Support to strengthening the higher education system in Azerbaijan

Twinning project ENI/2018/395-401

Mission Report

Short-Term Mission on Activity 3.7 Undertake a mock accreditation at each pilot university for a study programme in a priority area

(December 9-13, 2019)

1. <u>**Name and Function of the Expert:**</u>

Full name of expert

Ms. Jolita Butkiene, Lithuania   Signature

Full name of expert

Mr. Boris Misnevs, Latvia   Signature

2.   **Objective and Tasks of the Mission:**

The mission is carried out within the framework of:

COMPONENT 3: **THE QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM IS FURTHER DEVELOPED TO REFLECT THE STUDENT-CENTEREDNESS OF STUDY PROGRAMMES**

Activity 3.7 Undertake a mock accreditation at each pilot university for a study programme (Informatics teacher) in a priority area

Benchmarks for this activity are:
- Minimum 4 mock accreditations of study programmes implemented

3. Time schedule of mission:

Date and Time	Activity
Monday, 9th of December, 2019	Preparation for the Informatics and Informatics and Mathematics Teacher study programmes peer- evaluation meetings at three universities , distribution of tasks among the peer-review team, revision of the methodology for the peer-evaluation, discussion of the questions arising from the Reports submitted for the Informatics and Informatics and Mathematics Teacher study programmes peer-review evaluation.
Tuesday, 10th of December, 2019	Peer-evaluation visit to Baku State University to evaluate Informatics Teacher study programme. Meetings with the main stakeholder groups: management of the University and the programme, self- evaluation group, academic staff of the programme, students of the programme, graduates, and employers. Visit to the Classrooms, computer labs, libraries, and other facilities to evaluate the sufficiency for the achievement of the programme learning outcomes as described by the State Standard.
Wednesday, 11th of December, 2019	Peer-evaluation visit to Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University (ASPU) to evaluate Informatics Teacher study programme. Meetings with the main stakeholder groups: management of the University and the programme, self- evaluation group, academic staff of the programme, students of the programme, graduates, and employers. Visit to Classrooms, computer labs, libraries, and other facilities to evaluate the sufficiency for the achievement of the programme learning outcomes as described by the State Standard.
Thursday, 12th of December, 2019	Peer-evaluation visit to Sumgait State University (SSU) to evaluate Informatics Teacher study programme. Meetings with the main stakeholder groups: management of the University and the programme, self- evaluation group, academic staff of the programme, students of the programme, graduates, and employers. Visit to Classrooms, computer labs, libraries, and other facilities to evaluate the sufficiency for the achievement of the programme learning outcomes as described by the State Standard.
Friday, 13th of December, 2019	Meeting at the Accreditation and Nostrification Office (ANO) to discuss the process of the first peer-review visits, findings from the visit, preliminary conclusions, and to plan distant work among members of expert team to finalise evaluation reports.

4. Relevant Background Information/State of Affairs regarding the mission

Only institutional evaluation has been performed in higher education institutions of Azerbaijan so far. The first Twinning project implemented in 2015-2017 supported the then newly established (2016) Accreditation and Nostrification Offiice at the Ministry of Education to build up its capacity in the field of quality assurance in compliance with the principles of the European Higher Education Area. The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Azerbaijan (AzSG) reflecting best EU quality assurance practices were developed jointly by the Twinning experts and ANO staff and pilot institutional evaluations were carried out in three pilot universities. At current stage the Accreditation and Nostrifcation Office needs to build its capacity in the field of study programme accreditation. As part of the Component III of the ongoing Twinning project certain number of documents concerning the programme evaluation (Handbook for Requirements and Methodologies for Programme Evaluation, Guidelines for Assessing Competence-based and Student-Centered Approach of St.Ps, Grid for Self-assessment

of Competence-orientedness and Student-centeredness of Study Programmes) have been already developed by the Twinning experts to ensure the compliance of programme accreditation practices in Azerbaijan with EU best practices. As a next step, the higher education institutions were trained on how to conduct a self-evaluation of study programmes and were instructed to write the initial draft of self-evaluation reports on relevant programmes and submit them both in Azerbaijani and English before 25th of April. The second mission under this Activity took place from 29th of April to 3rd of May 2019. The objective of this mission was to hold meetings with the HEIs representatives involved in the SER writing and to support them in this process. The deadline for the submission of final draft of self-evaluation reports was set for the end of August 2019. Mock evaluation of four pilot programmes has already been conducted so far. The current mission which is being implemented under the Activity 3.7 aims to conduct the mock evaluation of the programmes in Informatics teacher in three pilot universities.

