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SMARTI

**Support for Innovative Methodology, Approaches and Tools for
Teaching through the Medium of English in order to improve
Educational Yield, Sustainability and Internationalization**

REPORT OF THE WP1 — PREPARATION

Desk&Field study in Armenia:

English as a Medium for Instruction

Student centered learning

Teacher Enhancement

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SMARTI overview

English as a Medium for Instruction (EMI) is a current phenomenon. This project can be described as innovative as it offers to develop, teach, mark, test and benchmark a sustainable model of teacher training and retraining based on EMI pedagogy integrated into the student-centered learning and the project method. SMARTI includes the following innovating elements:

- Development of the cross-disciplinary competence model and EMI descriptors for pedagogical skills of university teachers delivering EMI courses comparable to EU standards and national qualifications framework. It involves consideration of student-centered skills based on the requirements set by today's labor market and employers to the quality of university graduates;
- Development of EMI educational tools and student-centered teaching methods applicable for HEIs based on the analysis of EU best practices and with regard to the characteristics of the higher education systems of the project participants;
- A student centered learning combined with the project method. The plan is to integrate this approach into existing curriculum and programme in order to create and maintain a supportive and effective EMI teaching/learning environment.

The priority of SMARTI project aims at enhancing the quality and the effectiveness of teaching. The project will help improve the teaching capacity of the project participants and will benefit the higher education systems of PC by enhancing cross-disciplinary teacher competences and introducing new approaches in education.

This project supports teacher and student mobility and attracts international students at the respective universities with all the added benefits this brings. The establishment of EMI Centers will bring new academic and research networking among all partners directly involved into the project. Judging from the previous projects, no similar ones have been carried out in either of the PC HEIs. EMI pedagogical training using the ECTS/TUNING framework as a tool of QA of academic content makes the project a "brand new" offer for both countries and their participating HEIs.



WP1 overview

We see this package as primarily a Preparation Activity although there are strong Management and QA aspects.

It will start with a desk and field study of PC practices in EMI and evaluation of Russian and Armenian practices in EMI methodologies and student-centred methodologies. PC HEIs will conduct field studies of Russian and Armenian practices in teacher training and competence enhancement (with focus on EMI teaching). It will take place at each PC university with SWOT analysis, surveys, self-assessment and analysis of results. All degree programmes which are delivered in English (where applicable) will be examined at each PC university. Survey methodology will be elaborated by UCP with the support of PC Universities (PetrSU + ANAU). Each PC university will conduct surveys among their partner universities (QA Certification Agencies among all their partner Universities) over 4 weeks. UCP will collect the results and present it as a report.

At the same time EU partners together with PC Universities will conduct a parallel desk and field study of EU best EMI practices and EMI teacher enhancement approaches via surveys, field studies, and self-assessment. European best practices will create the inventory of tools and approaches applicable for the objectives of the project. The study will cover teaching methods of European education which must be understood in this project: European Credit Transfer System (ECTS); EMI learning/teaching methodologies; project-based learning, practice-oriented approach, student-centered approach, personalization, active and interactive learning (computer simulations, role plays, case studies, brainstorming etc.) and academic mobility system. Another issue to be presented in the inventory is the study of the European experience in teacher competence enhancement in EMI teaching.

The results of the desk-study will be analysed using qualitative research methods such as comparison and analysis of research objects. The method of comparative analysis is the most general research method, which can be applied in this project for giving a general direction. It reveals, on the one hand, the similar features with two objects or the comparison (EU EMI



best practices and RF+ARM EMI real situation). In other words, comparison is a necessary and basic element of this WP methodology, as it determines and sets research value for the project in the whole and it will serve as an information input for delivery of WP 2.

The results will be presented to all consortium by UCP (lead partner for this WP) at the introduction training seminar on Training of QA English for Specific Purposes Training (1 week) and ECTS/Tuning Modular training (1 week) for PCs (UK).

Preparation of materials by EU for QA terminology, language and soft skills is developed.

The results of the desk study will be presented in an online session. The report prepared on the study will include the results of the analysis of approaches to teacher academic content in English, including training courses, internships and placements, assessment procedures and motivation practices. The report will be uploaded to the online platform.

Tasks

1.1 Desk and field study of PC practices in EMI teacher enhancement approaches and student-centred methodologies. Inventory of the best European EMI teaching methodologies.

