

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF ARMENIA  
College of Humanities and Social Sciences

**A Study on Teacher Dispersion and its  
Effects on Rural Education in The Republic  
of Armenia**

A Paper is submitted in  
partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree  
Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

By

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April 30, 2013

We hereby approve that this paper

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Entitled

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Be accepted in partial fulfillment for the requirements of the degree

Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Foreign Language

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the data collected during the development of this MA paper was to find out where MA TEFL teachers are from and where they plan on teaching after they finish their studies as well as where past graduates are from and where they have been teaching. A small amount of the population comes from Armenian villages but there was not found to be a correlation between where a teacher is from and if they are willing to teach in an Armenian village. Qualitative data was used to propose solutions to the lack of graduates teaching in Rural Armenia where their skills are much needed.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the data collected during the development of this MA paper is three fold. Firstly, I want to find where current MA TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) teachers plan on teaching after they finish their studies at AUA (The American University of Armenia) Secondly, I will analyze where are previous MA TEFL graduates are now as well as where they have been teaching. The third purpose of this study is to gain qualitative data on current and former students as to why they plan on, or have chosen, to work/teach at their respective locations. This information will be collected with the hope of discovering what motivates our teachers to work and teach where they do with the hopes that a system may eventually be put in place to encourage our teachers to reach out to rural communities throughout Armenian.

My hypothesis is that AUA graduates are underrepresented in the rural areas of Armenia, which make up roughly half of the population. That they are either choosing not to return to the small towns and villages in which they grew up or are simply not considering working/teaching outside of Yerevan.

This study will be conducted using both quantitative and qualitative data. The subjects will be both current AUA students as well as past graduates/alumni of AUA. The data will be collected and analyzed. After which, an evaluation of the current trends of AUA MA TEFL graduates will be presented. Current programs that are already being implemented will be discussed and evaluated as well.

## CHAPTER TWO: SCOPE AND BACKGROUND

A significant amount of research has been done recently on the education system in Armenia. In this section I will attempt to summarize the current pedagogical situation in Armenia addressing the current needs and trends of the Armenia and its educational system. This paper and the referenced research will, for the most part, focus on the teaching of English as a foreign language and will highlight the disparities that exist in rural, mountainous regions, within The Republic of Armenia.

There are several major challenges facing Armenia's current educational system. The first I would like to highlight is the fact that students in many of the villages throughout Armenia are not receiving the same level of education as they might in Yerevan. *"The quality of education received by students suffers because many teachers teach subjects that they are not trained to teach. Particularly in small rural schools, the policy of downsizing the staff has had a negative impact on the quality of education."* (Raisa Belyavina, Wiley, Tovmasyan, Petrosyan, Poghosyan, & Ter-Ghevondyan, 2010) In regards to English education, this notion is especially disturbing considering the fact that English is becoming ever increasingly important when considering upward mobility within society, not only Armenia but throughout much of the world.

Some steps have been taken to address the problem at hand in an attempt to get qualified teachers to where they need to be. For example, the Armenia Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) implemented a program in 2007 that gives a small stipend and bonus to teachers who leave their home town to teach in "hardship areas" through Armenia. These areas consist primarily of rural mountainous regions. However,



according to MoES itself, the program is infrequently being taken advantage of. *“In 2008, there were 91 teachers who were deployed through this process; in 2009, there were 34.”* (Raisa Belyavina, Wiley, Tovmasyan, Petrosyan, Poghosyan, & Ter-Ghevondyan, 2010)

A third issue in Armenia is that it seems that some of the major pedagogical institutions that supply many of the teachers to schools throughout Armenia are actually behind current trends and teaching methods; that they are producing teaching with a degree in hand but little practical teaching experience or knowledge current teaching methods. *“A big emphasis is placed on teaching the content of subjects rather than on the teaching process. As a result, the gap between pre-service training and actual teaching practices is vast.”* (Raisa Belyavina, Wiley, Tovmasyan, Petrosyan, Poghosyan, & Ter-Ghevondyan, 2010)

According to a report done by UESCO *“The fastest growing needs in the region include: a need for teacher training, solving the challenge of a shrinking pedagogical cadre and creating effective policies for teacher recruitment and retention.”* (United Nations Educational, 2009)

