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EMI Lecturers in Vietnamese Higher Education: Exploring professional development needs for teaching quality enhancement

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ABSTRACT

As English-medium instruction (EMI) programs have expanded rapidly in Vietnam as a result of educational globalisation, more research is needed in this field. This study aims to promote EMI lecturers' professional development and enhance teaching quality by identifying the needs of content lecturers in Vietnamese higher education, in order to gain a more comprehensive insight into appropriate support and policy development. Data were collected via questionnaires distributed to EMI lecturers (n=33) and in-depth interviews with six participants. The findings show that EMI lecturers required professional development support, particularly in improving their pedagogical competencies and English language proficiency. They also expressed a desire for collaboration with colleagues. In addition, this study identified lecturers' specific needs for institutional support, with particular emphasis on teaching materials and resources. These insights contribute to the existing literature and provide helpful suggestions for supporting EMI lecturers in similar settings.

1. INTRODUCTION

EMI programs in Vietnam have received greater attention since the implementation of the National Foreign Language project 2020 (Decision No. 1400/QĐ-TTg, 2008). Especially, the second phase of the project (2011-2015) emphasised teaching subjects in English (Prime Minister, 2008). This language policy was further strengthened by Decision 1505/QĐ-TTg (2008), which set up Advanced Programs in Vietnamese universities to deliver EMI courses (Nguyen, 2024). Recently, the Politburo's Conclusion No. 91-KL/TW (2024) highlights the desire to enhance English proficiency among students, encourage collaboration between domestic and international educational institutions, attract foreign experts to teach in Vietnam, attract international students to study in Vietnam, and

encourage prestigious universities to open branches in Vietnam. These policies have created favourable conditions for universities to expand their EMI programs as well as established a strong foundation for EMI development in higher education institutions in Vietnam (Nguyen, 2024).

Although EMI implementation in Vietnam has received positive results, such as improving student access to advanced international materials and graduate employability, several challenges exist. Tran and Nguyen (2018) identified several problems in EMI programs, including issues with curriculum design, teaching methods, financial and human resource constraints, and inadequate English proficiency among both students and faculty. These difficulties raise an urgent need for effective support interventions. Understanding EMI lecturers' needs

is crucial because they are the ones who deliver EMI directly, and their needs affect program success. Despite extensive research on EMI implementation, the specific needs of EMI lecturers remain relatively understudied (Fenton-Smith et al., 2017; Macaro, 2018; Beaumont, 2020).

This research aims to fill this gap by exploring what support EMI lecturers need to build better support systems and improve the quality of EMI programs in Vietnamese higher education.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. EMI and an overview of EMI growth in higher education institutions

English-medium instruction (EMI) is a relatively new phenomenon in most higher education institutions (Dafouz & Smit, 2020). It refers to “the use of the English language to teach academic subjects (other than English itself) in countries or jurisdictions where the first language of the majority of the population is not English” (Macaro, 2018, p. 19). In other words, in EMI settings, English is not a subject of study; instead, it serves as the language through which content across disciplines, such as science, mathematics, and social studies, is delivered. It is characterised as “focuses on content learning only” (Smit & Dafouz, 2012, p. 4), “the central focus is on students’ content mastery and no language aims are specified” (Unterberger & Wilhelmer, 2011, p. 96) or “aiming at the acquisition of subject knowledge” (Unterberger, 2014, p. 37).

While providing students with opportunities to study academic subjects in English, EMI actively promotes the use of English in the classroom. Learners can therefore be more motivated to learn and apply English when engaged in the study of academic subjects than in traditional English language classes (Huang, 2012). It has also been proven effective in promoting internationalization in higher education. In addition to content knowledge, EMI provides benefits for learning English, career opportunities, and the promotion of intercultural understanding and global citizenship (Galloway et al., 2017).

Because of its benefits, EMI programs have expanded globally. In Viet Nam, EMI has developed significantly (Nguyen & Tran 2018), which is considered a changing process (Hoang et al., 2018; Galloway et al., 2020). However, EMI programs are more expensive than VMI programs

(more than twice as much), and only the wealthier students may enrol.

2.2. Challenges for content teachers in teaching in EMI classes

Despite this growth, a number of EMI challenges have been identified (Aguilar, 2017) including language issues (Galloway et al., 2017), cultural issues (Mok, 2007), administrative challenges such as shortage of qualified staff, management system issues (Dearden, 2014; Goodman, 2014; Hu et al., 2014), inadequate support for content lecturers who switch from teaching their subjects in their native language to teaching them in English, and insufficient teacher training on methods and intercultural communication (Costa & Coleman, 2013).

In Viet Nam, when teaching subjects in English, EMI teachers also experience a range of challenges, which require immediate attention. Previous studies have identified key issues in EMI implementation at Vietnamese universities at macro and micro levels, including a lack of detailed guidelines from the government, challenges with imported curricula, inappropriate entry requirements, low level of English proficiency in both lecturers and students, pedagogical problems, and insufficient support resources (Nguyen, 2024).