1.1.1 Desk and field study of PC practices in EMI teacher enhancement approaches and student-centred methodologies. Leading: Armenia (ANAU), RF (PetrSU)

1.1.2 Inventory of the best European EMI/SCL teaching methodologies. Leading : UCP, lead support from RTU

1.1.3 On-line Report Presentation in EMI/SCL methodologies. Leading : UCP, PetrSU

1.2 Preparation of EU QA English for Specific Purposes Training (vocabulary, language and soft skills) and ECTS/Tuning Modular training for PCs.

1.3 EU preparation of EMI Curriculum training by PC partners.



1. Introduction

English-medium instruction in non-English speaking countries has gained prominence around the world in the last decades due to the internationalization of higher education. The growth in academic subjects taught through English, in countries, where the first language of the majority of students is not English (English medium instruction, EMI) has been matched by growth in research into its desirability. EMI teachers need professional development to teach effectively especially in the developing countries where EMI is still not well established practice for all levels of higher education and for all public and private universities. At the same time EMI characteristics and tendencies of development are not uniform, neither within-country nor between-countries.

Higher education in Armenia has been transformed considerably in the last decade. In Armenia 27 state and 25 non-state HEIs are presented and these HEIs are offered a wide range of subjects. Despite the internationalization trends in all universities, not all - especially non-state universities - can be seen as successful attempts to implement EMI, on the other hand, there are state universities that have partially or fully integrated EMI while creating conditions for learning in English for students and for professional development of teachers.

The results of presented field and desk studies for HEIs of Armenia show that there is still many gaps in integration of concept of EMI, in harmonized methodologies, level of staff and students using EMI etc.

1.1. Aims

The aims of presented research are:

1. To identify the experience, obstacles and level of EMI implementation in Armenian universities
2. To identify issues raised by students related to English teaching



2. Context

2.1. English as a Medium for Instruction

Change of language for both lecturers and students has advantages and challenges. If a university can offer EMI courses, it can attract international students and faculty, exchange easily with other countries, present at international conferences, publish in English and rise in the international rankings.

According to the results of our research in 87% of Armenian universities EMI programs comply with ECTS, which is one more important indicator for further development of integration of EMI in Armenia.

In 73% of universities EMI curricula usually have paper-based form and only in 27% online form.

In 40% of universities there is no clear understanding of EMI program concept and that think that any program in Armenian can be directly translated into English and used as EMI program. This is an alarm that integration of EMI in Armenian Higher Education will need a lot of efforts, international consultancy from EU countries with well established EMI programs and will meet lot of difficulties in this way.

All universities mentioned that for them very important and they will only benefit if will have opportunity to establish special centre/training program for EMI lecturers, to have open-source written or online guide for university's EMI lecturers or teachers aiming at becoming EMI lecturers, self-study materials for teachers and to have compliance of university's EMI programs with ECTS standards. From which we can conclude that the main goals and aims of SMARTI project is very important for Armenian Higher Education in a process of integration and further development.

2.2. Student centered learning

Student-centered learning moves students from passive receivers of information to active participants in their own discovery process. In the system level, this requires implementing curriculum planning practices, pedagogy and assessment methods that support a student-centric approach. In the classroom, teachers craft instruction and apply technology in a way



that best serves each student's learning journey. This approach is especially important implementation of EMI programs.

Analyzing the results of field study and follow-up student survey we find out that from proposed 4 approaches to teaching through EMI the most important were Implementation of student-centered technologies (communicative approach, active participation of students and Implementation of blended learning environment (E-learning + offline activities). Should be mentioned that 2 others also were evaluated as important.

According to the results of field survey in the list of difficulties which meet EMI teachers are mentioned Establishing a good rapport/contact with students and Lack of motivation among students, in case that according of follow-up student survey results the main difficulties difficulties due to which students are unable to participate or fully participate in EMI programs are mentioned low level of English, quality and limited areas of EMI programs in universities.

2.3. Teacher Enhancement

The question of teacher ability to teach through the medium of English may not simply be a question of their own level of English proficiency but of their general pedagogy, their understanding of the linguistic challenges EMI students face, and the interaction skills needed to communicate and ensure content learning with students whose own level of English may be insufficient.

According to analysis of surveys we can conclude that for the success of EMI program development and delivery the key point is a professional development of the teaching staff.

The analysis of the data related to the teaching tools used in teaching through EMI (10 different tools) shows that all of them are mentioned between important and very important.

As a teaching materials in all universities teachers in different proportion of course but trying to use classical teaching materials and modern tools and techniques too. In only half of interviewed universities there is written guideline for EMI and from SMARTI consortium universities only Vanadzor State University after H. Tumanyan has such a guideline.

