

Summary

Blended Learning in Teachers' Professional Development - Developing a Blended Learning Course in Content Area Literacy for Secondary Teachers (BleTeach)

Erasmus+ Project under KA 2: Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices: "Strategic partnerships in the field of education, training and youth"
Strategic Partnerships,

Project Duration: Nov. 2015 – April 2018

Project Number: VG-SPS-NW-15-30-013892

EU Co-funding: 260.000 Euro

Partners (BleTeach Consortium)

Partner 1 - Germany: University of Cologne (Coordinator: Prof. Dr. Christine Garbe, Prof. Dr. Malte Stein, Dr. Andreas Seidler, IDSL II; scientific assistant / employee: Corina Volcinschi)

Partner 2 - Romania: Reading and Writing for Critical Thinking, Romanian Association, Cluj-Napoca (Ariana-Stanca Vacaretu, Maria Kovacs)

Partner 3 - Hungary: Kecskemét College (KeCo) (Prof. Dr. Janos Steklacs, Dr. Ildikó Szabó, Dr. Veronika Szinger)

Partner 4 - Germany: Pedagogical State Institute Rhineland-Palatinate (Stefan Sigges, Andrea Bürgin)

Partner 5 - Belgium: University of Liège (Prof. Dr. Patricia Schillings, Dr. Dominique Verpoorten)

Partner 6: Belgium: Haute Ecole de la Ville de Liège (Anne-Catherine Vieujean, Marie-France Pire, Julien Van Beveren)

Partner 7 – Portugal: University of Minho, Braga, (Prof. Dr. Maria de Lourdes Dionísio, Juliana Cunha)

Additional partner 8 (on self financing basis): Russia: Herzen Pedagogical State University Sankt Petersburg (Prof. Dr. Tatiana Galaktionova, Anastasiya Kuznetsova) – in charge of translating BaCuLit into Russian and implementing / piloting it in Russia.

External Experts (on subcontract basis):

External evaluator: Angelika Schmitt-Rößler, Amt für Lehrerfortbildung Hessen (Germany)

External consultant: Prof. Dr. Colin Harrison, University of Nottingham, School of Education (UK)

Rationale of the Project:

The BLETEACH project addresses **two crucial needs** in teachers' continuous professional development (CPD) in most European countries:

1. A general (structural) problem: The unsatisfying structures of teachers' continuous professional development (CPD) in the EU.
2. A specific (content related) problem: the lack of expertise of secondary school teachers, i.e. content area teachers required to address the problem of low literacy skills of children and adolescents in many European countries.

Ad 1) In many European countries the time for face-to-face learning in teachers' CPD is limited to a few days per year and thus privileges "one-shot-approaches" which are not effective in changing classroom practice (as research has proven). Therefore this project will explore and analyse the most promising formats in blended learning offers in CPD in order to develop and implement a blended learning course (BLC) for secondary teachers (and teacher trainers).

Ad 2) The PISA studies carried out by the OECD (2000 ff.) revealed severe deficits in basic literacy skills among adolescents (15 year olds): In European countries, one out of five adolescents lack the necessary basic literacy skills to cope with literacy requirements in education, training, workplace, societal participation and lifelong learning. One reason for these deficits of adolescents in literacy is seen in the lack of a systematic reading instruction in mother tongue and content area education in secondary schools. International research found that understanding content area texts (or disciplinary texts) should be taught in all subjects and all grades systematically. Unfortunately in most European countries secondary teachers mainly study their subjects and subject-related didactics during pre-service education but do not get trained in content area literacy. The term content area literacy (CAL) refers to teachers' competence to deal with reading / writing and learning instruction not only on the elementary level in the language arts classes, but in all subjects and all school levels. But in most European countries, content area teachers are not trained to fulfill this task.

BleTeach pursues two **main objectives**:

- **A general objective:** Modernizing structures of teacher education by integrating digital learning opportunities into teachers' professional development.
- **A specific objective:** Developing a model blended learning course (BL-course) in CAL to be included into the regular course programme of around 40 European Teacher Training Centres.

The **main target groups** of BLETEACH are

- 1) secondary teachers of all school subjects and
- 2) teacher trainers / in-service training institutions in teacher education.

Those two target groups will be addressed directly by the BLETEACH project whereas the ultimate target group shall be the students in secondary schools – and especially adolescents struggling with literacy standards – who will benefit from the newly gained expertise and engagement of their teachers in providing content area literacy instruction.

The **BleTeach-Consortium** consists of 8 partner institutions working in different countries and in different fields of teacher education:

- Universities with an expertise in educational sciences and initial teacher education,
- teacher training centres with an expertise in teachers' professional development,
- providers of teacher training and of IT-offers.

In addition the **BleTeach-Consortium** cooperates with a total of **40 “associated partners”**: in-service teacher training institutions and schools. Continuous cooperation will be arranged in a series of 3 **Multiplier Events** per country and on the basis of a common E-learning platform.

Main results of the project:

Altogether, BleTeach will deliver **six intellectual outputs** which are closely connected to the two project objectives.

First phase November 2015 – May 2016 (months 1 – 7)

- **Output no. 1:** National reports on good practice examples and concepts in blended learning in teachers' CPD in Belgium, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Romania (and Russia)
- **Output no. 2:** Pool of concepts and course materials about Content Area Literacy Training for Secondary Teachers in English and all involved national languages.

