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STRATEGIZING THE INTEGRATION OF THE EFFECTIVE TRADITIONAL AND INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGIC METHODS AS PART OF THE PROCESS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE JEAN MONNET UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMME IN EUROPEAN STUDIES AT IVANE JAVAKHISHVILI TBILISI STATE UNIVERSITY

Abstract

This article reviews the context and some of the most important aspects of the process of the development of the new undergraduate programme in European Studies at the Institute for European Studies (IES) of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University (TSU). The action was financed by the EU within the frames of Erasmus+ Jean Monnet project 'EUStBA'. This support became a game-changer in terms of enabling the meaningful participation of the large circle of stakeholders during the different phases of project implementation. Once we had set in train the project of completing our efforts in the building of the European Studies education at all three cycles of education, the initiatives in this field rapidly came to be viewed within the framework of the institutional development and self-sustainability strategy. This action facilitated not only establishment and accreditation of the new undergraduate programme, but also synergized well with the upgrade of the TSU Institute for European Studies across the range of vast spectrum of issues, which ended up in the second mandatory re-accreditation of Master's programme and successful finalization of the long negotiations on two double degree programmes.

The working package on the effective amalgamation of the traditional and innovative Teaching Methods was another important dimension across the various phases of the 'EUStBA' project implementation. This sub-action made sure that the content of the new undergraduate programme reaches its most important audience in an efficient manner. Hence, the second part of this article discusses the role of the 'EUStBA' project in mainstreaming the elaboration of a coherent and a purpose-driven strategy, which was aimed at incorporation effectively of traditional and innovative teaching methods in the Undergraduate and graduate programmes of IES. The activities aimed at teaching and learning the EU from the perspective of four different disciplines at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University was indeed a challenging endeavor that paved the way for the successful outcome in the accreditation process of the newly developed Undergraduate programme in European Studies.

Key Words: Undergraduate Programme in European Studies, Development of the Programme, Accreditation, Incorporation of the effective traditional and innovative Pedagogic Methods in the curriculum

Introduction

The EU funded Erasmus+ Jean Monnet project "Establishment of the interdisciplinary undergraduate/Bachelor's programme in European Studies /EUStBA at TSU" was unique with its 'cross-fertilization' effect, because it enhanced the awareness-raising on European Union, its values, EU Law and Policies across the faculties of the university. Both the elaborative as well as the implementation phases of the project had been directed at the development and the refinement of the new undergraduate programme as an ultimate objective. The

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adventure had been undertaken in a special framework of the workshops and conferences that ensured the lively discussions among the large groups of stakeholders. The international experts from various prominent higher education institutions of Europe, with whom IES-TSU established the sound partnerships, facilitated the process.

The experienced staff of the Institute for European Studies of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University played its decisive role in crafting out the successful outcome: the administrative and academic personnel of 12 people with a vast institutional memory² had been enthusiastic to engage in discussions, to participate in collaborative efforts and to accept criticism positively. While the programme development was a constant and a daily non-stop routine during the two and a half years period for the author of this paper, it could not have been a successful endeavor without the input of the stakeholders provided during the high-level workshops and international conferences. These high-level events became a very valuable platform for the discussions and reflections on the particularities of interdisciplinary European Studies education at undergraduate level. This was a thought-provoking process, but at the same time very challenging as well, because establishment of the Bachelor's programme had a context of accomplishment of all three cycles of European Studies education at IES in TSU, which had to encounter a holistic approach.

During the development phase of the Erasmus+ project, the IES team perceived the workshops and international conferences as some specific tools for spilling over the relevant context on the EU and European Studies education, for setting the standards for future programme and for sharing the best experiences about the mechanisms of bringing the positive repercussions to the broad objective, which is the knowledge-based society. This had been accomplished by elaborating the curriculum, which could deliver both the strong disciplinary knowledge as well as the most relevant content on the acute EU issues from the interdisciplinary perspective to the prospective undergraduate students. Later on it had been transformed into the key format for the structured dialogue aimed at finding the best solutions to the dynamically emerging issues related to programme accreditation.

All of these efforts had been reflected into the sequence of the logical and needs-based events as a result of which the following deliverables were successfully accomplished: a. The interdisciplinary curriculum of the new undergraduate programme in European Studies had been elaborated. It includes the programme aims, values, correlation of the objectives with the learning outcomes, programme structure and content, curriculum map, organization of the effectiveness of the teaching and learning methods, adequacy of the criteria envisaged under the student assessment schemes, admission preconditions, a quality assurance system and opportunities for the institutional self-improvement, the framework for the professional development of the academic and administrative staff involved in the implementation of the programme, tentative budget and the self-sustainability mechanisms, shortcomings and risks, etc. b. The detailed syllabi for all the courses, which were integrated into the new curriculum, had been developed. c. The governmental accreditation of the programme had been accomplished. d. Some of the most important outcomes of the international workshops and conferences had been transformed into the academic publication, thus enabling the results to be accessible for wider circle of stakeholders.