Le (2012) reviewed problems that universities encountered when switching to EMI, including lack of specific and practical strategies, insufficient detailed preparation, neglect of contextual factors, and failure to consider interfering factors at micro levels.

In Vu and Burns' (2014) study, EMI lecturers at a Vietnamese public university faced several challenges, such as their own language proficiency, students' language competence and learning styles, pedagogical issues, and limited access to resources.

In two studies on EMI implementation, Nguyen et al. (2016, 2017) found that the main challenges in implementing EMI at a Vietnamese public university were the lecturers' low level of English proficiency, a lack of resources and materials, inadequate teacher training, and an inability to create appropriate social and pedagogical environments to ensure both content and language learning.

Nguyen et al. (2017) found that challenges in EMI implementation existed at several levels. At the national level, guidelines were too general, and there was not enough time for preparation. At

institutional and individual levels, challenges included inappropriate English entry requirements, difficulties with imported curricula, low levels of English proficiency among professors and students, and lecturers' lack of experience with EMI teaching. A review of literature on EMI challenges at Vietnamese universities indicated that the challenges reported were consistently similar. These results imply that enhance the quality of EMI teaching at Vietnamese universities, comprehensive and systematic solutions are required.

2.3. EMI lecturers' needs

A global study by Macaro et al. (2020) on EMI teacher training found that EMI teachers in Asia received less professional support than those in other countries. For example, in China, only one-third of EMI instructors received formal training (Macaro & Han, 2020). Multiple studies highlight that pedagogical training and language communicative strategies were not well developed (Jiang et al., 2016; Macaro & Han, 2020). This has led to growing calls for training courses and support for EMI teachers, covering a variety of areas from professional and pedagogical training to needs for institutional support. Main concerns were identified, including language proficiency (O'Dowd, 2018), teaching methods, classroom management in a second language, materials development and assessment (Dafouz, 2018; Pérez-Cañado, 2018).

The majority of studies show that EMI teachers stressed the importance of professional development. Bradford (2016) found urgent demand for training in both academic English and EMI teaching skills. An interesting finding in 2021 found that even teachers with advanced language skills were interested in language training (Piquer Píriz & Castellano Risco, 2021). Many researchers (Jiang et al., 2016; Valcke & Wilkinson, 2017) highlighted linguistic competence as crucial, with Ball and Lindsay (2013) specifically pointing out that pronunciation was essential for successful EMI instruction.

EMI lecturers expressed a need for more training on teaching methods, materials design and other training on theoretical aspects of EMI education. Studies highlighted that effective EMI teaching required a variety of skills, such as interactional skills for promoting student engagement, techniques for constructing effective EMI discourse (Lin, 2018; Morell, 2018), transmitting knowledge, and making meaning (Dafouz, 2011).

Furthermore, language and content lecturers need to work together. Costa and Coleman (2013) found inadequate teacher collaboration to be a major obstacle to successful EMI implementation, with 15% of universities identifying it as a challenge. To address this, EMI lecturers should establish professional communities and networks to exchange experiences and ideas. According to Alhassan et al. (2022), EMI subject lecturers needed to collaborate closely with English for Academic Purposes (EAP) lecturers and engage in professional discussions and teaching practice with them.

Previous research has consistently emphasised the increasing workload demands on EMI lecturers, particularly in material preparation (Piquer-Píriz & Castellano-Risco, 2021). As a result, the critical need for institutional support and resources in EMI teaching has extensively highlighted. A study by Unterberger and Wilhelmer (2011) addressed the important role of institutional support for managing workload challenges, while research by Guarda and Helm (2017) and Beltrán-Palanques (2021) emphasised the importance of having clear institutional policies and support systems. Galloway et al. (2017) stressed the need for detailed implementation guidelines.

Finally, Curdt-Christiansen et al. (2023) listed specific support needs, including time for course preparation, resources for international collaboration, funding for training programs, and workshops with EMI experts. Sharing the same view, Uehara and Kojima (2021) emphasised the importance of acknowledging EMI teachers' additional workload, adjustment of teaching load, providing proper compensation and promotion opportunities. Curdt-Christiansen et al. (2023) noted that smaller class sizes, project-based support for course preparation, and mechanisms for peer and classroom observation were the infrastructure needs.

In short, these findings, which are seen to be essential for the successful implementation of EMI, provide a general outline for targeted supports to address practical teaching demands in EMI contexts.

2.4. Theoretical frameworks

Social Learning Theory, Sociocultural Theory and Adult Learning Theory (Knowles's Andragogy) were chosen as the theoretical frameworks for this study. These theories are particularly relevant for

identifying and understanding the needs of EMI lecturers.