Second phase June – December 2016 (months 8 – 14)

- **Output no. 3:** “Guidelines for Success”: Handbook of Success Factors in Blended Learning Offers for Teachers' In-service Training
- **Output no. 4:** Concept and Preparation of Materials for Content Area Literacy Course addressing Secondary Teachers (Including Adaptations and Translations)

Third phase January – September 2017 (months 15 – 23)

- **Output no. 5:** Blended Learning Course in CAL for Secondary Teachers and Teacher Trainers – Producing the master version (English) and five national versions including all materials (worksheets, texts, assignments, PPTs, video presentations, etc.).

Fourth phase August 2017 – April 2018 (months 22 – 30)

- **Output no. 6:** Concept for implementation of BleTeach CAL course, including Certification and Accreditation Requirements.

Multiplier Events (ME):

We plan a series of three meetings with associated partners (about 40 teachers' in-service training institutions) in Belgium, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Romania and Russia.

ME 1 in months 5 or 6 (March/April 2016): presentation of project design, consultation about experiences with and requests of blended learning in CPD, discussion about the general concept (and country-specific adaptations) of the BL-course, planning of future work and meetings.

ME 2 in months 13 or 14: presentation of findings about best practices in BL for teachers' professional development (desk research and national reports), discussion about technical/didactical requirements of e-Learning platforms, presentation of best national platforms, decision about which platform to use in the country; input to the specific planning of the BL-course, planning of future tasks and meetings.

ME 3 in months 25 or 26: presentation of the full version of the BL-course and the agreed platform, practicing the usage of the platform, developing implementation plan for all participating institutions.

Learning/Teaching/Training Activities: The BleTeach Summerschool in April 2016

Based on the work of months 1 – 6 (where outcomes No. 1 and 2 have been worked out) the consortium will meet for a 6-day summer school in month 6 (April 2016). Many partners know each other from previous projects and/or from the ELINET network, but their experience, competences and background are quite different. As the BeTeach project combines structural aspects of teacher training and technical aspects of BL with scientific aspects of CAL, we have to arrange a training event that makes partners familiar with the state of the art in the relevant other fields. This shall guarantee an effective cooperation of experts in different fields throughout the duration of the project.

External experts will be present for giving input and to discuss the concept and content of the Blended Learning Course in CAL and best practice standards for blended learning offers. Both will form the basis for the next steps in the work programme (outputs No 3 and 4). The summerschool participants will get input from leading international experts in CAL and teachers' CPD (probably PhD Cynthia Greenleaf, WestEd California; PhD Carol Santa, Project CRISS Montana; PhD Mal Thompson, New Zealand) and in blended learning / online learning for educational professionals (e.g. Morten Fahlvik, Univ. of Bergen, Norway, expert in the European ITS-Learning consortium, or colleagues from the Clayton Christensen Institute for Disruptive Innovation, U.S., see www.christenseninstitute.org or from the Innosight Institute, U.S., building on Prof. Christensen's theory of disruptive innovation as well, see www.innosightinstitute.org).

In the second half of the summer school, participants will organise workshops in order to share their expertise and the results of their previous investigations with colleagues from the other countries.

BleTeach Project Design: Work Packages (WP; so called “Intellectual Outputs”) and Meetings / Events (see pp. 29 – 34 of the full application document)

Project Meeting No. 1: Kick-off-Meeting, all partners, in November 2015

WP 1: Research Report about International best practice in blended learning in Teachers’ CPD (This WP has been cancelled; so we will not produce it! Lead: UCO Germany)

WP 2: National reports on good practice examples and concepts in blended learning in teachers’ CPD from Belgium, Germany, Hungary, Portugal, Romania and Russia (Months 1-6 = Nov 2015 – April 2016; with reduced working days: 7 days for each partner instead of 20 planned days; Lead: RWCT Kluj, Romania)

Multiplier Events in all countries: March or April 2016

WP 3: Pool of concepts and course materials about CAL for secondary teachers in English and all involved national languages (Months 1-6 = Nov 2015 – April 2016; with fully approved working days, between 10 and 30 days per partner; Lead: Univ of Minho, Portugal)

Project Meeting: Summerschool of 6 days in May 2016 (= month 7)!

WP 4: Handbook of success factors in blended learning offers for teachers’ in-service-training containing guidelines, indicators and examples of good practice (about 100 pages) (Months 8 – 14 = June – December 2016; Lead: UCO Germany; with full 15 work days for each partner and 25 – instead of planned 50 – days for Cologne)

Project Meeting No. 2: October 2016

WP 5: Concept and Preparation of Materials for Content Area Literacy Course addressing secondary teachers (including adaptations and translations) (Months 8 – 14 = June – December 2016; Lead: University of Liège; with full 15 work days for each partner and 45 – instead of planned 50 – days for Liege)

WP 6: Blended Learning Course in CAL for Secondary Teachers and Teacher Trainers – Producing the master version (English) and five national versions (Months 15 – 23 = January – September 2017; Lead: Pädagog Landesinstitut Rheinland-Pfalz; working days for almost all partners increased about 5 days, e.g. PL Rheinland-Pfalz: 55 days)

Multiplier Events in all countries: February or March 2017

Project Meeting No. 3: May 2017

WP 7: Concept for implementation of BleTeach CAL course into the regular offers of 40 teacher training centres, including general certification and national accreditation requirements (Months 22 – 30 = August 2017 – April 2018; Lead: Kecskemét College Hungary; all partners got approved 7 working days for this deliverable).

Project Meeting No. 4: October 2017

Multiplier Events in all countries: November or December 2017

Project Meeting No. 5: March 2018

End of the project: 30 April 2018, reporting: 30 June 2018.