The most demanding phase of the 'EUStBA' project implementation was the 'paper-work', which is the process of preparation of the new undergraduate programme for the accreditation; It required a daily commitment of the author of this paper for more than two years period. By encountering the changing educational context of the EU as well as the demands of the authors of the specialization courses (those covering European and EU issues) to build a solid module of the so-called disciplinary courses/'scaffolding courses' (for example to teach first 'the Principles of Economics' as a precondition for the course on the 'Economics of European Integration', etc.), - it took considerable time and efforts to accomplish the following tasks: 1. To develop the strategy and the first draft concept of the programme for the discussion with various stakeholders, 2. To outline the structure of the curriculum with clear proportions of mandatory and elective courses while at the same time fitting it into the requirements of the national legislative framework, 3. To fill in the special accreditation application forms of hundreds of pages, integrating in it the feedback coming from stakeholders as well as interpreting the results of the research including the case studies and the comparative analyses of similar international experiences, 4.

² IES of TSU operationalizes the interdisciplinary Master's programme since 2007, the Doctoral Programme in European Studies since 2014 in European Studies and the Regional Master Programme in Human Rights and Democratisation under the EU Globas Campus initiative since 2015.

To transform the analyses of the surveys with focus groups into the special annexed forms of 'evidences' which had been attached to the accreditation documents, etc.

After the full package of the newly developed Undergraduate programme had been submitted for the accreditation to the National Centre for Educational Quality Enhancement (under the Ministry of Education and Sciences of Georgia), the second phase of this Erasmus+ Jean Monnet project had been launched. At this stage, the project was aimed at the activities directed towards the identification of the best ways for the successful implementation of the new programme as well as at deepening of the content of the curriculum and giving a meaning to some particular aspects of the syllabi of the courses. It had been mainstreamed again through the second-round of workshops and international conferences. These events facilitated the project team to outline the long-term quality assurance mechanisms, helped in setting up the strategy on self-sustainability as well as to draft the guidelines for increasing the employability of prospective graduates. The international experts' panels provided the valuable insights: their key note speeches and the 'external evaluation' documents paved the way for the meaningful dialogue with TSU academic staff, quality assurance experts and the administration. The workshops and the conferences were open for the stakeholders' contributions, where they could engage in the discussions on the topics related to the structured approaches during elaboration of the undergraduate programme in European Studies.

One of the most important dimensions of the second phase of the project implementation had been a dedicated efforts of IES, aimed at outlining a broad scope of the pedagogic methods and tools that could have been used by the Academic Staff of TSU across all three levels of European Studies education. A coherently elaborated strategy on the effective teaching and learning methodology usually plays one of the decisive roles in the successful accreditation outcome: it largely determines whether the academic staff involved in the programme implementation have the capability to meet the broad objectives of the curriculum as well as whether they have the ability to achieve the specific learning outcomes defined in the syllabi of their courses. This article will review both the features of the developmental phase of the undergraduate European Studies programme as well as the commitment of the project team to strategize the implementation of the effective traditional methodology and innovative pedagogic tools in its interdisciplinary curriculum.

Phase 1. Development of the new Undergraduate programme in European Studies at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University

Development of the new interdisciplinary Undergraduate programme in European Studies became possible within the frames of the EU funded Erasmus+ Jean Monnet project "EUStBA". The idea itself on the development of the Bachelor's programme at TSU was envisaged under the strategy and the action plan (hereinafter IES-AP) long before launching the application process for the mentioned EU grant: The strategy was elaborated by the author of this paper, which had been asserted³ upon her election as the Director of the TSU Institute for European Studies in 2010. This very document structured both the short term as well as the long-term priorities as the 'building blocks', which could incrementally facilitate the excellence in teaching, learning and research at IES in the future; Expanding the scope of the European Studies education as well as the objectives related to the achievement of the self-sustainability had been enumerated under the column of the long-term goals.

Among the immediate objectives of the IES-AP 2010 had been enlisted the need to lead the English-taught interdisciplinary Master's programme in European Studies to its first accreditation. The concept of the MA programme was elaborated by the international experts under the EC/TACIS project in 2007, but it had not been wrapped up in the accreditation as the ultimate output, until this task was successfully accomplished in 2011.⁴

³ Director of IES has an obligation to present the Strategy with its Action Plan to the IES Scientific Council for discussion, and afterwards it is asserted by the Rector of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University. The First Strategy and Action Plan was asserted in September 2010.

