we need to find innovative solution appropriate to different context. It is the choice of the person to use it wisely for the benefit and not to become a prey to its harmful consequences.

Keywords: Academic Projects, COVID-19

### 1. Introduction

Improving the quality of higher education through new teaching methods is always one of the significant issues in the world (Nabi et al., 2017). At FPT University, Vietnam, all lecturers are encouraged to introduce new teaching methods. Some existing methods, such as teaching in the direction of social construction, teaching through projects, taking learners as the centre, etc., have been applied and continuously improved to become better. In the last three semesters, the author has applied the teaching method through the project for the 3rd year students majoring in economics. In particular, this method has innovation when students not only do projects with their friends in class but group together with students in another country, then practice their major in another country's assigned topic. For example, in the marketing framework, 4 Vietnamese and 4 Thai students will gather in a group, select a favourite Vietnamese product, and analyse and develop a marketing strategy to export to Vietnam. Thailand. Of course, some related content, such as product analysis through the SWOT model or market survey campaigns, learning about competitors, PR campaigns, etc., are also mentioned. Thus, it is also project-based learning, but this approach increases the novelty and deeply promotes students' capacity. Furthermore, many critical skills are opportunities to be used and honed via the programs. In addition, to some extent, it helps enrich their student experiences and thereby contributes to building their brand in a more positive direction, preparing for the future with the global labour market ahead.

### 2. Literature Reviews

Many schools in higher education have adopted the project-based learning method. Besides, many studies on this form of teaching have also been carried out. From there, the advantages, limitations, and new suggestions are given so this method can be more effective. It can be mentioned as Eltigani et al. (2020) study. They have analysed this approach in the science of organization and management. They have determined that learning occurs more effectively, when knowledge and information are put into practice through Learning modes that form the core of organizational learning capabilities. The study concludes with a call to action emphasizing the strategic importance of improving learning practices in project-oriented

organizations. In another approach, Sumarmi et al. (2021) analysed Project-Based Research Learning (PBRL) as one learning model that stimulates students to be proactive and creative in product development. In addition, this learning model is also effective as an alternative to distance learning.

In Vietnam, in 2017, Van Loi, N. also discussed this method as an effective way to promote learners' autonomy, especially in learning English. Through this method, learners had to recognize which skills they needed to be weak in, thereby honing them and especially turning the theory of language into the most practical, relatable, and easy to remember. In a deeper approach to EFL classroom practice, Thuan, P. D. (2018) also mentioned project-based learning as an irreplaceable method for learners to store information about the lesson. as long-term memory.

Under the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, Yustina et al. (2020) also had their in-depth studies on the impact of Blended Learning (BL) and Project-Based Learning (Pj-BL). ) for teachers' creative thinking before serving in student learning, thereby concluding that Blended Learning and Project-Based Learning significantly increase creative thinking ability in pre-service biology teachers and BL and Pj-BL were more effective than usual in enhancing teachers' pre-service ability and creative thinking in biology learning. So, at this point, we see that there has been no research on project-based teaching methods that incorporate elements of globalization, or in other words, Cross-Border Academic Projects - The topic is deeply researched by the author.

### 3. Methodology

The study was carried out using both qualitative and quantitative methods. The author surveyed FPT University students who have participated in at least one cross-border academic project. The author then received all 114 valid responses. Since then, the author has used SPSS 26 software to perform Multiple Response Frequencies analysis. The author conducted a survey using a questionnaire within 30 days through different channels such as Messenger, Zalo, and Gmail.

Besides, the author also uses the descriptive statistics method. It is used to summarize or describe the essential characteristics of a set of data collected through empirical research, represented as a number or a visual figure (Sternstein, 2017). In this study, the descriptive statistical method described students' evaluations of the values they received from cross-border academic projects, thereby reflecting student satisfaction.

### 4. Research Results and Discussion

When surveying participants' satisfaction in cross-border academic projects, the author proposed four areas of Expertise, Soft Skills, Experience, and Qualifications with detailed statements. The 114 responses obtained with detailed results are shown in Table 1 below after running SPSS on Multiple Response Frequencies.

**Table 1. Multiple Response Frequencies**

\$Q1 Frequencies				
		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Percent	
\$Q1a	Expertise	63	24.0%	55.3%
	SoftSkills	87	33.2%	76.3%
	Experience	67	25.6%	58.8%
	Qualifications	45	17.2%	39.5%
Total		262	100.0%	229.8%

a Dichotomy group tabulated at value 1.

The results from the above table show that there are 262 responses, reaching 229.8% in percent of cases, in which the choices in order from high to low, respectively, belong to Soft Skills (87 choices) and Experience (67 options). options), Expertise (63 options) and Qualifications (45 options). In the most general way, it is clear that the student's assessment of the effectiveness of these projects is relatively high. Among the three main proposed factors, the most minor selected factor is Qualifications, up to 39.5% in percent of cases; the rest are all over 50%, of which the highest is Soft Skills, accounting for 76.3%. To some extent, we understand that the teaching method based on cross-border academic projects has brought students much value in many different fields, and most of all, it is the students who are the main ones. Understand those values, reflecting the importance of these projects in higher education, specifically, in this case, the research at FPT University in Ho Chi Minh City.

