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TIPS “T-learning to Improve Professional Skills for intercultural dialogue”

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Abstract

TIPS “T-learning to Improve Professional Skills for intercultural dialogue” is a two-year Leonardo da Vinci project co-funded by the EU Lifelong Learning Programme. The project started in November 2007 and will finish in October 2009. The purpose of the project is to support cultural mediators around Europe to improve their skills and competences through the T-learning approach, an integrated methodology exploiting the potential of E-learning, M-learning and TV-learning.

The TIPS T-learning system hosts various tools to encourage both interactivity (e.g. self-assessment quizzes) and interaction (social software). TIPS beneficiaries will benefit from an on-line course supported by a mixed methodology where E-learning is supported by M-learning and TV-learning. The triple system exploits the benefits of distance learning tools and specific learning objects are developed for each tool offering a solution to compensate for any weaknesses that might be present in the other methodologies. Thus ensuring high quality interaction, portability, multimodality, simulations and no limits of space and time. These intrinsic qualities of the TIPS system are expected to positively impact cultural mediators’ learning process by promoting customized training able to fit different learning styles.

Within the framework of the TIPS project, the concept of integration can be considered as a leitmotiv concerning the pedagogical, methodological and technological components. The pedagogical component promotes different learning styles such as, visual, auditory and kinesthetic through the use of the different instruments (i.e. personal computers, smartphones and the television). The didactic component offers cross-references encouraging users during a session to access other Learning Objects, on the same course topic, through the different didactic tools. For example, during an audio lesson the system will indicate a film on the same topic available through the TV-learning platform. The technological component provided by the three platforms are linked through a comprehensive database able to track students’ training paths and allow tutors to make statistical analysis.

Keywords

E-learning, M-learning, TV-learning, STB, streaming, mobile devices, social software

Principles and strategies to implement continuing education at the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences (BOKU)

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BOKU University sees itself as a teaching and research institution that focuses on renewable resources that are a prerequisite for human existence. The relationships between man, society and the environment form the basis of all activities at BOKU University. Its foremost aim is to make decisive contributions to securing the well-being of future generations. In this endeavour, it will seek ways of ensuring a sustainable and environmentally sound management of natural resources by allying the competences of the natural, engineering, economic and social sciences.

Continuing Education

Lifelong learning is a fundamental principle of European education policy, and thus a mission of universities. In the wake of rising demand for university postgraduate programs, BOKU University has embarked on developing a broad portfolio of continuing education opportunities together with co-operation partners. Continuing education at BOKU University

- includes all measures that promote and support lifelong learning
- is practice-oriented,
- led by research
- is focused on regional needs as well as aligned on the requirements of national and international audiences.

As "University of Life" BOKU University assumes a major responsibility for the society in which we live. The range of academic programs covers mainly ecological but also political and economic areas. These programs are developed in close cooperation with relevant branches of the economic. Thus the university can adapt issues, contents, knowledge and skills mediated in the studies as well as possible to the needs in the various fields of work.

Continuing education primarily serves re-qualification or rather best possible specialization, as well as reorientation in the profession. The development of personality development is also on the priority list in curricula design. Thus the continuing education programs at BOKU University are generally aimed at all those interested in the field "applied life sciences". One particular target group are university graduates of this field.

Objectives of continuing education at BOKU University

- Providing a market- and target-oriented scientific training.
- Providing opportunities for graduates of the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences to expand or further qualify in their specific subject area, or innovate their job specification after graduation and relevant professional experience.
- Opening continuing education at the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences to everyone with basic university education. This qualification should enable graduates to deal with socially relevant and pressing issues in the fields of environment, nutrition, water, waste management, climate and ecology.
- Positioning the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences as a leading institution in Central and Eastern Europe in the area of academic continuing education of applied life sciences.
- Providing new approaches and paradigms for current societal problems in the interdisciplinary fields of ecology, economics and social sciences. Traditional studies

and a rigid professional specialization do not meet the new, complex challenges of today. Leadership responsibility therefore requires more than just specific expertise. Knowledge about global relations and responsible ecological, but also economic thinking is in demand.

Continuing education at BOKU University ...