⁴ Institute for European Studies (IES) was established at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University with the support of European Union through its local Delegation to Georgia under TACIS programme in 2007. The idea was to launch the first interdisciplinary interfaculty English taught Master's Programme in European Studies in South Caucasus region which was successfully accomplished with the involvement of academic staff from the University Pierre Mendès France of Grenoble (France), Centre for Public Reforms of Innsbruck (Austria) and Panteion University of Social and Political Sciences of Athens (Greece). The consortium members contributed much in implementing new student-centred teaching and learning methods, allowing the MA programme to reach European quality standards in accordance to Bologna Process. MA programme proved to be very attractive both for Georgian as well as international students. Apart from this, IES -as a focal

After the necessary upgrade of the MA programme in line with the national quality assurance standards, the Accreditation Council on Education Programmes (under the Ministry of Education and Science of Georgia) by its decision no. 97 granted the accreditation to the IES MA programme on October 17 of 2011⁵. The accreditation had been extended until 1 July 2022 by the Ordinance no. 1881 of 7 September 2017 of the Government of Georgia.⁶

The establishment of the interdisciplinary English-taught Doctoral programme in European Studies had been defined as one of the most important intermediate goals along with the idea of the creation of the bilingual scientific journal, which could turn itself into a platform for the academic dialogue provided to the local researchers and scientists. Both of these objectives of the IES-AP had been accomplished in 2014⁷.

The development of the double degree Master's programmes and the elaboration of the Undergraduate Programme in European Studies, as defined under IES Strategy, had always been considered as pivotal for reinforcing the excellence, promoting the internationalization agenda, increasing the accessibility to European Studies education to local communities and speeding up the resilience of the Institute for European Studies *vis-à-vis* the continuous financial shocks it had to face as a result of TSU austerity policies during past decade.

The negotiations on the Double Degree Master Programme with Vilnius University (Lithuania) as well as with the Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences (Latvia), were launched in 2019 by the initiative of the author of this paper. As a result, the two double degree Master's programmes had been elaborated: MA programmes in European Studies and European Law/International Law (Vilnius University) and MA programmes in European Studies, Strategic Communication and Governance (with Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences). The first cohort of the European Studies MA students of the Institute for European Studies of TSU had been sent to Vilnius and Valmiera in 2021. Successful finalization of the negotiations on the two double degree programmes became possible only after the accomplishment of due mandatory re-accreditation of the TSU Master's programme in European Studies.⁸ It is to be emphasized, that the Erasmus+ Jean Monnet project "EUSTBA" became an aid to the successful outcome of this process: it synergized well with the primary objectives of the grant, which had been defined as the establishment and accreditation of the Undergraduate programme in European Studies at TSU. The accreditation of the newly established Bachelor's programme as well as the re-accreditation of the Master programme for the purposes of establishment of double degree opportunities had been mainstreamed by the administration and academic staff of IES as a joint action.

As it was mentioned above, the key concept behind the Erasmus+ Jean Monnet "EUSTBA" project, was the establishment of the undergraduate programme. The finalized concept about the Bachelor's programme in European Studies at TSU was given its credence via the set of internal and external self-evaluations as well as through the analyses and synthesis of accumulated experiences, which the IES administration and its academic staff had acquired over past 15 years, during the process of building the inter-faculty and interdisciplinary

point of brightest representatives of academia and society involved into EU-Georgia policy making process - has taken the path of transformation into the place of constant academic inflow paving the way in 2014 towards elaboration and expansion of research activities through the process of establishment of interdisciplinary structured Doctoral programme in European Studies supported by the EU under ENPI project (in 2014). In this process the contribution of international experts from the Trinity College Dublin, Central European University and Ljubljana University together with local academic staff of IES is to be underlined. The Institute for European Studies is conceptually based on four faculties of Tbilisi State University - Faculty of Law, Faculty of Economics and Business, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences as well as Faculty of Humanities. This model provided with tremendous opportunity in outsourcing, cross-listing and effective collaboration. Being in partnership with Committee on European Integration of the Parliament of Georgia since 2010 as well as with the circles of academia within country and abroad, facilitated upgrading IES onto the new level of opportunities, which enhanced the realization of ideas through various international and local undertakings.

⁵ Available at: <https://eqe.ge/ka/decisions/2378/show>

⁶ Available at: http://ies.tsu.edu.ge/data/file_db/Accreditation/%E1%83%9B%E1%83%97%E1%83%90%E1%83%95%E1%83%A0%E1%83%9D%E1%83%91%E1%83%98%E1%83%A1%20%E1%83%92%E1%83%90%E1%83%9C%E1%83%99%E1%83%90%E1%83%A0%E1%83%92%E1%83%A3%E1%83%9A%E1%83%94%E1%83%91%E1%83%90%202011-2012-%E1%83%99%E1%83%9D%E1%83%93%E1%83%98%E1%83%A4%E1%83%98%E1%83%AA%E1%83%98%E1%83%A0%E1%83%94%E1%83%91%E1%83%9A%E1%83%98.pdf

⁷ The Doctoral Programme was accredited first time on 25 March 2014, by the Decision no. 55 of the Accreditation Council on Education Programmes. At: <https://eqe.ge/ka/decisions/886/show>