Social Learning Theory, introduced by Albert Bandura, accounts for the interaction of environmental and cognitive elements that affect how people learn. Social learning theory reveals that teachers learn by observing experienced colleagues, receiving peer feedback, and adapting to institutional requirements. This theory is useful for describing and explaining professional development processes by providing insight into how teacher development depends on both individual and external factors. This also helps identify the need for mentorship programs, collaborative opportunities, and supportive institutional environments (Rumjaun & Narod, 2020).

An important concept in sociocultural theory by Vygotsky, the zone of proximal development, emphasises the importance of collaboration with more skilled peers in one's development. Vygotsky (1978, as cited in Silalahi, 2019) defined the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 174). This theory reveals that EMI teachers require opportunities to work with knowledgeable and experienced EMI colleagues.

Adult Learning Theory (Knowles' Andragogy) emphasises that adult learners, unlike children, are self-motivated and self-directed. They need to be given the chance to learn in ways that are relevant to their lives and work environments, which helps inform the design of appropriate professional development interventions (Bouchrika, 2022). This theory helps recognise the need for independent learning opportunities, applicable training content, and professional development that builds on teachers' existing experience and knowledge.

In conclusion, these three theories offer the researchers useful information such as how teaching practices are influenced by social and environmental factors, how institutional limitations and work demands impact instructional strategies, how new teachers are influenced by their more experienced teachers, and how feedback from colleagues impacts teaching behaviour. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive lens for what support EMI lecturers need for quality teaching such as peer collaboration and mentorship, institutional support systems, learning opportunities, relevant

training, opportunities to observe and receive feedback.

3. METHOD

In this research, data were collected through sources of information such as interviews and questionnaires. The combination of quantitative and qualitative data in a mixed-methods design helps improve the validity and reliability of the data (Mathison, 1988) and is likely to yield a more complete set of findings (Dörnyei, 2010).

3.1. The context of the study and participants

The current study was conducted at a medical university in the Mekong Delta (Viet Nam) in the academic year 2023-2024. This university has academic units such as the Faculty of Medicine, the Faculty of Pharmacy, the Faculty of Odontology – Stomatology, the Faculty of Public Health, the Faculty of Nursing and Medical Technology, the Faculty of Basic Sciences, and the Skills Training Unit. These faculties are providing different programmes; however, English as a medium of instruction has only been implemented at the Faculty of Medicine for Indian students since 2022. In other words, in this research site, EMI programs were in the beginning stages of implementation. The institution also represents a typical higher education setting where EMI is implemented for international students. These features provide a unique opportunity to explore content lecturers' needs in the initial EMI implementation process.

Due to the early phase of EMI implementation, the number of EMI lecturers was still limited. Therefore, in this research, complete sampling was chosen because the current population of EMI lecturers is small and easily accessible (n=33). All participants obtained postgraduate degrees, which equipped them with advanced knowledge in their fields. They all were involved in undergraduate-level EMI programs and willing to participate in the research. That the participants and I, the researcher of this current study, worked in the same institution under study made data collection procedures quite convenient. It also gave me more opportunities to gather reliable data.

3.2. Research questions

The following research questions were addressed:

1. What type of support do EMI teachers need for professional development?
2. What types of institutional support do EMI lecturers need?

3.3. Instruments

A literature review and interviews were conducted to determine the content lecturers' needs in EMI teaching. Based on the literature analysis and interview responses, the researchers drafted the initial questionnaire. Then, three reviewers - a language lecturer, a content lecturer, and an SPSS specialist - were consulted for assistance with item development. They provided feedback on its design, individual items and sections, which contributed to the questionnaire's validation, ensuring the questionnaire was clear and aligned with their intended purpose.

Interviews: The interview explored EMI lecturers' experiences regarding language development, pedagogical training, collaboration opportunities, and institutional support. The participants' responses enriched our understanding of lecturers' needs, institutional support requirements, and directly provided deeper insights for designing the questionnaire.

Questionnaire: A 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire was developed covering participant demographics (gender, age, teaching experience, English proficiency), professional development needs (training formats, frequency preferences, language development, pedagogy training, teacher collaboration), institutional support, and needs for teaching materials and resources. The questionnaire was validated by three reviewers before distribution to participants via email.

3.4. Data collection and analysis

Data were collected qualitatively via individual interviews with six lecturers across different subjects, followed by 5-point Likert-scale questionnaires administered via email to EMI lecturers (n=33). To administer the survey, consent was obtained from the lecturers in the research site. A total of 37 responses were received, constituting a response rate of 89%. All interviews were conducted with permission. The language used was Vietnamese to avoid misunderstanding, and the interviewees could feel more comfortable expressing their opinions, and then the researchers translated the interviews into English. Moreover, pseudonyms like T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, and T6 were used to individual lecturer in order to protect participant confidentiality.

Interview data were *processed qualitatively* by thematic analysis. Qualitative data were transcribed, coded, and analysed to identify recurring patterns

and themes. Quantitative data from questionnaires were analysed using SPSS 26.0 with descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Results were presented in tables and charts. Descriptive statistics were used to summarise all data.