*“A big emphasis is placed on teaching the content of subjects rather than on the teaching process. For this reason, approximately 40–60 per cent of the instructional hours in the pedagogical universities are allocated for subject-specific courses. About 14–25 per cent of hours are given to pedagogy and psychology courses and 12–13 per cent of instructional hours are allocated to courses in humanities and social science disciplines. In the Department of Preschool and Primary School Pedagogy, pedagogy and psychology courses make up about 90 per cent*

*of the curriculum (ASPU, 2010). The hours allocated for the practical school experience are insufficient and do not allow students to develop and practice their teaching skills. As a result, the gap between pre-service training and actual teaching practices is vast.”(Raisa Belyavina, Wiley, Tovmasyan, Petrosyan, Poghosyan, & Ter-Ghevondyan, 2010)*

This knowledge has led me to focus on what might be done to positively affect the current situation in the rural Armenian education system. Not with the idea to change the whole educational system and institution throughout the republic of Armenia. Such a plan would take much more time and assistance that is currently available to me. Instead, I am focusing on a feasible solution that could be implemented in a relatively short period of time.

As evidenced by these recent studies there are several key challenges facing Armenia. One of which is certainly the quality, qualifications, and experience of teachers in rural Armenia. This paper will attempt to attempt focus its attention on this issue. It will investigate what is hindering current and past MA TEFL students of AUA from going and teaching, or training, in these high needs areas, as well as try to address what might be done to address the aforementioned issue.

While research has been done into the current rural education system in Armenian little to none has been done on the teachers themselves where they choose to go after graduation and why they make those choices. For this we have to look at studies outside of Armenia and while they may apply to the current situation in Armenia there is no way of knowing if this is truly the case or not. One such study conducted in the United States found that *“working conditions play a relatively more important role in determining where new teaches end up choosing to teach, rather than differences in relative*

*teacher wages.*” (Bacolod, 2007) The research conducted here will address whether the same holds true in regards to Armenian Graduates or whether we see other more influential factors at play.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

### **Participants:**

For this study two populations were selected. The first population consisted of both first and second year cohorts studying in the MATEFL program at The American University of Armenian. The second population consisted of past graduates of the AUA MATEFL and TEFL certificates programs.

### **Materials:**

Data collection was done using two separate but similar subject-completed instruments. For this two questionnaires were created, one for each population. The questionnaires were then distributed to all current AUA MATEFL and TEFL Certificate Alumni.

### **Research Design:**

One function of the surveys/questionnaires was to collect biographical and background data on the subjects. Information such as where they are from, where they are teaching or plan on teaching in the future, and where they have taught in the past, was obtained multiple choice questions.

The second function of the questionnaires was to collect both qualitative and quantitative data in regards to what factors affect their decision as to where they have taught or hope to teach in the future. This was accomplished using a Likert scale with nominal variables as well as open-ended questions.

A third function of the current cohorts survey was to find out what, if any, knowledge current MATEFL students have of programs provide English teachers to rural Armenian towns and villages. This was presented in the form of an open-ended question.

**Procedure:**

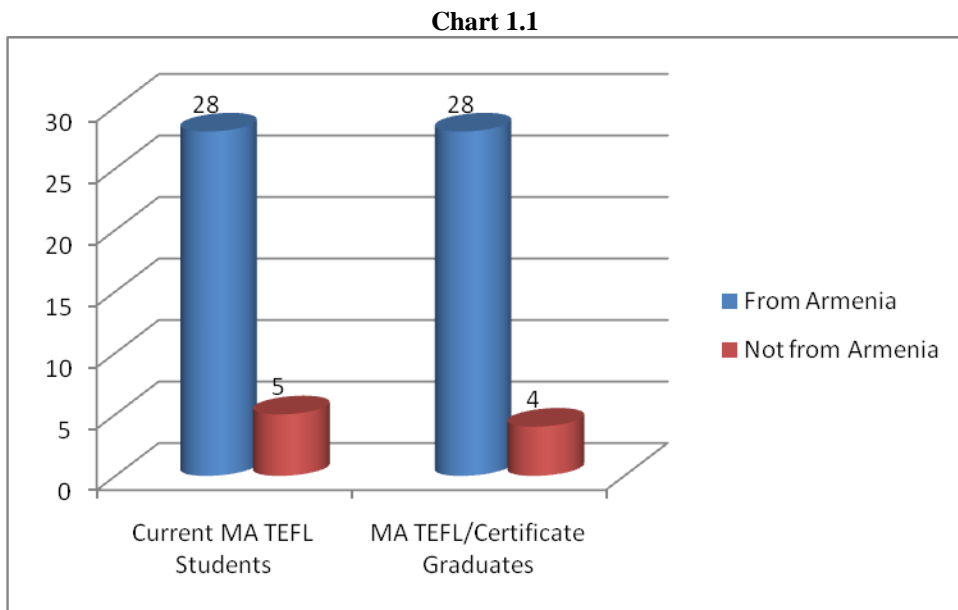
First, descriptive statistics were used to analyze the quantitative data. Next, inferential statistics were analyzed using a multiple regression analysis in an effort show any correlation between the variables as well as to expose any suppressor variables that might exist. For example, a subject's biographical background was compared to where they had taught or plan on teaching in the future to see if there was any statistically significant correlation between the two variables.