The TSU Doctoral Programme in European Studies was successfully re-accredited on 1 October 2019 by the Decision no. 183 of the Accreditation Council on Education Programmes. At: <https://eqe.ge/ka/decisions/9891/show>

⁸ On 30 June 2022 the interdisciplinary Masters programme in European Studies of IES-TSU was re-accredited by the Decision no. 805701 of the Accreditation Council on Education Programmes. At: <https://eqe.ge/ka/deqars/688/show>

Institute for European Studies. Therefore it was not a simple depiction of an over-ambitious interpretation of the results of those higher education institutions of the Europe, which are considered as leaders in the field of European Studies. Rather, the willingness of the establishment of the undergraduate programme was supposed to be assessed firstly, as a part of the general aspiration of IES towards excellence in teaching and research, which primarily aims at the promotion of European values and the knowledge on the European Union across the region; And secondly, it should had been viewed in the context of its incremental evolution towards the *sui generis* status as defined under the Institute's establishment grant agreement (TACIS) in 2007, which describes it as something more than a typical "auxiliary educational structural unit of TSU" (as it was defined by TSU Legal Department in the IES Charter) due to its autonomous character, but less than a fully-fledged faculty of the same University (because it lacks the necessary financial resources as well as the political will from the University top management to transform and upgrade it to the necessary level).

During the past decade the IES, for the purposes of quality assurance, organized several internal and external evaluations, facilitated the feasibility study, mainstreamed the regular interviewing practices with the focus groups as well as systematically analyzed the results of the inquiries distributed across the extended groups of stakeholders. During this process it had been revealed that the demand was great for the establishment of an Undergraduate (Bachelor's) programme in European Studies. On the positive side, the stakeholders regularly used to outline that the already established English-taught Master and Doctoral programmes managed to attract the best students from the country (Georgia) and across the Eastern Partnership region. Besides, these programmes also supported extensively the internationalization of Tbilisi State University. At the same time, the stakeholders used to refer to the fact, that teaching solely in English language made IES programmes accessible only to "elites" and put them somehow remote from the local Georgian population at large. This was attributed mostly by the existing reality in the country: only few potential students have a good command of English as a foreign language (even if it is the foreign language most taught in Georgian schools and is considered to be the *lingua franca* of science), while passing a high threshold test is among the mandatory pre-conditions for the admission to the programmes. Hence, the interviewees used to elaborate the opinion that it would have been reasonable if the future undergraduate programme would had been operationalized mainly in Georgian language in combination with integrating some English-taught components in the curriculum (for example, one of the suggestions was that several courses would be taught in English language, etc).

Considering all the above mentioned, the idea of establishment of undergraduate programme in European Studies at TSU consolidated around several broad objectives:

Firstly, it was aimed at accomplishment of teaching European Studies at TSU at all three cycles of higher education: at the moment of launching the Erasmus+ Jean Monnet project 'EUSTBA', the IES had operationalized higher education only at two cycles – Master's and Doctoral levels. There was a consensus at IES-TSU, that launching the European studies on undergraduate level would enable more advanced education on Master and Doctoral programmes: Starting from a scratch every time on Master's level was considered by the academic community of the Institute as a hindrance and a 'stumbling block' for increasing the responsiveness to promote academic discussions in the classrooms on the acute issues of the EU. It was believed that by offering the education on Undergraduate level, the enrollment of more highly qualified candidates on the later stages of Master's and Doctoral programmes would had been ensured.

Apart from this, establishment of the Bachelor's programme was believed to be a game-changer as it could enable application of an open-doors policy towards a wider society: As it was mentioned above, the reason behind was that the percentage of those with advanced English language skills are few in the country and therefore the number of enrolled students is traditionally substantively little as compared to other similar Master's and Doctoral programmes that are operating in Georgian language. Therefore, IES considered that the creation of an interdisciplinary Bachelor's programme in European Studies in national language would increase the scales of dissemination of knowledge about the European Affairs and the EU within the country.

Thirdly, there was a common approach at IES that the Undergraduate programme would create opportunity for the representatives of academic community at TSU to trigger the elaboration of the professional dictionary on the key terms and concepts on European Integration in the national language. It would ensure that those experts who are involved in the process of approximation of Georgia with the EU standards - are using coherent and uniform vocabulary in a sophisticated manner. We believed at IES that, launching this process would increase the internalization and domestication of EU terms, concepts and policies, hence, provide a good support to the Europeanization of Georgia.

Finally, there was a belief that undergraduate programme would create a space for IES PhD candidates as well as for the fresh graduates of the Doctoral programme to participate in the teaching process and to get a practical opportunity to disseminate their knowledge and the results of their research among the large numbers of the local students. Over the years, it was considered as a drawback that the TSU Institute for European Studies could not offer the Doctoral researchers any options to teach at the University - unlike the similar well-established practices in the Higher Education Institutions in the EU and beyond.