Qualitative results were used to develop questionnaire items, allowing researchers to create an instrument based on participants' actual experiences. In addition, the integration of both types of data, where "the initial qualitative exploration leads to generalizable results through the second quantitative phase" (Creswell, 2018, p.555), helps increase the trustworthiness of the research.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. The participant demographics

The study involved 33 Vietnamese university lecturers (17 female, 16 male). Participants were divided into three age groups: 48.5% were between the ages of 25 and 35, 45.5% were between the ages of 36 and 45 and 6.1% were between the ages of 46 and 55. 8.5% of teachers have over 10 years of teaching experience, as illustrated in Figure 1. Most of them were relatively new to EMI programs, with 78.8% of lecturers having only taught for 1-2 semesters. Their English proficiency levels were: C2 (1 lecturer), C1 (14 lecturers), and B2 (18 lecturers).

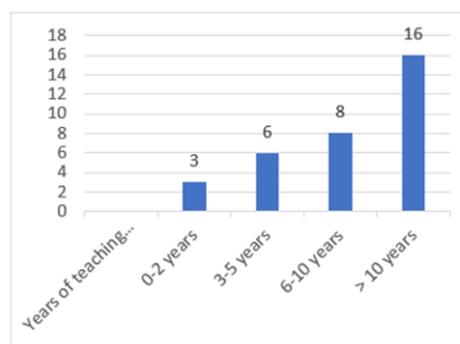


Figure 1. Years of teaching

4.2. EMI teachers' need for professional development

The research findings showed that only 18.2% of lecturers had received EMI training, indicating a lack of EMI training for EMI lecturers. This finding was similar in different regions. Despite the global prevalence of EMI programs (Mancho-Bares & Arnó-Macià, 2017), research consistently showed a

significant lack of teacher training. The number of EMI teachers who had received training was limited (Dearden et al., 2016). Most lecturers began teaching in English with little formal preparation for EMI instruction (Costa & Coleman, 2013). An international survey found that 61.4% of EMI teachers had not received any pre- or in-service training in EMI (Mancho-Bares & Arnó-Macià, 2017). Similarly, Yuan (2020) reported that most EMI teachers had not received any EMI training. Another study by Uehara and Kojima (2021) revealed that 82% of EMI teachers had not participated in any EMI training. In Italy, 77% of universities provided no EMI teacher training, with only a small fraction (8%) offering methodological training. Clearly, there is a pressing demand for EMI teacher training across numerous countries.

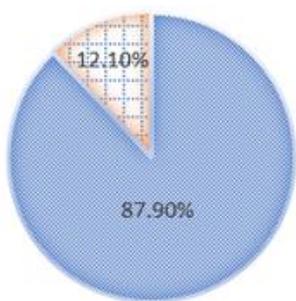


Figure 2. Training needs

In the current research, the large majority of teachers recognised the importance of continuous training for teacher professional development. 87.9% of the participants needed more training on EMI, as illustrated in Figure 2.

The study participants expressed interest in receiving additional training. As T2 claimed,

I think we need a training course. Ideally, it should be tailored to our specific requests. Maybe it is offered one course per semester. These sessions would give us time to exchange ideas and get advice on handling challenging classroom situations. Since we teach in the same contexts, most of us likely face similar difficulties and have similar needs.

(T2, Face-to-face interview, 2024)

The findings were positive and encouraging. It can be concluded that most EMI lecturers considered training essential for effective teaching. EMI lecturers showed intrinsic interest in professional development, particularly in enhancing their teaching abilities in EMI setting.

This finding corresponded to research by Guarda and Helm (2017), whose participants emphasised

that continuous professional development was important for successful EMI implementation. A participant expressed desire for additional training: “there should be a series of training steps. I need more” (p.18). Similarly, in a study by Beltrán-Palanques (2021), all participants expressed interest in receiving more EMI training, and the author noted that “a major concern is the professional development of EMI lecturers, particularly through EMI training courses” (p. 64). Another study conducted by Galloway and Ruegg (2022) concluded that more contextual and pedagogical training was needed. In particular, research by Curdt et al. (2023) provided strong evidence for the need for EMI training. Faculty from both key universities and non-key universities needed training in teaching skills and language skills. A significant finding was that 75.9% of faculty who studied abroad still required additional training. In this study, the strong need for training was confirmed by interviewees, as expressed by one participant: “I want to attend more training. I hope the institute could provide training programmes in a systematic manner or regularly. Otherwise, it would be hard to be effective teachers in real terms” (Curdt-Christiansen et al., 2023, p. 16).

Clearly, based on analysis of studies, there is universal recognition of training needs.

