The International Research Foundation
for English Language Education

Title of Project:
Korean University Professors' Knowledge Base and Professional
Development Needs for English-medium Instruction

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Project Summary:

English-medium instruction (EMI) is now a global phenomenon that impacts university education in Asian countries (Kong, Hoare, & Chi, 2011). Korean universities are enforcing EMI adoption without adequate support (Lee, 2010). Compelled by changes in the Korean university ranking system, the policy-makers of higher education have embraced a top-down internationalization policy in their decision to implement EMI while language learning remains as a secondary agenda (Smit & Dafouz, 2012).

Despite a growing body of research on EMI, most studies revolve around understanding perceptions and measuring effectiveness, while few have focused on pedagogical issues. Therefore, to inform education policy and improve classroom practices, this classroom-based study aims to fill the gap in the research literature by exploring EMI instructors' knowledge base and professional development needs for EMI in the Korean context.

The theoretical framework employed for this study is the reconceptualized knowledge base of language teacher education (Freeman & Johnson, 1998), which highlights the social nature of teacher learning. Content-based instruction is another theoretical framework that informs this study by highlighting the inseparable relationship between content and language.

Based on research questions that seek to understand the participants' knowledge base and development needs for English-medium instruction in Korea, the researcher worked with six Korean professors in four universities and collected data through a variety of methods: interviews, classroom observations, stimulated recall interviews, document analysis, researcher journal-keeping, and member checking. Data will now be analyzed using the reconceptualized knowledge base (Freeman & Johnson, 1998) and the SIOP scheme (Echevarria et al., 2012).