

HOW TO INCREASE ENGLISH COURSE OFFERINGS AT SPANISH UNIVERSITIES

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1. Introduction – The Bologna process has encouraged that many European universities are attempting to foster their international dimension by increasing course offerings taught in English. Several Spanish universities are promoting the use of English among their students and faculties [1][2] but there are several intrinsic problems that lack global solutions [3]. Currently, the Technical University of Madrid (Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, UPM) does not yet have a specific program to promote teaching in English, although an Educational Model exists that highlights the need to foster UPM internationalization and suggests some measurements like the International Semester. The innovative education project TechEnglish funded by the UPM is working to improve the internationalization of undergraduate and graduate programs at this university by increasing the number and quality of courses offered in English. To do that a university wide framework has been elaborated.

2. Experimental – We summarized and compared existing strategies to increase course offerings in English from 13 different Spanish universities (Image 1) to develop a framework based on the specific needs of our university (UPM).



Image 1. List of all the Spanish universities analyzed that had internationalization programs or specific strategies to promote the use of English in university classrooms.

3. Results and Discussion - The information from other universities was grouped into one of nine categories: students, professors, administrative personnel, courses offered, other actors/institutions within the university (e.g., language departments), funds and projects, dissemination activities, mobility plans and quality control. The sections on students, professors and administrative personnel included sub-sections on training, admission, mobility and certification (see Table 1). Those results show that very few universities consider administrative personnel (PAS in Spanish for Personal de Administración y Servicios), which could be a handicap in the near future since they are often in close contact with students.

Table 1. Percentages of university programs reviewed (n=13) that provided details about certification, training, mobility and recognition of efforts to teach or learn courses in English.

	<i>Professors</i>	<i>Administration</i>	<i>Students</i>
Certification	69	23	62
Training	84	46	69
Mobility	62	31	84
Recognition	54	7	92

The sections on course offerings at other universities included information on the courses themselves, how they were organized (e.g., length of the course or bilingual degrees), how to enrol in the courses (administrative details), but less than half included information about the minimum amount of students required to be able to offer the course, which is often a problem for both students and professors (Image 2).

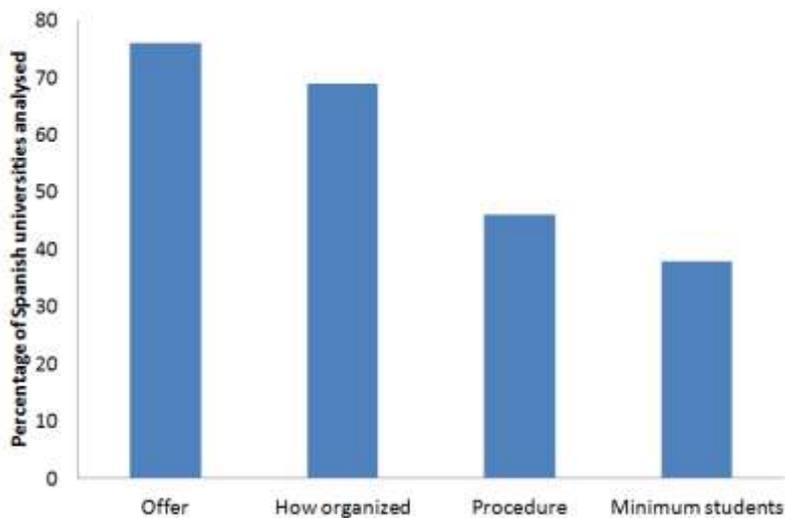


Image 2. Percentages of all the Spanish universities analyzed that included information about course offerings, how the courses were organized, what was the procedure to offer courses and the minimum number of students needed to be able to give the course.

The institutions involved in increasing English course offerings, within the various universities, were quite varied and ranged between language departments to commissions and vice-chancellorships. However, only 5 universities (38%) provided information about funding for their initiatives and a bit more than half (7 universities or 54% of the sample) mentioned quality schemes which would help to maintain the programs in the medium to long term.

Using this information our group has drawn up a framework proposal to increase course offerings at the UPM. The framework has been structured into five blocks : institutional organization, academic offer, teaching body, administrative personnel and student body. From the initial design, the proposal has been modified through a participatory approach. Successive rounds of consultations with the main actors involved in the teaching process have been organized: center leadership teams, department directors, teachers from Linguistic Department, content teachers, administrative personnel and student representatives. Most consulted actors agree with the general premise (i.e., to increase course offerings in English) but there is general concern about how efforts will be recognized or compensated. Other concerns are related to the teaching quality, the lack of funding and the training.

4. Conclusions - Most of the plans and efforts by Spanish universities to increase course offerings in English can be summarized into three basic categories, the people involved, the course plans themselves and the institutions involved at each university. Within those categories there is a wide diversity among universities, but in general there is less information about how to help train, certify and recognize the efforts of the personnel.

5. References

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