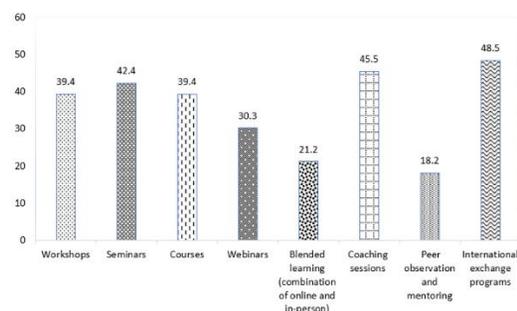


Figure 3. Format training

As shown in Figure 3, regarding training format, Seminars (42.4%), Coaching sessions (45.5%), and International exchange programs (48.5%) were EMI lecturers’ favourite ones. This finding aligned with research conducted in China by Curdt-Christiansen et al. (2023), one participant expressed her interest in attending training sessions. She emphasised the importance of local seminars and valued learning opportunities from visiting experts.

Previous studies have mentioned training formats which are commonly applied including intensive courses, summer schools, blended learning combining face-to-face and online instruction

(Guarda & Helm, 2017), pre-program implementation workshops (Galloway & Ruegg, 2022), microteaching sessions, personalized tutorials (one-on-one or small group guidance sessions), EMI teaching observation, peer feedback from other teachers (Banks, 2018), observation of model EMI classes, workshops where teachers can exchange ideas and reflect on teaching/learning, international training opportunities (short-term visits to overseas universities), small group training, teaching presentation (Curd-Christian et al., 2023).

It can be concluded that the most preferred training formats are those that enable direct interaction and practical experience. They are found to be most effective for EMI professional development, which helps improve language skills and teaching methodology, build confidence in English-medium instruction, promote student-centered teaching approaches, enable experience sharing between lecturers and develop EMI community of practice.

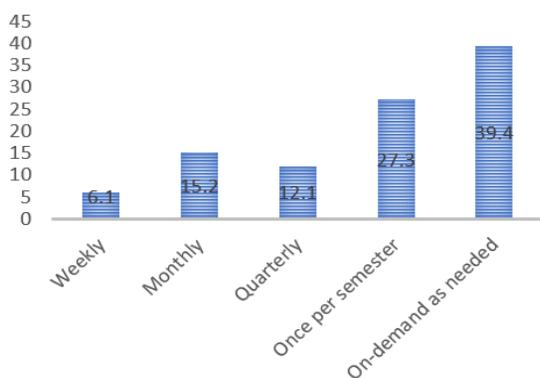


Figure 4. Training frequency

As shown in Figure 4, regarding training frequency, the collected data showed that the highest preference (39.4%) was for "on-demand as needed" training, suggesting that EMI lecturers preferred flexibility in their EMI training schedule rather than fixed regular intervals. The second most popular option was once per semester (27.3%). The data showed a clear direction where less frequent but more flexible training options (on-demand and once per semester) were chosen.

All interviewed lecturers stated that EMI lecturers were reluctant to attend more frequent regular sessions (weekly, monthly, or quarterly) primarily due to time and resource constraints. This finding was consistent with research by Unterberger and Wilhelmer (2011), who found the training had to be scaled down due to institutional pressures and

teachers' workload (teaching, clinical work, research). Similarly, another study by Macaro et al. (2020) confirmed that concise and intensive training was preferred, given teachers' time constraints. This was further supported by the data showing that "84% of EMI teachers were unwilling to participate in training programs longer than one day" (p. 7), indicating their limited time availability and preference for concise training formats.

4.2.1. Needs for Language Development

The current research revealed the need for language courses. Using a five-point scale, the lecturers indicated that they found English courses very necessary, with their willingness to become involved in general English language improvement courses (78.8%), improving academic English proficiency (84.8%), pronunciation and fluency training (78.8%) and strengthening classroom language, e.g., ways to provide positive feedback, useful expressions for lecture, interactional strategies to check students' understanding (81.8%).

The research findings corresponded to a study by Banks (2018) with "98% of respondents said they wanted to improve their English, and 95% thought it was important to do" (p. 22).

That EMI lecturers may be hesitant to teach in English because of their lack of self-efficacy or confidence can be explained as follows: Each academic discipline has its own specific terminology and discourse practices (Lasagabaster, 2018). Teachers need to consider how to explain terminology to students who lack background knowledge in the subject, using appropriate instructional language for different disciplines. Therefore, even lecturers with high levels of general English proficiency may struggle to discipline-specific language. As Westbrook and Henriksen (2011) stated, some content lecturers may feel conflicted between their professional identity as experts in their field and their self-perceived weakness in a foreign language.

Sharing the same view, T1, the participant in my research, said that,

In medical schools, some older professors, due to historical circumstances, didn't have opportunities to learn foreign languages at a young age. Their limited English proficiency affects their confidence in teaching EMI classes, despite being highly skilled doctors. At this research site, this challenge is also from the working environment, where some lecturers have limited opportunities to use English

outside the classroom. As a result, they experience trouble speaking and listening, which undermines their confidence when teaching in a non-native language.

