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## International students "In real life" at BTH



A two year project (Sept 2012 – Aug 2014) between Blekinge Institute of Technology and:

- The Society of Indian Alumni of Swedish-European Universities (SIASEU), based in Hyderabad, India
- BTH's office at Shandong University at Weihai in China
- JNTU Hyderabad
- JNTU Kakinada
- Shandong University at Weihai



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## Background



Registered students in 2018: 7 200 (fulltime equivalent: 3 200)

600 registered international students in 2018,  
in 2011: 1 400

One of the Swedish universities with the largest proportion of international students

Largest student groups in 2012 from countries from outside of Sweden:  
India and China - Asia dominant

A number of Double Diploma collaborations where Indian and Chinese students joined international programs during which they spend their last three semesters at BTH.



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## Observations

- BTH's profile "In real life" refers to the purpose of the education – a career after graduation

However, low ranking in international student surveys as to career guidance and preparation for a future employment

- Teacher/supervisor frustration over spending time on "non subject related" issues in the international classroom
- Cultural clashes/misunderstandings in the international classrooms
- Delayed graduation for international students



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## Assumptions

International, mainly Asian, students:

- enter Swedish universities less prepared than Swedish co-students for the teaching methods used by Swedish universities
- enter Swedish universities with expectations that do not fully match the reality that they meet during their studies.
- often struggle more than Swedish students in coping with independent as well as team and goal oriented work during their studies and graduate from Swedish universities less prepared for, thus less attractive on the Swedish labor market.
- often miss out on job opportunities due to intercultural misunderstandings.



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## Problems addressed

A pilot addressing the difficulties for many Asian students to:

- adapt to Swedish teaching methods involving independent, goal and project oriented work
- enter the Swedish labor market

And aiming at assuring that:

- students coming for studies at Blekinge Institute of Technology from five partner universities in India and in China would upon arrival to Sweden be better prepared for the studies involving *independent* as well as *team and goal oriented work* and thus better succeed in their studies.
- the students would come with *realistic expectations* on what they can expect from the university and of what is expected from them and finally that they will be better prepared and found more attractive for a possible entry on the Swedish labor market.





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## Existing assets

- DD programs where the participating students were fully aware of and set to finish their studies at BTH, and where BTH, consequently had names and faces on students that would arrive to BTH in as much as three and a half years ahead
- Campus based study technique courses
- Experience in net based education, preparatory language courses in both Swedish (e.g. EILC courses) and in English.
- An alumni office in India and a BTH office in China



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## What we actually did



A package of four preparatory courses – that became five:

1. Skills required to succeed in studies at Swedish universities.
  2. An overview of the Swedish culture
  3. Academic writing
  4. Presentation skills
  5. (An improvised "crash course" in Swedish)
- One week campus based education in India and China including courses 1 and 2 (and 5)
  - One week campus based education in India and China including courses 3 and 4
  - Net based individual training, supported by collaborating organizations (mainly SIASEU, JNTU H and JNTU K)



Student participation:

- India: 234 (JNTU Hyderabad: 144, JNTU Kakinada: 90)
- China: 50





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## Outcomes

In general, the students having participated in the project:

- felt and were, according to their teachers/supervisors, better prepared for studies in Sweden
- integrated more with Swedish students as well as with students from other countries than what had been seen in previous similar student groups

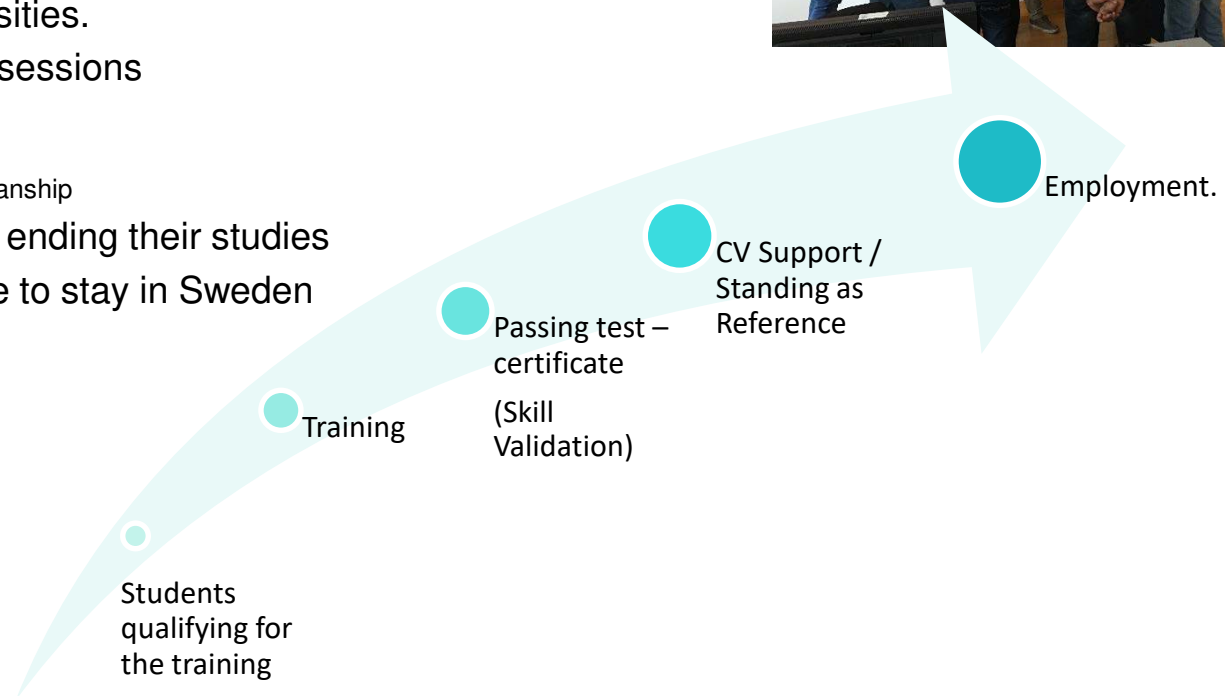


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## Post STINT activities at BTH

A Vinnova financed project targeting employability

- Interviewing companies Indian and local – Identifying skill gap.
  - Ericsson, Qvantel, CGI, ABB, Softhouse, CSC and other local companies.
  - Tata Consulting Services, HCL, Accenture, Quantel India.
- Knowing the students competence form previous experience and partner universities.
- Preparing training sessions
  - Language
  - Culture
  - Software Craftsmanship
- Targeting students ending their studies
- Verifying the desire to stay in Sweden





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## A closer look on the first 50 Indian students

- All but 3 graduated on time
- 35 have employments
- 19 have employments in Sweden
- 4 have employments in Europe
- 12 returned to India/no information



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### Questions or comments?

- The past – me
- The present and future – my dear former colleagues in the audience 😊



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Thank you!