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CATALYST

Key Point Report on visit to Laos for A1-A2 & B1 English for Specific Purposes (ESP) Training, 12-19 September 2017



Background

Two colleagues (Gerard Cullen from TU Dresden and Quynh Nguyen from the Pyramid Group, Germany) visited NUOL for the purpose of conducting training A1-A2 and B1 ESP as agreed with the Project Manager and the EU and PC Steering Groups.

The training consisted of Elementary/False Beginners Basic (A1-CEFR) ESP Training (Q.Nguyen) and Intermediate (B1 - CEFR) ESP Soft Skills Training (G.Cullen). Groups underwent a language test procedure based on grammar and basic oral skills to determine CEFR levels.

The training was conducted over a 7 day period as stated above with the two pre-selected groups. We found the facilities and organisation of the event to be very competent and participation of both groups was consistently good with strong motivation.

The stay also involved a visit to both university vocational educational facilities including library facilities and a final meeting with both the NUOL and UHS Presidents to whom we submitted our findings and recommendations after liaising with the overall Laotian Project Leaders Prof. Bounseng (NUOL) and Prof. Phrasisombath (UHS).



Findings and Recommendations

The CBHE CATALYST project focuses on developing university vocational teachers teaching methodologies.

In general the level of English needs substantial further support in order for appropriate participation in the Catalyst project and to fulfil the specific and wider key project objectives. This is particularly true with the Elementary/False Beginners Basic (A1-CEFR) ESP training participants (Group A).

Concerning the Intermediate B1 - CEFR Training participants (Group B) we found the general level to be maximum B1 CEFR level or lower. A positive exception was Ms Thavisone Mounlasane who we believe should later become a main participant in the project.

Other staff with potential (currently lower level B1) from NUOL and UHS could be involved after additional training. Both Laotian Project Leaders Prof. Bounsong (NUOL) and Prof. Phrasisombath (UHS) underlined the necessity for additional training and expressed their willingness to host such an event. We recommended that English training be undertaken locally to boost English levels and both universities are exploring possibilities in this regard which would support the development of both groups.

In the meantime Ms Nguyen has outlined and delegated online self-learning materials to the appropriate CEFR level groups. Additionally we have given both universities the specific CATALYST A1-A2 Grammar Script and Key (developed by TPG and TU Dresden) which participants can continue to use on a class or self-study basis. Furthermore Soft Skills materials have been distributed to the second B1 group specifically on presentation and public speaking skills.

In this respect, it would make sense if the limited number of participants outlined by Prof. Bounseng (NUOL) and Prof. Phrasisombath (UHS) with appropriate English attend the main Curriculum Training at TU Bucharest in December 2017. We also note the positive attitude of both universities in widening the participation level and their commitment to gender equality as outlined by the EU.

We support Laotian Project Leaders Prof. Bounseng (NUOL) and Prof. Phrasisombath (UHS) request for additional ESP training. We provisionally agreed to undertake Phase 2 training on A1-A2 and B1 ESP training in Spring 2018 by colleagues from TPG and TU Dresden subject to EU Steering Group ratification.

We wish to thank all parties involved in making our visit a successful one.

Gerard Cullen/Quynh Nguyen

25 September 2017.