(T1, Face-to-face interview, 2024)

In general, most of the interviewees highly emphasised the importance of improving English. T2 said, "If EMI lecturers are confident enough in their English, their teaching will certainly be good" (T2, Face-to-face interview, 2024).

T3 affirmed it by adding,

My biggest challenge is language. My difficulty lies in basic conversational interactions in the classroom. Since I rarely use English in daily life, I find myself not fluent enough in English for daily communication ... I often study English for classroom, e.g. common phrases for giving instructions, and classroom management, by watching YouTube videos. But, I'm not fully confident in my classroom language skills.

(T3, Face-to-face interview, 2024)

According to participants, expanding vocabulary and finding opportunities to practice speaking English more fluently were the two main priorities. T5 raised concerns about his limited vocabulary. Especially, he emphasised the need to improve his General English proficiency, not just improving English for Specific Purposes (ESP). He said: "I always wish to attend more General English courses. In my lessons, I don't use many ESP terms or specialised vocabulary. Instead, I rely on common English words for instruction and explanations" (T5, Face-to-face interview, 2024).

Sharing the same view, T3 said,

We need to improve our language both general English and ESP. Medical terminology, especially in anatomy and physiology, is particularly challenging. This requires extensive reading. However, in teaching, knowing a lot of medical terminology is not enough for me to teach my subject effectively. General English helps us, EMI lecturers, effectively explain concepts and help students understand the lessons.

(T3, Face-to-face interview, 2024)

It can be concluded that EMI lecturers still require general language support. They preferred training courses which were tailored to their needs and offered diverse options. As T3 said,

Each lecturer has different strengths and weaknesses in language. Some content lecturers are good at reading but have problems listening, while others struggle with the opposite challenges. We need tailored programs that meet individual needs. For example, since I'm not good at listening, I would need more training on listening skill.

(T3, Face-to-face interview, 2024)

4.2.2. Pedagogy Training

Using the same scale ranging from very necessary to not very necessary, the researcher found that training on teaching methods was necessary in the EMI setting. The results showed that lecturers had a strong need for participating in practical teaching workshops (81.8%), initial EMI preparation course such as training on teaching methods and classroom management in EMI settings, techniques to promote classroom interaction, more strategies for explaining complex concepts, ways to facilitate discussions, assessment, and feedback (93.9%). They hoped to receive chances for professional content knowledge update (87.9%), material design, e.g., handouts, PDFs, booklets (81.8%), tasks, assignments, exam tests, teaching and learning activity (87.9%), as well as other multicultural awareness and international communication skills (97%).

The interviews showed that lecturers strongly desired pedagogical training. T4 said,

Most of us learned to teach from our teaching and learning experience, not formal education training. Unlike education majors, we are doctors who studied medicine at a university. Although we have basic teaching certificates, we need more training to improve our teaching methods.

(T4, Face-to-face interview, 2024)

T6 expressed a greater interest in training on the teaching method. He said,

We should conduct classroom observations and provide constructive feedback to each other. Before teaching officially, we can practise teaching sessions where colleagues observe and suggest improvements for our lesson plans, teaching methods, and delivery.

(T6, Face-to-face interview, 2024)

Sharing this view, the interviewees in a study by Curdt-Christiansen et al. (2023) expressed a strong need for pedagogical training. For example, on participant said: "I have been teaching EMI for over ten years. The longer I teach, the more confused I

feel because sometimes I do not know whether my methods work or not, so yes, training is very welcome” (Curdt-Christiansen et al., 2023, p. 25). Another participant stated: “I am a new teacher here. I have a lot to learn. I want to learn from other experienced EMI teachers, especially their teaching skills” (Curdt-Christiansen et al., 2023, p. 25).

The research findings indicate that language training, followed by instruction, is an urgent need for EMI lecturers at this research site, which is common in various EMI settings. *Maintaining* student engagement can be challenging, particularly when EMI teachers, who are non-native speakers, are grappling with both the subject matter and the language simultaneously. EMI involves more complexity than simple translation from first language to English during teaching (Yang, 2021). In other words, to teach effectively in EMI, “EMI lecturing involves more than delivering content through English; it is a complex process that requires language and methodological attention” (Cots, 2013; Fortanet-Gómez, 2013; Morell, 2018; as cited in Beltrán-Palanques, 2021, p. 63).

4.2.3. Needs of Teacher Collaboration

81.8% EMI lecturers considered the collaborative support important. Cross-departmental EMI teacher networks were highly appreciated (75.7%), followed by peer support networks and collaboration with language experts (72.7%), whereas Co-teaching was considered the least favourite form of teacher collaboration, with 39.3% participants thinking it was necessary.

Interviewed teachers emphasised the importance of colleague collaboration for EMI lecturers' professional development, offering various reasons. T1 commented,

Working together with other teachers is vital. When I want my English writing to sound natural and impress native speakers, I always seek guidance from English instructors. They help make sure my grammar is correct and my writing flows well.