In order to achieve the main objectives of 'EUSTBA', the project team organized the workshops and international conferences, which became a game changer during the elaboration of Undergraduate programme in European Studies. It ensured a level playing field for the meaningful participation of all interested parties, including that of the local academic and administrative staff of TSU beyond IES setting, prominent international experts from the academic circles of the EU Higher Education Institutions, the national and international Quality Assurance specialists, the representatives of the Parliament of Georgia from the ruling coalition as well as the opposition, Members of European Parliament, Civil Society representatives, MA students, PhD researchers, graduates of IES programmes, representatives of Mass-Media, prospective employers, etc.

All the intermediate results of the workshops and thematic conferences had been published in English and Georgian languages on both IES and TSU websites, while some of the best results had been facilitated to be transformed into the academic/scientific publications. The main indicator for the objective evaluation of the successful outcome of the project implementation was obviously considered the very fact of the accreditation of the new Bachelor's programme, which was accomplished by the decision of the specially assigned council on 30 June 2022.⁹

Phase 2. Strategizing the integration of the effective pedagogic tools in the curriculum of new Jean Monnet undergraduate programme in European Studies

Incorporation of the effectively amalgamated traditional pedagogic tools and the teaching innovations at the Undergraduate, Master and Doctoral levels in European Studies programmes at IES-TSU had been largely defined by four important factors:

1. Interdisciplinary nature of the programmes. 2. Long-lasting influence of the efforts of the international experts collaborating with IES-TSU within the frames of the EU funded Tempus project "INOTLES". 3. Personal experiences of the academic personnel of IES, including those, which they acquired within the frames of the international credit mobility schemes. 4. The necessity to respond effectively to the acute challenges related to the Covid-19 pandemic.

To give the background context, it is to be mentioned that the international experts, who had been working at TSU within the frames of EC/TACIS project, developed the Master's programme in European Studies in 2007. In this process they also set the concept of interdisciplinary as a guiding principle. They did it by linking the four core courses of the Master programme curriculum to the four founding faculties of Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University. In particular, EU Law was tied to the Faculty of Law, EU Governance and Policy-Making Process was tied to the faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Economics of EU Integration was tied to the Faculty of Business and Economics and History of Europe was tied to the Faculty of Humanities). All the elective courses elaborated had been interlinked to one or several core courses indicated above.

The author of this paper as a team leader, had to consider very closely the above mentioned scheme (or in other words -a guiding principle) of the Institute, when the development phase of the interdisciplinary undergraduate programme in European Studies under the EU funded Erasmus+ Jean Monnet projects 'EUSTBA' had been launched. Initially, the decision was made on two important aspects: Firstly, agreement was reached that part of the courses of the undergraduate curriculum would be offered in both languages – Georgian as well as English (for prospective international students as well as for those local students who will opt for the course in English language upon its availability). And secondly, IES Team made a choice for integrating the research component in its undergraduate programme. Hence, they decided that the defense of the Bachelor's Thesis would be mandatory in the final semester.

The interdisciplinary curriculum of the newly developed undergraduate programme, which combines the mandatory and elective courses, is taught during the eight semesters. It comprises of 240 ECTS in total, out

⁹ See at: <https://eqe.ge/ka/deqars/687/show>

of which 145 ECTS is prescribed to the mandatory taught courses, while 15 ECTS is reserved for the research component (Bachelors Thesis), 40 ECTS is for the electives (mandatory electives) and 40 ECTS is kept for the 'free credits' (flexible electives). This last option enables the recognition of the ECTS accumulated by the prospective student within the frames of the international academic mobility or the local 'cross-listing' practices across various TSU faculties.

The courses under the 'Legal Module' of the new undergraduate programme is composed as follows: Correlation of European Union Law and Public International Law(Geo), Basics of EU Competition (Geo/Eng), Introduction to General International Law and the Law of International Organizations (Geo/Eng), History of Law (Geo), Philosophy of Law and International Law Theories (Geo/Eng), International Private Law (Geo), EU External Relations Law (Geo/Eng), EU Fundamental Rights Law (Geo), Role of the United Nations in the enforcement of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESR) (Geo/Eng), European System of Protection of Human Rights: Theory and Practice (Geo), EU-Georgian Association Agreement and Approximation of Laws (Geo/Eng), Basics of EU Private International Law (Geo/Eng).

The courses under the 'Social and Political Sciences Module' are the following: Political Ideologies (Geo), General Framework of the Political and Legal Relations between Georgia and the European Union (Geo/Eng), Politics of Euroscepticism (Geo), EU Institutions, Politics and the Mainstream Theoretical Approaches on European Integration (Geo/Eng), Introduction to Quantitative Research Methods (Eng), European Union in the Environment of Security and Military Challenges (Geo/Eng), Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods (Eng), Theories of International Relations (Geo), Foreign Policy of the European Union (Geo/Eng), Humanitarianism and International Aid (Geo), EU Energy Policy (Eng), Social Groups and Interaction (Geo), Political Systems of European States (Geo/Eng), EU role in peaceful conflict resolution (Geo/Eng), British Politics (Geo/Eng).