5. Achievement of the Expected Results

Planned action was achieved. Three mock-evaluations of the study programme of Informatics and Informatics and Mathematics Teacher study programmes in three universities: Baku State University (BSU), Azerbaijan State Pedagogical University (ASPU), and Sumgait State University (SSU).

6. Unexpected Results

State if any unexpected results were identified during the mission. Add any relevant comments.
Not applicable.

7. Issues Left Open After the Mission

State if any issues were left open. Add any relevant comments.
Not applicable.

8. Recommendations (including recommendation for future missions)

1. In the mock evaluation and accreditation exercise the experts suggest to evaluate the whole area and as it is the mock evaluation not to score points.

2. The experts suggest to review the criteria in **Annex 7 of the programme Accreditation Methodolody – Criteria and indicators for study programme evaluation and accreditation in Azerbaijan** and propose to consider the following amendments:

a) The Criteria section Curriculum design is too ambitious and suggested edition is not in line with current situation at universities. For example, the majority of already existing text books do not fit suggested criteria. Complete redesign of curriculum in current time is quite possible and requires several years. Suggestion for mock accreditation – assess process of transferring from teacher-centered teaching to student centered with proper indicators and criteria.

b) The first subciteria *Relevant teaching documents are in line with the aims and learning outcomes of the programme* in the Evaluation area 1 **Programme aims and learning outcomes** is ambiguous as documents by themselves cannot be in line with the learning outcomes.

c) ***Existence of an opportunity for students to gain credits inside and outside the higher education institution** does not belong to the **Curriculum design area,*** belongs to the study process, not curricular design.

d) *It is difficult to assess* **Procedure of recognition of prior learning (incl. non-formal, informal learning) and number of cases** as there are no special by-laws or regulations on the government level to allow universities to so.

e) Evaluation criteria "The teaching staff of the programme is involved in research (art) **directly** related to the study programme being reviewed" must be soften – the word directly we recommend to delete – to avoid misunderstandings and unreasonable requirements.

f) Evaluation criteria *The teaching staff teaching the subjects **are selected by students*** is ambiguous as it is not a general practice that students select teaching staff, selection of teaching staff is a responsibility of a university.

g) The criteria "Financing of the programme is appropriate for obtaining the learning outcomes" is hardly measurable. Usually financing is done not in line with learning outcome achievements. Formally it may remain.

h) Statement "Quantity and quality indicators of students per academic years" needs a clarification. Are indicators the same for all programs or they are defined by each university on the base of their strategy?

i) Statement "Forms and methods of students' participation in teaching process" requires clarification to avoid misunderstandings. May be we are asking about teaching process improvement? Or students' involvement in the teaching process by means of active teaching methods?

j) Speaking about admission we may use also "matriculation" word.

k) In the statement "Data on admission marks and attrition (drop-out) rates (examination information)" we suggest to separate into two parts: "Data on admission marks" and "Data on attrition (drop-out) rates with root causes analysis", then "Causes drop-out" may be deleted.

l) *List of the **master's final thesis** for the past two years with the indication of the subject, supervisor and assessment of the project.* As bachelor students also may have a final thesis, **master's** should be eliminated.

m) Statement "Proportion of students' time allocated to **consultation, practice and independent work"** seems has no sense because such separation (between the three items?) is regulated locally for separate subjects and is not directly dedicated to whole program. Moreover, practice consists of the contact hours in the place of practice and individual work hours spent by the student preparing for the internship tasks. If we want to evaluate the proportion between the contact and individual work hours, we should formulate the question: **The proportion between the contact and individual work hours is adequate.**

9. Acknowledgments (if any)

The experts extent their appreciation for the support during the evaluation exercise.

Annexes

(if any)

Centre international d'études pédagogiques (CIEP)   **Ministry of Education of the Republic of Azerbaijan**