(T1, Face-to-face interview, 2024)

The findings correlated well with the results from studies conducted both internationally and domestically. As Schlaack and Steele (2018) proposed, teacher collaboration fostered teachers' motivation to implement new instructional methods and enhance their teaching skills. Especially, Macaro (2023) found that collaboration between language and content teachers was essential for developing effective EMI lecturers with high

language proficiency and sufficient teaching skills. This finding was supported in Vietnam by Chau (2017), whose study at Hue University showed that participants reported greater benefits from working together. These participants shared their ideas:

Collaboration is very essential... As an old saying goes: “Two heads are better than one” ... When we are in difficulty, advice or suggestions from others can help us find a way to get out of trouble... People say collaboration takes time, but I think collaboration helps teachers save time. If a teacher tries to find out a solution to a problem or simply learn a new thing by himself/herself, it can take more time. When teachers come together and share knowledge, skills, materials, ideas, experiences, and other valuable resources of their own, they spend less time and gain more things

(Chau, 2017, p. 14).

Teaching is a demanding job with low salary... Sometimes I feel exhausted. I find exchanging ideas with colleagues is an outlet for expressing and sharing frustrations, concerns, problems with teaching... Moral support and encouragement from colleagues makes me more determined to try out new ideas and do the best things I can for the sake of my students... By discussing with other teachers, I realize what I am good at and what I need to improve. Others' thinking is often a useful reflection that helps me see myself and my job more clearly... Changes in education bring us new opportunities as well as new challenges. Some challenges, though very interesting, are very difficult for individual teachers to deal with. Collaborating with colleagues helps us take more advantage of the opportunities and cope better with the challenges.

(Chau, 2017, p. 17)

Such viewpoints allow us to conclude that the collaboration between content and language lecturers is highly appreciated and EMI lecturers have a strong belief in its benefits as “best support lecturing practices” (Beltrán-Palanques, 2021, p. 77). However, despite recognising the benefits, teacher collaboration in practice would be limited due to time constraints. T1 added,

About teacher collaboration, to make it feasible, we need institutional support. For example, schools should schedule collaboration time, treating it as a core part of teaching duties, compensate staff for attending, and require clear outcomes from each session.

(T1, Face-to-face interview, 2024)

4.3. Needs for institutional support, teaching materials and resources

Numerous ideas can be collected from questionnaires and interviews, in which the EMI

lecturers expressed their needs for support from the school policies, teaching materials and other resources as well as educational exchanges, as illustrated in Figure 5.

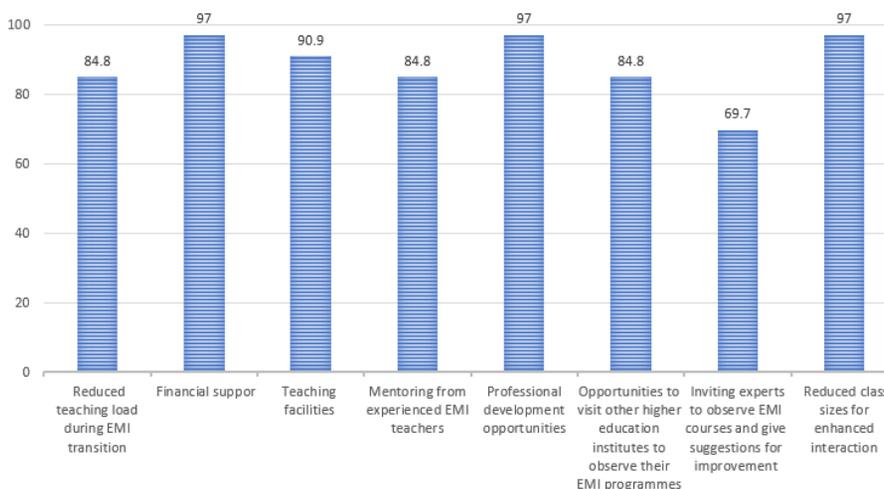


Figure 5. Needs for institutional support

Data showed that 84.8% EMI lecturers desired to reduced teaching load during EMI transition. As T1 said,

I need adequate preparation time. If I'm assigned to teach an EMI class, I require 1-2 months to prepare thoroughly. This includes developing materials, planning content, and designing teaching methods. I also need to think ahead about possible classroom situations - how students might respond to different topics, what questions they might ask, and what support they might need during lessons.

(T1, Face-to-face interview, 2024)

To clarify this opinion, T2 gave some explanation,

Preparing lessons for EMI is time-consuming and requires effort. Creating new content in English is far more challenging than in Vietnamese. Even preparing a lesson in Vietnamese can take days. In EMI class, the workload increases significantly. Financial support for this additional preparation time would be helpful.

(T2, Face-to-face interview, 2024)

The saying revealed that medical EMI lecturers spent more time preparing for EMI classes compared to Vietnamese-medium instruction. Content lecturers believed the workload in EMI classes increased substantially compared to regular teaching subjects in their mother tongue.