In order to more deeply evaluate the role of these projects on the quality of students, the author has deeply analysed the four significant aspects mentioned above into 13 more detailed aspects, of which (1) Soft skills have three aspects, (2) Experience has four aspects, (3) Expertise has three aspects and (4) Qualifications has three aspects; the details are shown in Figure 1 and Table 2 below.

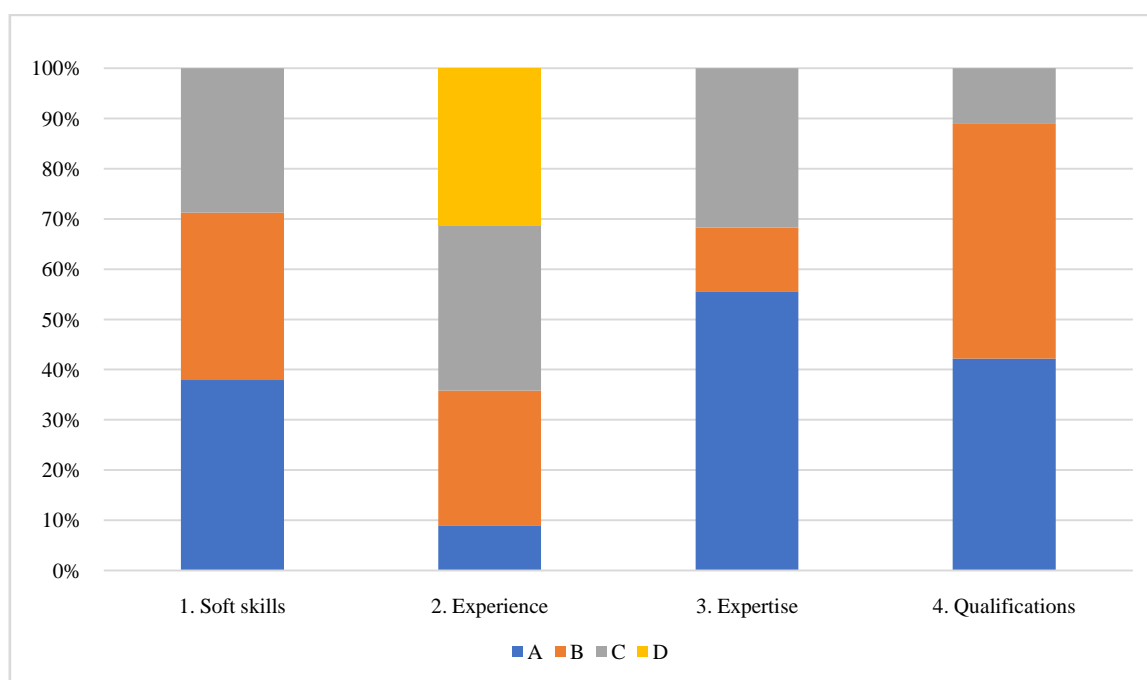


Figure 1. The overview of choices of students on the role of the cross-border academic project.

One point to note in figure 1 above is that the symbols A, B, C, and D are not the same in the four areas mentioned. Details are shown in Table 2. From this figure, we can see that students' general perceptions of the role of cross-border academic projects in different fields are different; however, outstanding both at a high level, except for a few factors such as in the area of Experience, Expertise, and Qualifications.

Table 2. Details of choices of students on the role of the cross-border academic project

Factor	Statement	Frequency	Percent
<b>1. Soft skills</b>		<b>87</b>	<b>100.00</b>
	1.1. Students have the opportunity to practice foreign language skills	33	37.93
	1.2. Students have the opportunity to practice cross-cultural communication skills	29	33.33
	1.3. Students have the opportunity to practice cross-cultural teamwork	25	28.74
<b>2. Experience</b>		<b>67</b>	<b>100.00</b>
	2.1. Students learn from many new lecturers	6	8.96
	2.2. Students learn from many foreign lecturers	18	26.87
	2.3. Students have the opportunity to expand their friendships	22	32.84
	2.4. Increase the diversity of student life	21	31.34
<b>3. Expertise</b>		<b>63</b>	<b>100.00</b>
	3.1. Students can apply much professional knowledge they have learned	35	55.56
	3.2. Students learn much new professional knowledge	8	12.70
	3.3. Students can compare national differences in the same academic subject	20	31.75

4. Qualifications		45	100.00
	4.1. Increase the pass rate of the internship at a foreign company	19	42.22
	4.2. Contributing to increasing the prestige of the job application	21	46.67
	4.3. Contributing to increasing the prestige of study abroad application	5	11.11