The 'Humanities Module' offers the following mandatory components as well as electives: History of Modern Europe from the French Revolution to Present Days (Geo), 19th Century European Literature (Geo/Eng), History of European Integration (Geo/Eng), 20th Century European Literature (Geo/Eng), Academic Writing (Geo/Eng), History of Europe and USA relations. Establishing the Euro-Atlantic Space (Geo), Intercultural Communication (Geo/Eng), Culture and Writing/Script System of Georgia (Iberia) in the Early Christianity Era, French (From A1.1 to B2.2).

The courses under the 'Economics Module' list the following titles: Principles of Microeconomics (Geo/Eng), Principles of Macroeconomics (Geo/Eng), Macroeconomics (Geo/Eng), Demographic Development of Europe (Geo/Eng), International Economics I (Geo/Eng), Export Management (Geo), Introduction to Economics of EU Integration (Geo), International Economics II (Geo/Eng), Economic History of Europe (Geo/Eng), Economics of Nordic countries (Geo).

TSU Institute for European Studies is not allowed to have its own affiliated academic staff, hence, the authors of the courses are usually coming either from the 'four founding faculties' (with Full Professors or Associate Professors), or have the status of invited academic personnel. Therefore, it is natural, that the methodology of teaching they bring to IES is very much determined by the specificities and the traditions of the faculties they are affiliated with. Sometimes the teaching practices reflect the international experience brought from the Western Universities from which our academic staff received their post-graduate education(Master's and Doctoral programmes) or acquired during their short visits within the frames of international credit mobility schemes. Because of this particularity, usually we witness the amalgamation of the traditional and innovative teaching methods with some spillover effects, which is the result of collaborative efforts under the umbrella of IES. Typically, these pedagogic methods are teaching by lecturing followed by traditional seminars where students are expected to summarize the mandatory reading material. Other tools include interactive classrooms involving debates and discussions, teamwork, cooperative learning, experiments, case analyses, mock courts, presentations, screening documentary movies, brainstorming, project-based learning, internship placements, sharing different experiences after participation in international credit mobility schemes, etc.

Majority of the Academic Personnel who were collaborating with IES before launching 'EUStBA' project, usually used to indicate in their syllabi the Problem Based Learning (PBL) and Simulations as one of the important pedagogic methodologies. The inquiry revealed that their choice was determined by the legacy of the EU funded Tempus project, acronymic as "INOTLES." This project was running during 2014-2017, where the staff of IES together with the representatives of other HEIs from EaP region had an opportunity to successfully

implement four innovative teaching pedagogical tools (PBL, Simulations, E-learning, Blended learning) in the syllabi of the curriculums of the European Studies Master and Doctoral programmes. The leading experts from the Free University Brussels, the Maastricht University and the University of Surrey contributed with the trainings of the academic personnel of the consortium.

While PBL and Simulations became very popular among the IES staff almost immediately after trainings, the coverage had not been the same for the rest of the methods. For example, Distance Teaching methodology and pedagogic tools for a Blended Learning found its true meaning only belatedly, in particular, since 2020 with Covid-19 pandemic crises. Indeed, during pandemic, the IES academic staff immediately revealed that as compared to the colleagues from other faculties of TSU, they felt themselves better prepared and well accommodated for the academic activities in distance mode, including for the smooth transition to a new era of online education.

Small size of the groups of the students at IES as well as the personal experience of the author of this paper during her MSc education at the University of Edinburgh (UK) facilitated the implementation of the policy of *ad hoc* student assessment system on Master's programmes. Switching to the submissions of the short-scale research assignments as a substitute to in-class mid-terms and final exams,- proved to be a non-lenient but a reasonable alternative solution during the pandemic-related long shut-down periods, which was a national measure of the Government of Georgia. Later on this assessment practice was adjusted to the outcomes of the working package on the 'teaching methodologies' of 'EUStBA' project.

Those academic staff who joined IES-Team only after they got involved in the development of the Undergraduate programme in European Studies at TSU¹⁰ - brought with them a rich and diverse experiences on effective pedagogic tools and methods. Still, the Team of Erasmus+ 'EUStBA' project identified the need to bring all of them under the common umbrella of the European Studies education. The idea was to ensure that opting for any specific teaching methodology for each separate course could not have been determined only by the aims and the learning outcomes of that particular subject area, but also had to take into consideration the overall broader objectives of the European Studies education at all three cycles at TSU. For this purpose, IES, within the framework of the Erasmus+ Jean Monnet "EUStBA" project,- organized a special workshop (during March 2-5, 2022)¹¹ and the international conference (during October 14 -15, 2022), which were dedicated to the review of experiences of using the effective traditional and innovative pedagogic methods at TSU in general, and the European Studies education, specifically.