Moreover, 97% of participants said reducing class sizes would improve teaching by enabling better interaction between teachers and students. They also needed financial support, especially for attending EMI conferences, training and professional development.

In addition, EMI lecturers expressed a desire for well-equipped facilities (90.9%). They were enthusiastic about applying new technologies in teaching. T6 insisted that,

There are many useful apps that support teaching - from lecture preparation, class management to student engagement through games and exercises. We're excited to explore these digital tools.

(T6, Face-to-face interview, 2024)

Sharing the same view, in research conducted by Guarda and Helm (2017), a participant commented on the use of technology in teaching practice. In his words, "In addition to increasing student participation, the use of technology was felt by some lecturers to be a strategic tool to help themselves in conveying their message to the students and ensuring understanding" (p. 20)

Furthermore, research findings revealed that EMI lecturers are interested in peer learning and professional exchanges. They desired to be mentored by experienced EMI teachers and visited other higher education domestic and international

institutions to observe their EMI programmes (84.8%), met invited experts to observe EMI courses and received suggestions for improvement (69.7%), as well as had opportunities for professional development (97%). T6 said,

Let's study how other countries or schools teach these subjects or invite foreign professors as guest lecturers to have chance to learn from experienced EMI lecturers.

(T6, Face-to-face interview, 2024)

This idea was very similar to the participants' view in a study conducted in China by Curdt-Christiansen et al. (2023). Participants in that research noted that overseas EMI institutions could provide valuable training and networking opportunities with experts from both English-speaking and non-English-speaking countries. One participant stated that she preferred to "go abroad to observe EMI courses or disciplinary courses as a form of language training to enhance English language proficiency" (p. 28). Another participant stated that, "Higher education institutes should regularly provide opportunities for EMI lecturers to go abroad to be "recharged" through observing discipline-related EMI courses. Such international communications could help the EMI lecturers update their disciplinary knowledge and improve EMI teachers' English language proficiency"

(p. 16).

Finally, EMI lecturers need materials and resources support, such as providing more medical textbooks (90.9%), teaching materials in English, online EMI medical resources (medical English websites, videos), and technology resources (93.9%). They were highly concerned about formal EMI coursebooks. T5 admitted that,

I'm using a foreign textbook, but its lessons are long and don't align with our courses. Our department needs to create its own coursebook since we can't use existing textbooks. Subject lecturers will be accountable for content accuracy, while language lecturers will refine the writing and ensure grammatical accuracy.

(T5, Face-to-face interview, 2024)

To sum up, it can be concluded that while providing financial compensation for these extra duties, institutions should allocate time for lesson preparation, opportunities for professional development, and other support for teaching materials and resources. These supports would provide both motivation and means for teachers to enhance EMI teaching quality.

5. RECOMMENDATION

This study contributes to existing EMI research by highlighting contextual factors unique to the Vietnamese context. The research reveals that older Vietnamese professors had limited English-language learning opportunities due to historical circumstances, leading to low confidence despite their subject expertise. Especially, the study provides insights into EMI within Vietnamese medical education, where specialised terminology combined with limited English exposure outside classrooms creates teaching challenges. These challenges distinguish Vietnamese EMI implementation from other international contexts and extend our understanding of EMI lecturers' needs.

The research findings have significant application for institutional policy development, resource allocation, and professional development. Some recommendations can be proposed to enhance teaching quality, such as developing clear guidelines, allocating funding for EMI teacher training programs and international exchanges. School leaders should implement practical measures such as reducing workload for EMI lecturers, establishing formal collaboration networks between content and language lecturers, providing administrative support for material development, implementing smaller class sizes for EMI courses, and developing institutional policies that recognise EMI teaching efforts. EMI lecturers themselves are encouraged to form support networks for sharing resources and teaching strategies, invest in both general English and English for Specific Purpose, and apply technology tools in teaching practice.

6. CONCLUSION

In this research, EMI lecturers express specific needs for personal development, particularly in English enhancement and pedagogical development, as well as teacher collaboration between content and language lecturers. In addition, for teaching quality enhancement, research findings indicate a need for careful consideration of EMI time and workload management, as well as comprehensive institutional support systems, especially in terms of teaching resources. It is noteworthy that language improvement courses emerged as EMI lecturers' top priority. These are important points that will help guide useful targeted support ways to address EMI lecturers' needs in the future. Although lecturers consistently demonstrate strong commitment to professional growth by

showing enthusiasm for learning, staying up to date, and a willingness to overcome challenges, ongoing support is necessary to encourage them to experiment with new teaching approaches.

This study is limited to one medical university in the Mekong Delta, Vietnam; therefore, findings cannot be generalised to represent EMI lecturers' needs in all universities across Vietnam. However, the findings can serve as a starting point or reference for future research on a larger scale, with more participants across various contexts.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest

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