Last of all, the qualitative data was used to highlight current trends, views, opinions, and knowledge of the given populations. This yielded results that otherwise could not have been obtained without the use of open-ended type questions. This data was then compared to the statistical analysis and also function as a means of support for possible solutions teacher attrition in rural Armenia.

## CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

### Quantitative Research Results:

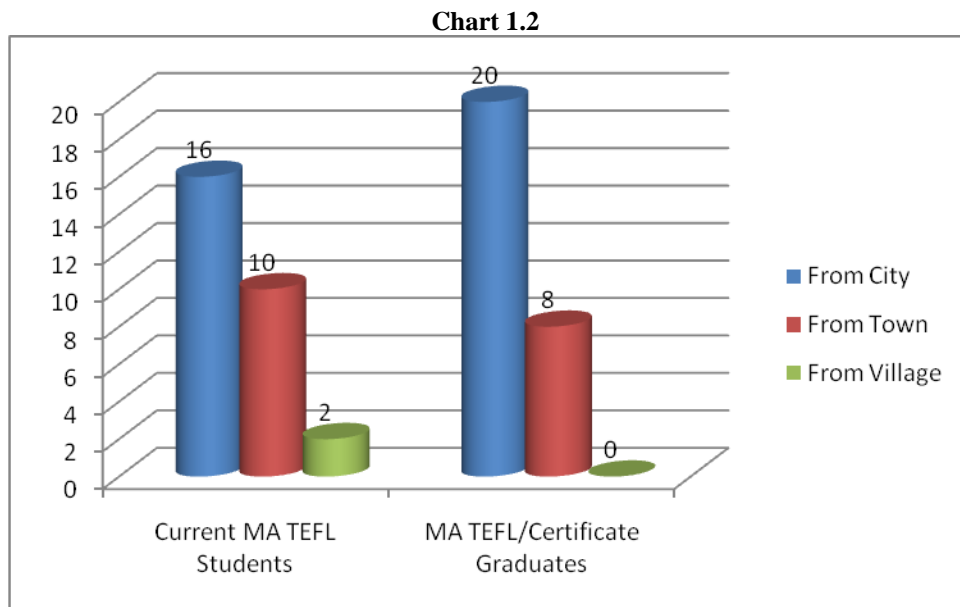
An analysis of the descriptive statistics garnered through this study illustrates several key points in regards to the given populations. The first being that the majority of both current AUA TEFL students as well as AUA TEFL alumni are from The Republic of Armenia while 15% of currents students stated that they are from abroad and 13% of graduates (alumni) are from abroad. This can be visualized in the chart below.



In chart 1.2 the parameters are reduced to include only those whose hometown is in Armenia. This has been done in order to illustrate what proportion of the population comes from Armenian towns, villages and cities. From the given sample we can see that 20 students/graduates, or 35.71% hail from Armenian towns or villages while the

remaining 36, or 64.28% percent of the surveyed come from cities. Yerevan, the capital and largest city of Armenia was the most represented city in this category.

The data also suggests a slight trend towards further integration of students from outside the major cities into the MATEFL program as the number of current MATEFL students has more students from Armenian towns and villages than past graduates although further analysis beyond the scope of this study might be needed to confirm this trend.



A further analysis of the survey results (see table 1.1) show that the majority (72%) of current MATEFL students plan on teaching in a city, presumably Yerevan, when they graduate while 18.2% plan to work abroad and a small portion, 9.1% is considering teaching in an Armenian town or village after graduating.