The workshop gave the opportunity to the involved academic staff to review the effectiveness of teaching methods they usually use, to reconsider the issue in the context of the European Studies education as well as to plan a publication on methods via reviewing their syllabi that are part of the curriculums of IES European Studies programmes (undergraduate, Master or Doctoral). The participants of the workshop contributed to design the content of the international conference on Pedagogic Tools as well as engaged in the consultations with quality assurance experts with regard to adoption of the level of innovation in teaching at the undergraduate, Master's and Doctoral programmes.

The international conference leveraged the professional discussion as a follow-up to the presentations of the first drafts of the papers. The papers had been dedicated to the basic features of the courses taught as well

¹⁰ Before launching the Undergraduate programme in European Studies, the Institute for European Studies of TSU had an administration and academic staff composed of only 12 persons, most of them permanently residing in Georgia which ensures their uninterrupted involvement in teaching and overseeing research activities since the Institute's establishment. The number of academic personnel involved in Undergraduate programme is 29. IES requested from the TSU Rector to give permission to increase the number of administrative personnel from two at least to four in order to manage the administration of the Undergraduate programme effectively. The Institute supports itself through the modest tuition fees paid by the admitted students. The TSU co-finances the Institute and covers part of the administration salaries and the utility (electricity, water, etc.) fees from its central budget.

¹¹ The fifth workshop of the 'EUStBA' project was led by Eter Gvineria, Associate Professor of the TSU Pedagogical Institute. During the meetings Prof. Gvineria discussed and invited the participants to consider critically the Bloom's Taxonomy, Edward de Bono's Six Thinking Hats, Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences, Evaluation forms, The Socratic Method of Teaching (Socratic Questioning), Critical Thinking, Problem-Based Learning, Case Studies, The Educational Theory by David Perkins, Concept of Metacognition (learning to learn), Daniel Goleman's emotional intelligence theory, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Dimitri Uznadze's Theory, Collaborative and Cooperative Learning Method, Project Based Learning, Role-play, John Dewey's approach to education, Carl Rogers' Humanistic Theory, Tool for Teaching Without Talking, Teaching to Learning Paradigm, Theories of Development: I. Behaviorism, II. Cognitivism (Piaget) and III. Constructivism (Vygotsky), Pragmatism, Progressivism-Reconstructivism as well as Existentialism-Humanism.

as the methodological approaches used. The presenters received valuable feedback from the distinguished project experts. The local stakeholders conceptualized the importance of linkage between the teaching and research from early stages of education, discussed the benefits of research-teaching nexus and provided some practical insights regarding the tools to develop the institutional policy in this regard. Among the participants of the conference had been academic and administrative personnel of the IES, the staff of the TSU quality assurance service, international experts from partner universities, students of the IES and other interested parties. Obviously, this process unpacked the advantage of the peer-review from the colleagues, before the conference participants would submit the papers for publication.

Lastly, it is to be admitted, that both of these events, which were funded under the Erasmus+ Jean Monnet project also facilitated the idea on the creation of the special space at IES library, which is dedicated solely to the teaching methodology, curriculum development and education management¹².

Accomplishment of the mission of integration of effective pedagogic methods and tools in the curriculum of the undergraduate programme in European Studies could not have been possible without the outstanding role played by the international experts, where we have to underline invaluable contribution provided by Kerry Longhurst -Professor at Collegium Civitas and Visiting Professor at College of Europe, Marek Martyniszyn -Professor of Law at Queen's University Belfast (UK), Agnese Dāvidsone -Rector of Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Dean of Faculty of Social Sciences and Associate Professor, Kamil Zwolski -Associate Professor in International Politics, Jean Monnet Chair of European Security Governance, Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy Politics & International Relations, University of Southampton (UK), and by Daniela Urse - Professor at the Department of Sociology, University of Bucharest, who later accepted the offer of IES to undertake the position of Academic Co-Head of European Studies programmes¹³.

Conclusion

Results from the analyses of the of two different phases of the Erasmus + 'EUSTBA' project implementation led me to find that 16 years anniversary since the establishment of the Institute for European Studies of Tbilisi State University is to be celebrated with the groundbreaking accomplishment, which is the successful development and accreditation of the new Jean Monnet undergraduate programme. Furthermore, the project synergized with a 'non-planned' positive results by supporting the re-accreditation process of the Master programme in European Studies as a parallel action accomplished in a synchronized manner. This last development paved the way for the operationalization of the two double degree Master's programmes with Vilnius University, Lithuania and Vidzeme University of Applied Sciences, Latvia- which is another very important milestone.