- ... is scientifically sound and interdisciplinary
- ... is related to the latest findings of the didactics of teaching and learning
- ... is set up extra occupationally and not only improves professional competence but attaches great importance to the expansion of personal capabilities.
- ... opens a wide range of professions by its interdisciplinary nature and combine theory and practice profitable
- ... covers the core areas of the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences - Natural science, technology and social science
- ... is subject to permanent quality control in terms of market acceptance and market reputation

Implementing the strategy of lifelong learning at BOKU University

- The "Directive on academic continuing education at the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences" stipulates a classification of continuing education programs into four categories, according to the objective, scope, extent and form of the certification:
 - o Courses, seminars
 - o Summer schools
 - o University courses with fewer than 60 ECTS without Master graduation
 - o University courses with 60-120 ECTS with university degree
- Process sequence:
 - o Initiative from the departments
 - o Content provided by the departments
 - o Analysis of requirements
 - o Design of curriculum and budget
 - o Submission to the university administration
 - o Evaluation as quality management tool
- International co-operation with other universities - double degree or triple degree programs
- Current Activities:
 - o University Course Game Management
 - o Summer School Woodschool
 - o Course Property Management
- Planned university courses:
 - o Environment & Management
 - o Garden & Monument-Preservation
 - o Nanosciences and Nanomedicine

Obstacles

- Focusing of the programs
- Distinction from similar programs at other institutions
- Characteristics of the unique position
- Establishing structures for the development of ideas, programs and their economic implementation

Russian universities progress in the sphere of lifelong learning to implement Bologna Declaration

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A transition to new educational degrees – Bachelor and Master - is made in Russian Federation nowadays. Some 7.5 million students studied in Russian universities up to the year 2008. Out of them, 6.7 million (90.4%) got a degree of a Specialist following the traditional educational scheme. 0.5 million study to obtain a degree of Bachelor (which is 7.1 % out of all students) and a little more than 40 thousand people (0.6%) study to become Masters.

Starting in 2009, universities will enroll students only to Bachelor and Master programs. It means that in the course of several next years this transition will take place so that everywhere students will acquire a degree of Bachelor or Master instead of a Specialist.

The same as in European countries such as Germany and countries of Eastern Europe, labour market and professional community's attitude towards these new degrees differs. On the one hand, training of Masters is evaluated positively, on the other hand, it causes anxiety that a four-year period needed to prepare a Bachelor (instead of 5-6 years to prepare a Specialist) may lead to a lower quality of graduates knowledge and weakening of their ability to fulfil their professional tasks. The countries where Bachelors and Masters have been taught for a long time solve such problems within the system of professional training in professional community, they offer probation, attestation, training and other post-university activities in business-schools, engineers associations, etc.

This system is to be created in the Russian Federation. Universities must lead in this process, their base should be used to organize regional centers for professional training and retraining for the graduates and specialists at enterprises.

The main requirement to implement this task is collaboration of universities with different companies and professional unions, business centers and employer associations, chambers of commerce and industry.

A unified system to evaluate educational results is needed within the system of continuous professional post-university training that will help people compare results and quality of education received in the course of the specialist's life.

Chelyabinsk State University has started to form a set of lifelong learning programs with the methodological help from EUCEN, these programs will help Bachelors better prepare for their future professional activity and retrain specialists on purpose to develop their professional skills. At the same time, our university leads a research work to evaluate content and results of learning within the European system of evaluation of educational load and knowledge level and ECTS system.

The structure and the quality assurance in LLLU and other training institutions in the Czech Republic, Greece, Finland and France: a comparative survey.

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The importance of LLL has been stressed a lot lately. The rapid socio economic changes, as a main factor, have lead to the development of LLL not only within the formal context of the Universities but also within the non-formal or/and vocational context of other training institutions. At present, there is no common line among the EU member states concerning the internal as well as the external impacts of LLLU. In the current study, 4 EU member states were selected randomly for a comparative survey (2 North and 2 South) which is based on how LLLU is structured and conducted today. This comparison is based on the National Quality Reports (NQRs) presented online at: <http://www.cfp.upv.es/webs/equipeplus/index/national.jsp>

Questions to be addressed- Discussion

- How Universities in each EU member state separately, as well as on common grounds among Europe should deliver ULLL?
- Should there be a central national board responsible for ULLL implementations in collaboration with official organizations (i.e. Ministries), as in France the CDSUFC and in Greece the National Committee for Life Long Learning? Should these national boards exchange ideas and discuss matters within a common european framework?
- Should LLL provided by Universities differ from LLL provided by other institutions? As in Greece? If yes, in what terms?
- Should the variety of offered programs (formal, non-formal, credit and non-credit bearing units) be more standardized and structured jointly in all EU member states? France for instance, has 4 sorts of courses, the Czech Republic 2.
- What about the fees? Should students pay as in Finland or should there be funds from elsewhere, as in France? How could these funds be raised? Could there be a level of cooperation with companies, regional or public and communal services, non-profit organizations as in the Czech Republic?
- Could there be a mutual strategy for organizing and managing quality in LLLU? How can this quality be enhanced at an internal and external level? How autonomous should the Universities be?
- Should there be a national body responsible for quality assurance, as in Finland the FINHEEC, in France the AERES, in the Czech Republic the MYSE and in Greece the Lifelong Learning Institute?

References

<http://www.cfp.upv.es/webs/equipeplus/index/national.jsp>