If we look at where AUA MATEFL graduates and certificate holders are currently working we see a similar trend. Of the graduates surveyed 62.5% are working in an Armenian city while only 6.2% are working in an Armenian town or village. Of the remaining, 3.1% are teaching abroad and 28.1% stated that they are not currently teaching.

**Table 1.1**

Current MA TEFL students		N	Marginal Percentage
Plan to teach in Armenian Town or Village	City	24	72.7%
	Town/Village	3	9.1%
	Abroad	6	18.2%
Where From	City	16	48.5%
	Town/Village	12	36.4%
	Abroad	5	15.2%
Valid		33	100.0%
Missing		0	
Total		33	
Subpopulation		3	



**Table 1.2**

MA TEFL /Certificate Graduates		N	Marginal Percentage
Where Teaching	Yerevan	20	62.5%
	Town or Village	2	6.2%
	Abroad	1	3.1%
	Not Teaching	9	28.1%
Where From	Town	7	21.9%
	City	25	78.1%
Valid		32	100.0%
Missing		0	
Total		32	
Subpopulation		2	

An analysis of the inferential statistics obtained through multinomial logistic regressions (see tables 2.1 and 2.2) fails to pinpoint any statistically significant correlation between where a teacher comes from (town, village, city and even abroad) and where they will teach in the future.

The results do not allow for us to infer that students from Armenian towns and villages are more likely to go back and teach in rural Armenian towns and villages. The statistics, on the contrary, show little difference between where an Armenian student is from and where they want to go or where they actually end up teaching.

## Current Students

Table 2.1

Parameter Estimates									
Plan to teach in Armenian Town or Village <sup>a</sup>		B	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval for Exp (B)	
								Lower Bound	Upper Bound
City	Intercept	1.099	1.155	.905	1	.341			
	[WhereFrom=1]	.000	1.291	.000	1	1.000	1.000	.080	12.557
	[WhereFrom=2]	1.099	1.563	.494	1	.482	3.000	.140	64.262
	[WhereFrom=4]	0 <sup>b</sup>	.	.	0	.	.	.	.
Town/Village	Intercept	.000	1.414	.000	1	1.000			
	[WhereFrom=1]	-20.078	.000	.	1	.	1.906E-9	1.906E-9	1.906E-9
	[WhereFrom=2]	.693	1.871	.137	1	.711	2.000	.051	78.250
	[WhereFrom=4]	0 <sup>b</sup>	.	.	0	.	.	.	.

a. The reference category is: Abroad.  
b. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.

## Graduates

Table 2.2

Parameter Estimates									
Where Teaching <sup>a</sup>		B	Std. Error	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% Confidence Interval for Exp (B)	
								Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Yerevan	Intercept	1.099	.471	5.431	1	.020			
	[HomeTown=2]	-1.504	1.027	2.143	1	.143	.222	.030	1.665
	[HomeTown=3]	0 <sup>b</sup>	.	.	0	.	.	.	.
Town or Village	Intercept	-1.792	1.080	2.752	1	.097			
	[HomeTown=2]	.693	1.581	.192	1	.661	2.000	.090	44.350
	[HomeTown=3]	0 <sup>b</sup>	.	.	0	.	.	.	.
Abroad	Intercept	-21.071	1.155	332.977	1	.000			
	[HomeTown=2]	19.972	.000	.	1	.	4.717E8	4.717E8	4.717E8
	[HomeTown=3]	0 <sup>b</sup>	.	.	0	.	.	.	.

a. The reference category is: Not Teaching.  
b. This parameter is set to zero because it is redundant.

To summarize the results of quantitative research analysis, there was found to be a higher amount (55.38%) of students from Armenian cities, more specifically Yerevan, than from towns and villages throughout Armenia and students from abroad combined. However, there might currently be a trend towards a more international and integrated student body.

What's more, there is little difference between the two samples (current students vs. graduates) when looking at where they hope to teach in the future and where they are currently teaching. Both samples lean heavily towards teaching in Armenian cities rather than rural areas. Some outliers were observed such as teachers working abroad as well as those who are not teaching at all.

The inferential statistics show no correlation between a teacher's hometown and where they end up teaching. However, it should be noted that lack of correlation in this study could be related to the small proportion of students, two to be exact, who are from Armenian villages.