Analysis of the results shows that for EMI teachers are very important following skills: perfect command of the English language, perfect research and academic writing skills (in English), to be able to follow ECTS-format when developing a course, to have a proper level of IT competence, to be able to use interactive way of teaching, to have a good oral teaching skills.



At the same time as main difficulties, which EMI lecturers usually experience according to our results are: first of all fluency, vocabulary and grammar of English. Should be mentioned that all universities would like to increase number of EMI teachers and also skills and knowledge of existing teacher in their universities.

Analyzing resources which will be needed for transfer of any course into EMI Format we find out that all main resources we need for different professional trainings of teaching staff (language training for a teacher, didactic training how to teach within EMI, training for a teacher on how to adapt a course to ECTS etc.) as well as trainings for improvement of list of soft skills (Teamwork skills, Decision-making, Effective business and personal communication, Creative thinking, Critical thinking, Motivation)

3. Methodology

For Field study was chosen online survey with 27 questions for representatives of 15 Armenian HEIs. In addition to this survey was prepared follow-up student online survey (14 questions) for students of 5 Armenian consortium universities.

For desk study was collected institutional report of 5 Armenian consortium universities.

All collected data was analyze quantitatively and qualitatively. Based on results of analysis was prepared final report, which will show ongoing situation in the country.

According to the results we got 15 answers from 15 different HEIs of Armenia for field study. All respondents of field study had very good understanding of what EMI means and had a general overview of EMI in their universities.

For follow up students survey we got 293 answers from students of different levels (bachelor, master and PhD), from which 120 has experience in EMI programs and 173 not. This is also an indicator showing involvement percentage and opportunities to learn EMI programs in Armenian universities.

The data which was suitable for visualization are presented in the form of graphs in annex.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. EMI Strategy and Action



I – Practices on Internationalization of HEI: ECTS; Institutional Strategies, Department/Faculty Strategies, Financial European Tools for this area, EU Policies concerning EMI or Internationalization, ...

In 2005 Armenia acceded to Bologna Process, and since then intensive education reforms have been carried out in all universities of Armenia. These reforms aim at integrating the University into EHEA. Education is based on the core principles of the ECTS.

Experience of internationalization of universities are quite diverse.

VSU has close cooperation with more than 25 major HEIs in Europe and post-soviet countries. Since 2013, serious investments have been made to improve the level of higher education at VSU. As a result, five Tempus (LeAGUe, SSRULLI, VERITAS, MAHATMA and GOVERN) and four Erasmus Mundus mobility projects have been implemented. Due to Tempus projects the University has undergone positive structural changes and Erasmus Mundus and Erasmus+ mobility projects have given VSU students and staff an opportunity to gain European teaching and learning experience. From 2017 to 2020 VSU was involved in the Erasmus+ Capacity building BOOST/ Boosting Armenian Universities Internationalization Strategy & Marketing project which enhanced the strategic planning of the VSU internationalization. Since 2018 due to the involvement of VSU staff in the Erasmus+ PRINTEL project/ Change in Classroom: Promoting Innovative Teaching & Learning to Enhance Student Learning Experience in Eastern Partnership Countries/ many academic staff members have been trained and imparted their knowledge and expertise to a great number of VSU internal and external stakeholders.

PAARA has developed its Internationalization Concept in line with the Strategic Plan 2019-2024 which in its turn complies with the RA Government Program in terms of internationalization of higher education and research field in Armenia. The Concept, as well as the Strategic Plan 2019-2024, stipulates provision of various professional courses in English. In addition, international accreditation of at least one specialty (MPA or MBA) is also envisaged in the above documents; hence steps are being made in the direction of transmuting the relevant study programs into English-taught ones.

SUSh has been participated in Tempus, Erasmus Mundus, Erasmus + programs since 1996. In the scope of BOOST/ Boosting Armenian Universities Internationalization Strategy and Marketing project (2016-2020) 5 regulations and procedures were developed and approved by SUSh (Regulation of the Centre for External Cooperation and Public Relations, Public



Relations Procedure, Academic Mobility Procedure, SUSH Marketing Strategy Concept, Policy For Internationalization Of Science And Research)

In compliance with its Strategic Development Plan GSU has been actively working to conclude agreements, and memorandums of understanding with local and international universities, institutions, and organizations, participated in the design of the drafts of proposals for EU funded KA1 and KA2 projects, organized English language trainings for its academic and administrative staff, has been a consortium member of several Tempus and Erasmus+ projects.

