Implementing Liberal Arts and Sciences Education in Russia and Palestine: toward Mutuality and Equality in Theory and Practice

Presenters:
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Session Outline

- Principal ideas and working conundrums – How Bard’s international network was built, with examples of problems and breakthroughs
- The Language and Thinking Program as a tool for introducing liberal pedagogy in a “traditional,” hierarchical Russian university
- Location-specific adaptations as response to local conditions and student needs at a large Palestinian university
Basics

• “Deep partnerships” are built on the principles of mutuality and equality.

• Shared curricular structures, joint faculty involvement, and student-centered pedagogy create a space for intercultural awareness, genuine curiosity, and self-critique.
Tools

- The dual degree – the critical leverage for negotiations and quality control
- Bi-lateral agreements legitimize and anchor administration at the top
- Joint faculty oversight committees work out curriculum and pedagogy
- Freedom of teaching and learning – faculty as source of curriculum & content
Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences (Smolny College)

- Founding of the program: 1997
- Became a Faculty: 2011
- Two diplomas: SPSU & Bard College
- 524 students
- 133 faculty members
- 82 full-time faculty positions
- Average class size: 15 students
- 14 BA Majors and 7 MA Programs
Bachelor's Degree Requirements
Obligatory / Core (63 ECTS)

- Russian Language and Culture of Speech / Writing and Thinking: 2 ECTS
- First Year Seminar: 11 ECTS
- English Language (max. trajectory): 23 ECTS
- Methodology of Humanities: 6 ECTS
- Final Attestation (Senior Project + State Final Exam): 21 ECTS
Bachelor's Degree Requirements

Elective (177 ECTS)

- Distribution Area Requirements: min 48 ECTS (6 ECTS per one class from 8 areas):
  - Mathematics
  - Conceptions of Modern Science
  - Philosophy
  - Music
  - Social Sciences
  - Philology
  - History
  - Visual Arts

- Major requirements: min 69 ECTS (including practices and 3rd year project)

- Non-major: 60 ECTS
Writing and Thinking program in a Russian university: problems

• Fundamental Education → Disciplinary approach. What discipline W&T is? What faculty are allowed to teach in the program? -

• Only few faculty members can teach the course both professionally and in an informal way. Work-intensive teaching assignments are always a challenge.

• Grading generously is a way to keep students interested and relaxed (We have to include the course credits within the credit system).

• To place an W&T within the Federal Standard curriculum it is positioned as a radically new version of the well-known traditional post-Soviet course “Russian Language and Culture of Speech” which was formerly an obligatory component of the curriculum and is still taught in most post-Soviet universities.
Al Quds Bard College for the Arts & Sciences
About AQB

• Opened in 2009
• Partnership with Al Quds University
• Language of Instruction: English
• Undergraduates: 221
• Full time faculty: 14
• Current part time faculty: 20
Program Challenges Part I: The Palestinian High School Experience

*Memorization – based curricula
*Tawjihi Exam
*English preparedness
*Arabic Language skills
AQB Integrated Core Curriculum

Language & Thinking

First Year Seminar

English Composition

Arabic Composition

Second Year Seminar
The curriculum combines traditional disciplines and innovative interdisciplinary programs:

- Human Rights & International Law
- Media Studies
- Urban Studies
- Computer Science
- Economics & Finance
- Political Studies
- Literature & Society
- Biology
- Chemistry
Program Challenges Part II

- Location and the Occupation

- Al Quds University: A Partnership
  - 14,000 students
  - 1,000 faculty and staff
Addressing Shared Challenges: Bard’s “Network”

• Institute for Writing & Thinking Workshops

• Arabic Language & Thinking

• Student Civic Engagement Activities:
  • Example: the village of Mas’ha
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