### **Qualitative Research Results:**

Question 7 from the survey 1.1 and survey 1.2 (*Under what circumstances would you consider working in a rural area in Armenia?*) attempts to address what factors might influence a teacher to work in towns or villages in Armenia. A comprehensive look at the responses shows that while no single factor may be attributed to whether a teacher will consider working in rural Armenia there are trends that may be used to attract teachers to such teaching positions.

Of the 65 subjects surveyed the most common influencing factor mentioned was salary. Twenty six of the respondents stated that earning a reasonable salary would have a significant effect on whether or not they would be willing to work in rural Armenia. The second most commonly mentioned factor was related to living conditions. Ten of the respondents stated that they would consider working in a rural Armenian town or village if items such as housing, internet connectivity, and other modern conveniences were

addressed properly. Eight of the respondents mentioned family as a major influencing factor. Considerations such as where their children would be able to study and feel “comfortable” as well as whether their spouse would be able to find work or agree to such a move were included in these responses. The third most common factor, mentioned by 8 of the surveyed, was related to the length of the contract period. These eight teachers mentioned that if the duration of their teaching assignment in the town or village was temporary or only on weekends they would be more willing to consider working there.

Other factors that were mentioned to a lesser extent included issues such as transportation, safety of the location and the programs available, (if their employer would send them they would consider), and whether or not the school involved would support current English teaching methods. Ten of the teachers surveyed stated that under no conditions would they consider working in a rural area of Armenia.

Question 8 (see survey 1.1) shows that the majority of MATEFL students are unaware of any programs that might provide them with teaching positions in rural Armenian towns and villages. Of the 32 students questioned only two stated that they know of any such program. Both of these respondents mentioned The Children of Armenian Fund otherwise known as COAF. It is also important to note that several of the respondents expressed a desire to have more knowledge about possible rural development programs or that more programs should be implemented.

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of the research conducted show us that the majority of AUA MATEFL students come from Yerevan, the capitol city of Armenia. However, there are currently more students studying from outside Yerevan than at any other time in the AUA's TEFL history. This could point to a trend towards to more inclusion of rural and international students. However, more research would have to be done to confirm this idea. A future study with a broader scope might be able to confirm this trend. However, the research done here does not confirm a link between a student's location, where they originated from, and where they will teach in the future. This could very well be because of the lack of students from rural villages and towns throughout the history of the program but it might also be that there is no connection between where a teacher is from and whether or not they are willing to teach in a rural Armenian setting.

According to (Murnane, Singer, & Willett, 1989) & (Shen, 1997) salary is one of the most significant predictors of teacher attrition. This was found to be true of AUA MATEFL students and graduates as well. Other significant factors that influence our teachers' decision as to whether they are willing to teach in rural Armenian included the living conditions (internet connection availability, housing, lifestyle etc...), the duration of the teaching assignment, and family considerations.

The mission of the American University of Armenia, according AUA's website as of April 30<sup>th</sup> 2013, is as follows:

*As an institution of higher learning, the American University of Armenia provides teaching, research, and service programs that prepare students and enable faculty and researchers to address the needs of Armenia and the surrounding region for sustainable development, in a setting that values and develops academic excellence, free inquiry, integrity, scholarship, leadership, and service to society.*

According to the most recent census data taken (CIA, 2013) around 1.1 million people live in Yerevan while roughly half of the population of Armenia comes from rural towns and villages. If we are going to address the “needs of Armenia” then the needs must surely include the needs of the population outside the capital city. One way to address these needs is to provide qualified teachers to such regions.

Only 9% of the 33 current AUA MATFL students surveyed confirmed that they are aware of any programs available to them that could place them in English teaching positions located throughout rural Armenian. Several programs do indeed exist. These range from private programs such as The Children of Armenia Fund (COAF) and the Turpanjian Rural Development Program (TRDP) to government programs supported by The Ministry of Education and Science (MoES). There are also newly developing programs here at AUA such as The Continuing Education Program that already have English teachers placed in both Shirak and Tavush marz. Moreover, The Continuing Education Program is planning to expand to other marzes over the next few years. This expansion will need to be supported by both Teachers of English as a Foreign Language as well as TEFL teacher trainers in places such as Stepanakert.

**Implications:**

Apart from conquering geopolitical divides and implementing economic reforms it seems that the single most feasible solution to encouraging AUA graduates to consider teaching in rural Armenian could simply have to do with providing them the necessary information as to what programs are currently available to them as well as what possibilities will be available in the near future. Highlighting key issues that arose from the results of the surveys conducted here such as salary concerns, transportation methods, and even advantages in lifestyle and accommodations could persuade our teachers to consider such a venture in the future.

