

**Title of example of practice:** Continuous Professional Development of Teachers

### Author

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### Institution and initiating department/faculty

**(i.e. where example of practice takes/took place):**

**PL:** University of Warsaw - University System of Language Provision and the Office for Persons with Disabilities

**BG:** Agricultural University, Plovdiv - Foreign Language Department (FLD) & Teacher Development Unit

### Departments/faculties in which initiative implemented/to be implemented:

**PL:** University System of Language Provision): Institute of Applied Linguistics

**BG:** Faculty of Economics; Faculty of Agronomy

### Abstract

**(QA question: What are/were you trying to do?)**

**PL:** The aim of the initiative is to assure and enhance quality (effectiveness of provision) at the level of the University units providing language courses to non-specialist students of the University so that they are mobile, employable and lifelong learning with special emphasis on the needs of visually impaired students by professional development of teachers in the form of Postgraduate Study for English Teachers teaching to visually impaired learners (inclusive of completely blind students). The curriculum of the Study comprises the following subjects: Foundations of Tyfology, Psychology of Visually Impaired Persons, Pedagogy of Visually Impaired Persons, Tyflodidactics of the English Language.

**BG:** The aim of the initiative is to assure and enhance quality by initiating a new flexible extension unit within the FLD to provide, support and continually help subject teachers acquire new and improve existing language skills aiming at offering English taught Master programmes to Bulgarian and foreign students).

Continuous professional development in HEIs may consist in the enhancement of language and CLIL skills in case of both language teachers and subject specialist as well as in the acquisition and enhancement of competences that lead to more efficient language provision. In both cases the measures adopted in PL and BG may lead to the acquisition of learning outcomes resulting in better employability and mobility of graduates and lifelong language learning skills.

### Background – contextual issues giving rise to the initiative

**(QA questions: Why are/were you trying to do it? / What are/were the aims and objectives?)**

**PL:** Postgraduate Study for Teachers of English Teaching to Visually Impaired Students was conceived in 2006 as a part of the EU funded ESF EQUAL project entitled “ Per linguae mundi ad laborem” whose aim was to make visually impaired university graduates more employable by providing them with better linguistic and intercultural skills. Within the framework of the project besides developing the curriculum of the Study and running the Study the following other initiatives have been implemented: establishing the Centre of Adaptation of Tyflodidactic Aids, writing a handbook on Methodology of Teaching English to Visually Impaired Students, adaptation of several English course books to the needs of visually impaired students (Braille version and enlarged print), developing English proficiency tests for visually impaired students, developing and running a course of English for visually impaired students.

**BG:** In most countries English medium higher education is still a fairly marginal phenomenon. In southern Europe English-taught programmes are very rare which is also the case of the Agricultural University in Plovdiv. There is a need to offer Master programmes in English both for in-coming students and Bulgarian ones so that they are more mobile and employable. Since AU subject teachers are not always proficient users of En and they are lacking CLIL skills there is an urgent need to continually improve their competences in this respect and monitor progress.

### Description of activity or initiative

**(QA question: How is/was the activity/initiative implemented?)**

**PL:** The free of charge three semester Postgraduate Study has been organised and run by the Institute of Applied Linguistics of the University of Warsaw. It is aimed at school teachers and HE teachers working with visually impaired students. The same course has been offered at the Catholic University of Lublin. The curriculum developed by the Programme Board consisting of specialists on tyflodidactics, comprises 350 hours inclusive of 50 hours of teaching practice (15 hours classes conducted under the supervision and in the presence of a methodologist, and 35 hours conducted autonomously). The curriculum consisted of 4 thematic blocks: tyflogical, methodological, technical and practical. Within the tyflogical block lectures and practical classes were devoted to causes, kinds and consequences of functional sight impairments, psychological and social aspects of sight impairments, and rehabilitation of visually impaired persons. The methodological block included classes on English language teaching methodology, observation of classes. Within the technical block there were lectures and classes on Braille, specialised software and hardware, optical aids, adaptation of teaching aids. Within the practical block the students conducted classes under supervision and autonomously.

**BG:** The extension unit aims at the subject specialists at two faculties, i.e. the Faculty of Agronomy and the faculty of Economics. First the initiative was discussed and approved of by the university authorities. The lecturers in English specialized themselves in the subject areas targeted. Greater attention is paid to EGP and EAP.

Another dimension of this extension unit refers to organizing short-term courses delivered by part-time language specialists teaching general language to outgoing Erasmus students, having chosen universities where English is not the medium of instruction.

### Evaluative comments

**(QA questions: What are/were the outcomes? What is/was the impact? Is/was the activity/initiative successful? How do you know whether or not it works/worked?)**

**PL:** The following are the outcomes of the initiative: curriculum of the Study, organisational structure of the Study which can be run when there is sufficient demand, a number of teachers prepared to work with visually impaired students, a handbook on Methodology of Teaching English to Visually Impaired Students

([http://www.adaptacje.uw.edu.pl/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=123&Itemid=24](http://www.adaptacje.uw.edu.pl/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=123&Itemid=24))

and adapted course books. Visually impaired students can learn English with the help of duly prepared teachers, taking advantage of the Braille or enlarged print versions of English course books

(Going for Gold – Longman Pearson). The Postgraduate Study has been positively evaluated by its participants (a students' survey) and also within the framework of the ESF EQUAL Project evaluation.

**BG:** The initiative is fairly new but its results so far have been encouraging although there is still some resistance on behalf of elderly university teachers. One obvious feature for the successful running of the activities at the unit is the fact that there is a waiting list for subject specialists willing to get enrolled in the courses.

#### Advice to others

**PL:** It is necessary to find adequate funding to support and run the Study like that. Even if it is offered as a fee-paying Study it will never be cost-effective as there is a limit of what tuition fee the institution can charge a student. The programme should be very well advertised and promoted to find sufficient number of participants. It is unlikely that sufficient numbers will enrol originating from one institution.

**BG:** It is vital to establish close links and cooperation between language centres and Faculties and students. There should be continuous interaction between language and subject specialists and the lg unit should stay "open" for assistance and cooperation.

It is necessary to network, to share good practices not only on the institutional level, but also nationally and internationally. In order to be successful all teaching staff (both specialist and non-specialist Ts) have to be involved and be motivated to initiate and develop quality assuring and enhancing measures which have to be acknowledged and possibly rewarded by the authorities. The sense of ownership is the most significant motivation for individual successful implementation of the initiatives.

#### Reflection/any other comments

**QA question: Is/was that the best way to do it? Why/why not? What improvements or adjustments are needed?**

**PL:** Maybe if interested teachers coming from the University of Warsaw were given some reductions in their teaching load more would be willing to take part. An attempt at finding a co-financing institution should be made for the future rounds of the Study – eg. Polish Union of the Blind.

**BG:** there should be continuous interaction between language and subject specialists and language unit should stay open for assistance and cooperation. Needs analysis instruments combined with structured observation related to language needs and CLIL needs of subject specialists should be in place so as to adjust educational aims of language courses to the actual and current needs. Testing system should also be established.

#### Further details

**e.g. web links; relevant references/publications; alternative contact names**

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