Soft Skills have always been an essential aspect of any university student (Yan et al., 2019). That is why almost no university does not pay attention to them (Gruzdev et al., 2018). The same is true for FPT University. In these cross-border academic projects, these skills once again have the opportunity to be used, cultivated, and developed. The results from the author's survey show options for (1.1.) Students have the opportunity to practice foreign language skills (1.2.) Students have the opportunity to practice cross-cultural communication skills, and (1.3.) Students with the opportunity to practice cross-cultural teamwork were selected with a similar proportion, accounting for 37.93%, 33.33%, and 28.74%, respectively. Thus, the students participating in the program had almost a relatively uniform view of the different aspects of soft skills related to the project they were involved in. First, this is an opportunity for foreign languages (at FPT University Ho Chi Minh City, English, Chinese and Japanese are available) not only in narrow classrooms or in Vietnamese territory but also in Vietnam; it has reached abroad. More specifically, it is used effectively and is full of usefulness. This value helps students strengthen their foreign language skills a lot. Coming in second place is cross-cultural communication skills; these are the things students have learned in class but mainly theoretical knowledge; through stories and situations, etc. Now, it has become more practical - when the learners are a part of that cross-cultural exchange and communication. Finally, the eternal story about the role of teamwork, especially working in an environment where the team's diversity is exceptionally high. Skills contribute significantly to the training orientation of global citizens who can work in the multinational environment of FPT University.

Next to the soft skills students receive from the program, it is impossible not to mention the valuable experiences they have gained through these projects. In the research paper, the author has introduced four components that create these valuable experiences: (2.1.) Students learn from many new lecturers, (2.2.) Students learn from many foreign lecturers (2.3.) Students have the opportunity to expand their friendships, and (2.4.) Increase the diversity of student life. Here, (2.3.) expanding friendships accounts for 32.84%. This number reflects the need to make friends and expand international relationships, which is an extreme, urgent, and valuable need for university students. It is easy to understand that this is not only a common need but also the result of a process of training and coaching not only in foreign languages but also in the spirit of internationalization among students. Today, many international student exchange programs are organized in many universities worldwide. The network of institutions that link universities together is becoming increasingly dense. Accordingly, students also have more opportunities to meet friends from all over the world, expanding their relationships. This need benefits them when they want to learn about the world's cultural diversity, preparing for the global road ahead. 31.34% is the ratio for factor (2.4.) Increase the diversity of student life. This number clearly shows that the need to increase diversity in student life is not new and does not just stop at a particular campus, which is now far beyond the inherent and narrow physical limitations. Accordingly, students need to experience more and more diversity. Therefore, international activities like this are considered one of the effective solutions for this Gen Z generation. Then here, the author also wants to suggest to universities, including FPT University, that we need to invest more in these activities to enhance the international experience. It is not only an experience but also a lesson that is sustainable and meaningful values for learners, especially in the current digital age.

Next is the aspect that received the most agreement, accounting for 26.87%. This result shows two things. First, students need to experience studying with international lecturers very highly. Because studying with foreign teachers helps students improve not only their foreign languages but also new perspectives from a teacher with a different perspective from a different culture, thereby greatly enhancing the students' valuable experiences. Second, the reality is that there are not many foreign lecturers at FPT University. With its importance, as mentioned in part 1, even though most of the current lecturers at the school have studied or practiced abroad, that internationality is not comparable to that of international lecturers in lecturers of foreign nationalities. Especially for students majoring in English, Japanese, and Chinese languages, they desperately need native teachers. Thus, here we can understand why cross-border academic projects have received much response from students; in this case, the reason comes from the source of international lecturers that students are attracted to. Finally, accounting for a relatively small proportion, 8.96% is the student's choice of the learning experience with new lecturers. This also opens up a new solution; instead of one instructor going through a class for the rest of the semester, we can have multiple instructors teaching the same class and changing each other. This adjustment will undoubtedly cause more or fewer difficulties for educational administrators, but it will also bring new values, significantly enhancing students' learning experience.

The author can conclude three aspects of the following perspective on the professional knowledge that students will gain through cross-border academic projects. They are (3.1.) Students can apply much professional knowledge they have learned (3.2.) Students learn much new professional knowledge, and (3.3.) Students can compare national differences in the same academic subject, with selected percentages of 55.56%, 12.70%, and 31.75%, respectively. Thus, the most prominent aspect is aspect 3.1. Many students believe that their professional knowledge is applied through the project. Although classroom teaching always focuses on not only theory but also practical exercises to be as practical as possible. However, that realism cannot be as high as working on an actual project, with real people, in a real situation. Here, the author also wants to make a fourth suggestion. The suggestion is how for specific majors, these projects are a mandatory part of the program's curriculum, or at least in the course syllabus. Because only then the actual value of these international projects can truly spread and influence a large number of university students. In the framework of this research paper, the professional value also can be seen in that students, with the knowledge they have learned, and their life experiences, can compare

national differences in the same academic subject. This comparison contributes significantly to consolidating knowledge, deepening information, and owning that knowledge in the long run. Next, lecturers and even international students working on the project will receive new professional knowledge. particular.

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