**Limitations:**

One limitation of this study is that the population contained very few respondents from Armenian villages. It is possible that the inferential statistics may yield different results in the future should this disparity shift. Delimitations include the fact that only AUA's MA TEFL program was looked at and that the research focused solely on The Republic of Armenia.

**Need for future research:**

Due to the time constraints of this project more research would need to be done in the future to show for certainty whether or not AUA's population is becoming more diverse and what effects this might have on teacher dispersion.

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## APPENDICES

**Current Cohorts**

**1. Are you from Armenia? (Did you grow up in Armenia?)**

Yes

No

Other (please specify)

**2. Your hometown is a...**

Village

Town

City

Other (please specify)

**3. Are you currently teaching?**

Yes

No

Other (please specify)

**4. Where do you plan on living/working after you finish school?**

Yerevan

Your hometown (not counting Yerevan)

Some other town or village in Armenia

Another country

Other (please specify)

## Current Cohorts

### 5. Where do you see yourself living/working 10 years from now?

- Yerevan  
 Your hometown (not including Yerevan)  
 Some other town or village in Armenia  
 Another country

Other (please specify)

### 6. Which factors are of significance/importance for you when making a decision as to where you want to teach?

	Very important	Important	Neutral	Not very important	Not important	N/A
Family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lifestyle of location	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Job availability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pay/salary	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

### 7. Under what circumstances would you consider working in a rural area in Armenia?

### \*8. Are you aware of any programs/organizations that place English teachers in Armenia villages. (If yes then please explain)

**1. Are you from Armenia? (Did you grow up in Armenia?)**

Yes

No

Other (please specify)

**2. Your hometown is a...**

Village

Town

City

Other (please specify)

**3. Since you graduated where have you taught English? (check all that apply)**

Yerevan

Your hometown (not including Yerevan)

Some other town or village in Armenia

Another Country

Other (please specify)

**4. Where are you currently teaching?**

Yerevan

Your hometown (not including Yerevan)

Some other town or village in Armenia

Another Country

I am not teaching at the moment

Other (please specify)

**5. Where do you plan on teaching English in the future? (check all that apply)**

- Yerevan
- Your hometown (not including Yerevan)
- Some other town or village in Armenia
- Another country
- I do not plan on teaching in the future.

Other (please specify)

**6. Which factors are of significance/importance for you when deciding where you want to teach?**

	Very important	Important	Neutral	Not very important	Not important	N/A
Family	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lifestyle of location	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Job availability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work environment	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pay/salary	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify)

**\*7. Under what circumstances would you consider working in a rural area in Armenia?**

## **Definition of Terms Acronyms and Abbreviations**

**MA:** Master of Arts

**AUA:** American University of Armenia

**TEFL:** Teaching English as a Foreign Language

**MoES:** Ministry of Education and Science

**COAF:** The Children of Armenian Fund

**TRDP:** Turpanjian Rural Development Program

# Draft Proposal

## Summary:

The purpose of this proposal is to encourage TEFL teachers to reach out to rural Armenian communities where modern teaching methods, specifically English teaching methods are lacking causing further disparity among the students of Armenian towns and villages verses their peers in larger cities. The program will match MA TEFL graduates to Armenian village schools. We will provide them with a suitable salary, comparable to that of one in Yerevan, and provide proficient housing and transportation. The program will be during the summer and possible on the weekend throughout the year as well. This will allow us gain enough qualified teachers to make a substantial difference in the lives of the communities in which are teachers work.

## Background:

See Background and scope – pages 2-5

## Project Objectives

- To strengthen the English language capabilities of students in rural Armenian towns and villages.
- To train current English teachers in Modern teaching methods
- To foster a system of communication between AUA and rural Armenian communities

## Project Activities:

Based on the information gained through the extensive research done on AUA's MA TEFL students and alumni I recommend implementing a teacher dispersion program that

will send AUA MA TEFL graduates to villages to teach English and Train English teachers.

**Evaluation Plan:**

To be developed at a latter date.

**Budget:**

The budget will need to include the following items:

- Salary for teachers
- Food allowance
- Travel expense
- Housing allowance sufficient for quality housing (similar to that of Yerevan)