It is certainly true that if one measures the success of the higher education programmes by the numbers of the students, then the progress was slow indeed. However, one has to consider that TSU does not have any

¹² Currently the following relevant textbooks are available at IES library: Alan Tait (Ed.), *Key Issues in Open Learning*, Longman in association with The Open University, 1992. Borje Holmberg, *Theory and Practice of Distance Education*, Routledge, 2000. Desmond Keegan, *The Foundations of Distance Education*, Routledge, 1996. E.C. Wragg, *Classroom Teaching Skills*, Routledge, 2016. Fred Lockwood (Ed.), *Open and Distance Learning Today*, Routledge Studies in Distance Education, 1995. George Brown and Madeline Atkins, *Effective Teaching in Higher Education*, Routledge, 1994. Meredydd Hughes, Peter Ribbins and Hywel Thomas (Eds.), *Managing Education. The System and The Institution*, Holt Education, Holt, Reinhart and Winston, 1985. Peter Tomlinson and Margret Quinton (Eds.), *Values Across the Curriculum*, Routledge Library Editions: Philosophy of Education, 2017. Roger Dale, *The State and Education Policy*, Open University Press, 1990. Sally Brown and Angela Glasner (Eds.), *Assessment Matters in Higher Education, Choosing and Using Diverse Approaches*, The Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press, 1999. Starr Roxanne Hiltz, *The Virtual Classroom, Learning Without Limits via Computer Networks*, Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1994. Stefania Baroncelli, Roberto Farneti, Ioan Horga, Sophie Vanhoonacker (Eds.) *Teaching and Learning the European Union, Traditional and Innovative Methods*, Springer, 2014.

¹³ With this new round of accreditation/re-accreditation, the IES made a decision that for the purposes of strengthening its interdisciplinary approach, all IES programmes (undergraduate, Master and Doctoral) will have four Co-Heads, the leaders of respective modules of European Studies education. Taking this approach, IES is symbolically representing the assurance of its considerations to the four founding faculties of the TSU Institute for European Studies. The Co-Heads of the Programmes are: 1. Daniela Urse (Professor at the Department of Sociology, University of Bucharest) 2. Natia Lapiashvili (Associate Professor of the Caucasus University, Associate Professor at the University of Georgia, Invited Professor in the University of Grenoble), 3. Tamaz Zubiashvili (Associate Professor at TSU Faculty of Economics and Business) and 4. Vasil Kacharava (Associate Professor at TSU Faculty of Humanities).

unit in charge of 'marketing' and that it usually does not organize any awareness raising campaigns around the newly established programmes. Hence, the reasons behind the prevailing sad situation, which is caused by the low number of students across all faculties who are in charge of administration the programmes offering the 'non-traditional disciplines' - becomes more explicit. In that regards, 'EUStBA' project already played its positive role in dissemination as well and it will carry its consequences in the future during the admission of the first cohort of the undergraduate students in summer 2023.

Georgia recently was granted with a clear European perspective, which is the materialization of nation's pro-European aspirations. In this context, it is to be underlined that the higher education can play a pivotal role in promoting Georgia's EU-integrative processes. In particular, the European Studies education at Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University, which is tied with the interdisciplinary approach, provides the unique opportunity to understand contemporary Europe, European integration and the EU-Georgia relations - from the perspective of Economists, Lawyers, Political Scientists and representatives of the faculty of Humanities. Indeed, a proper understanding of the challenges ongoing in the European Union is impossible without the close collaboration of the representatives of the professionals coming across various faculties, who anchored their European Studies teaching and research in a mixed methodology. Since the first accreditation of the Master programme in 2011, this is our declared standing mission that was accomplished in an outstanding manner. The interdisciplinary approach, which is not a convenient expression at all, but a guiding principle, helps to analyze the historical, legal, political and economic processes in the member states of the EU and the neighborhood.

Students enrolled at TSU European Studies programmes start to understand how the countries with different socio-political background manage to find effective and joint solutions to their common problems. Theoretical and practical insights, simulations of the real-life scenarios, e-learning techniques, case studies, discussions and debates,

Problem based learning and blended pedagogical tools are the unique features of the Institute that builds the cooperative culture among the students.

Building a strong European values-based society is another important mission of the European Studies education at TSU, which together with the theoretical knowledge on Europe - is something that is multipliable across the country via the broad awareness-raising activities undertaken by the staff of the Institute and its graduates. The so-called third mission of the institute contributes to comprehend the meaning of democracy, human rights, rule of law, good governance, accountability and transparency. It is through this prism only that the integrative processes in European countries and the key challenges are explained.

Institute for European Studies of TSU is the place where discussions are common on the following: 1. The role and impact of Europe in shaping the continent; 2. EU's actorness and consistency in promotion of democracy, peace and prosperity in the neighborhood; 3. Impact of the legislative approximation with EU *aquis* on Georgia and its access to the common market. 4. Effective teaching methods and pedagogic tools aimed at bringing the updated content effectively to the relevant audience.

All the mentioned leads me to conclude that the developmental intents at IES aimed at establishment of the new Undergraduate programme in European Studies at TSU wrapped up in another successful academic endeavor of our team, thanks to the EU generous support and the absolutely terrific efforts of every dedicated member of our network of professionals.