



EMI training for university professors: a potential tool for internationalization

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This research took the form of a case study involving professors from the seven state universities within Paraná, which are all involved in the Paraná speaks Languages Program. The focus of the research is on investigating professors' attitude towards EMI and the extent to which this aligns with the institutional viewpoint; to ascertain how well prepared professors feel to deliver courses in English both before and after EMI training, and to find out from them and students what additional support they feel they require to deliver their classes in English. The results of the case study will help deepen understanding of the challenges faced by professors in Brazil delivering classes through the medium of English; it will also inform the direction of future research involving a wider sample of professors and also students with the aim of informing opinion how to deliver EMI classes most effectively.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

EMI has been a growing phenomenon to better support the internationalisation development process in the Higher Education Institutions from

countries where English is not their first language. This research builds on previous studies, in particular that carried out by Banks (2017) where research questions explored the attitudes and needs of EMI lecturers in Spain. The overall picture emerging through this and related research, e.g. O'Dowd (2015), is that there is a significant gap between the importance attributed to offering subjects through English and the attention being paid to the training of teachers. Not only is little attention paid to EMI training, but the needs of EMI professors are not adequately taken into account when devising professional development programmes (Airey, 2013; Kling, 2013; Johnson, 2012) to ensure training is relevant to their needs and sensitive to their teaching contexts (Bax, 1997).

As Gröblinger (2017) observes, even assuming that professors have an adequate command of English, the challenges are still not to be underestimated, as summarised by Breeze and Sancho Guinda (2017: 10-11): *Lecturers face the challenge of not only having to update their teaching methodology but also having to do it in a foreign language.* O'Dowd (2015) points out the perception is that EMI training is more concerned with the "E" of the acronym rather than the "I", i.e., the focus is on improving English language skills is prioritised over improving EMI teaching methodology. While Bank (2017) found that lecturers' attitude towards institutional support and training was generally positive, feedback from this and a range of other studies (O'Dowd 2015, Dearden, 2014; Macaro, 2015; Cots, 2013; Costa & Coleman, 2013), found that training in methods adaptation would benefit EMI professors. Without adequate support, there is a risk that the transition to EMI may not be a smooth one, as professors anxiety and self-confidence is impacted, such that vulnerabilities are exposed which may result in resistance and defensive positions (Nevgi, & Löfström 2015).

METHODOLOGY

We have gathered data from two rectors, four Deans for Research and Postgraduate courses, five Deans for Undergraduate courses, eight Heads for the International Offices, 13 professors and 27 students, who have answered the questionnaires. Altogether, all the State University system was somehow represented. Having this purpose in mind, the following research questions were established: Research question 1: What is the view of EMI from the point of view of the decision makers, professors and students?; Research question 2: How prepared do professors consider themselves to be to deliver EMI classes?; Research question 3: What additional support do professors feel they need to become more effective in the use of EMI/overcome challenges? Research question 4: What suggestions do students have with regards to the teaching of disciplines in the media of English?

FINDINGS

From the participants' point of view of what EMI is for them, there is no right or wrong path on the way, but a medium term path, that considers the context in which EMI will be approached. Each country, each educational context has its own perception of EMI, development and implementation and its effectiveness will highly depend on the way it is implemented in their own contexts. Having said that, EMI for professors, students, and decision makers is a institutionally-driven process, with clear language policies aligned with the university community interests aimed at supporting the internationalisation process of the higher education institutions considering language support and development to ensure the content acquisition and recognition of the whole process for both professors and students.

From opinions expressed by the professors, their willingness to deliver their content through EMI and the awareness of its contribution were clearly observed. However, the institutional support is the key element to achieve to support them and have EMI as a sustainable and effective process. By professors' conceptions they somehow feel prepared in term of the willingness to take part in the process, but the success of their participation will depend on both improvement of their language proficiency and EMI methodology, together with the institutional support in terms of incentives and language policies. Whether all these aspects are taken into consideration, professors will feel much more prepared and confident to deliver their content through EMI. There is lots to consider to better support the professor to deliver their content through EMI. In general terms, all these aspects must be part of the institutional language policy, taking into account the university community involved and its impacts.

On the other hand, students considered the professors need to be well prepared, not just linguistically, but also about in relation to content. Besides, they noticed some professors have low English proficiency and were not feeling comfortable to express themselves in English. Because of that, most students (17) agreed that the professor's methodology (skills and techniques) needs to be different when delivering EMI classes, as it requires more effort from both professors and students, and the classes need more audio-visual resources and dynamism to motivate the students. Besides, 80% of students also considered classes need to be objective and straightforward, as well as not teacher-centered (lecture). Also, 90% of students were aware that EMI requires more preparation, which is necessary for professors to find ways to achieve effective class delivery. In addition to that, 85% of students state the importance for professors to consider the heterogeneity of the class membership and adapt the methodology accordingly, thereby increasing the impact of the course subject learning.

When considering the kind of support that should be given by the university for the teaching and learning through EMI, 80% of the students have considered the following points:

CONCLUSIONS

In this research project, we aimed at investigating professors' attitude towards EMI and the extent to which this aligns with the institutional viewpoint and better understand the professors' and students' needs, as well as their feelings and expectations towards having EMI in their academic life. From this pilot project, we could better comprehend the key factors to support the development of a State Policy on benefit of supporting internationalisation in Parana Higher Education system, by means of the State Program Parana speaks Languages/English.

Initially, when the project was proposed, it was expected to have guidelines and policies for delivering and assessing EMI classes, which might be proposed considering the data collected through this case study evolving decision makers, professors and students.

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