Armenian National Agrarian University in the field of international cooperation has adopted to bring the university to international recognition, integration in the area of international higher education, leading research and advisory services provider policy.

During the last years ANAU has been actively involved in various international projects. Particularly, for that period ANAU was involved in 4 Tempus (GOVERN, ARMENQA, SuToMa, LeAGUe) and 3 Erasmus Mundus programs (ELECTRA, EFFORT, EMBER). ANAU has 38 ongoing agreements within the framework of Erasmus + KA1, 4 Erasmus+ KA2 ongoing projects (SMARTI, GEOTAK, ABIONET, TOPAS). In total, ANAU cooperates with around 100 international organizations.

II – Support Structures: Innovation in Teaching; Technologies for Teaching, EMI Centers, Training in English For Teachers, Offices to Support Mobility for Teachers and Students...

English as Medium of Instruction approaches are not adopted in SuSh and GSU. No any EMI centers in universities. In all universities Offices to Support Mobility for Teachers and Students are international relations department and for Training in English For Teachers and students usually are responsible Chairs of Languages or Language centers (for example in ANAU).

III – HEI Strategy for EMI: Joint Degrees Programs, Full Undergraduate Program in English (corresponding program also in Portuguese); Full Master Program in English (corresponding program also in Portuguese); Promoting Students/Teachers Participation in International Competitions/Challenges/Awards (Ecotrophelia, Health Innovation,...)

In case of HEI Strategy for EMI experiences and efforts of universities are very diverse.

As was mentioned previously in GSU and SUSH there are no EMI programs. In case of other universities the situation is following:



PAARA provides only postgraduate study programs (*MA, PhD and Postdoc*). English is included in Master's and PhD programs as a mandatory *course (Professional Foreign Language)*, and some courses in different specialties are taught in English.

As a key step towards Internationalization at home, the Chair of Foreign Languages of VSU embarked on the enhancement of English proficiency level of the academic staff. To this end, EMI course was developed in the frame of which 10 Academic staff members were trained to teach their academic disciplines in English. The course started from February, 2017 and lasted till June, 2020.

The Agribusiness Teaching Center (ATC) is an exceptional example of applying an EMI. ATC provides two-year undergraduate program and the 18-month Master of Agribusiness (MAB) program are based on the related Agricultural Economics curricula. ANAU has a lot of implemented and ongoing English taught short courses as well.

IV – HEI Initial Teacher Training for EMI (in Portugal HEI Teachers started holding a PhD, ...): PhD offered in English (the unique path to initial training of teachers ; English Training for PhD Students; Course with adequate SCL methodologies; Involving PhD Student in International Innovations Programs (EIT,))

For support of non-English native Students and teaching staff many universities have language centers which periodically provide English courses for different levels. The same structures support also teaching staff. According to the results of field study in 87% of universities there are opportunities for to develop their English-skills within a special university-based training. Unfortunately, in Armenian HEIs there no established special EMI centers, which underlines importance of SMARTI project and establishment of EMI centers in consortium universities.

V – Programs to support non-English native Students (indirectly have impact on the Teacher's work): Pathway Support Program; Erasmus Mobility Program for Students

For Teaching Enhancement main part of Armenian universities which participate in Erasmus+ KA1 International Credit Mobility are using this opportunity for improvement of language skills of teaching staff and students and also gaining new experience from European partners. The other source for teaching staff and students' trainings are international projects including Erasmus+ KA2. Unfortunately, here also we meet inhomogeneous level of international cooperation between Armenian and EU HEIs, some universities are very active and lot of



opportunities for development and cooperation, the others are not involved in any international projects.

Annually in 87% of universities in average 1-10 teachers usually travel abroad for academic exchange and only 13% of universities don't have academic exchange for teaching staff. At the same time using the same academic exchange programs 87% of universities annually receive at least 1-5 lecturers from others countries for teaching. In both cases mostly it's short visit, but even 1 week exchange can have a big influence on improvement of skills and knowledge of staff and students.

Annexes

List of universities participated in field study

N/N	Name of the university
1	Yerevan State University
2	State University of Shirak
3	Goris State University
4	Eurasia International University
5	Northern University
6	Public Administration Academy of the Republic of Armenia
7	ISEC NAS RA
8	Vanadzor State University after H. Tumanyan
9	Armenian State University Of Economics
10	Armenian National Agrarian University
11	National University of Architecture and Construction of Armenia
12	Gavar State University
13	Brusov State University of Languages and Social Sciences
14	Yerevan Gladzor University
15	UFAR- French University Foundation







