

CURRICULUM GUIDELINES

for Access Programmes into Higher Education
for Underrepresented Adult Learners

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| C | CURRICULUM |
| H | Higher Education |
| A | Access Programmes |
| G | GUIDELINES |
| A | for Underrepresented Adult |
| L | Learners |

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To CHAGAL students



Foreword

The permeability of education systems is one of the key prerequisites for joining forces and building a Europe of knowledge. Austria has already implemented a series of measures to ensure permeability and facilitate the mobility of people. Particularly the university preparation programmes (Vorstudienlehrgänge) for international students at Austrian universities represent a model of good practice in Europe: they combine a successful preparation for university studies and supplementary examinations (Ergänzungsprüfungen).

Under the Grundtvig project 'Chagal' (Curriculum Guidelines for Access Programmes into Higher Education for Under-represented Adult Learners) experience was exchanged among 9 different countries and 16 partner institutions to tackle the challenges of increased mobility in the European Higher Education Area. The project's aim consisted in

developing curriculum guidelines that meet the requirements of the multiculturalism of society and take account of the variety of education systems to further enhance student exchanges between European establishments of higher learning.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all institutions which have cooperated in this project for their high level of commitment and I hope that many institutions will make use of the project results and integrate them into their daily work!

Elisabeth Gehrler

Austrian Federal Minister for Education, Science and Culture

Foreword

Universities play a significant role for society. They educate especially young people and influence societies through research and innovation. Universities contribute to social and economic welfare and future development.

Learning and research at universities are dependent on people who come up with new ideas while grasping different views. Universities are dependent on diversity: scientists of diverse scientific fields are working together; students and teachers with diverse backgrounds make different perspectives possible; cultural and linguistic diversity enhances teaching and learning through comparative and distinctive approaches. With regard to this perspective, social inclusion is a fundamental condition for general learning and research processes.


This report focuses on the CHAGAL students. They represent not only a highly diverse group at universities, but are, unfortunately, disadvantaged and underrepresented from certain points of view. Therefore, universities must care for the special conditions and needs of this group to create a vital learning community of students and teachers with diverse backgrounds.

Furthermore, this report gives orientation and support for university decision makers, university teachers, and students.

We express sincere thanks to the network and the coordinators, to all the institutions who made this work possible and to all the people who shared their knowledge to create guidelines for a better university system. Thus, this report is in itself a proof of the energy of intercultural learning and communication.



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Preface

In 1995, a conference on “Education for Transition. Bridging non-western schools and western higher education” was organised by the Preparatory Year for International Students of the Free University of Amsterdam. This was the beginning of a most fruitful co-operation among several preparatory institutions from the Netherlands, Germany, and Austria, which soon afterwards began with planning a European project. In 2002, the Project CHAGAL was officially approved by the European Commission / Directorate-General for Education and Culture under the Socrates-Programme, Grundtvig 1.

The overall project aim was to develop the CHAGAL Curriculum Guidelines as a specific tool for assisting a multicultural group of students in getting better access to higher education programmes. In spite of various initiatives, this specific target group, consisting of university applicants who are members of ethnic minorities, migrants, refugees, asylum seekers or come from the new European countries and from the accession candidate countries as well as from developing countries, still does not get the attention it would need for adequate integration.

The project goal required teachers of preparatory programmes, university teachers, and NGOs to closely work together. The CHAGAL Curriculum Guidelines reflect the project partners’ viewpoints and were developed by sixteen partner institutions from nine countries – a most diversified group of practitioners. By working towards a common goal and by contributing their different perspectives, the partners could experience the process of intercultural learning themselves.

We want to thank the European Commission, the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education, Science and Culture, and the Socrates National Agency Austria for financing the CHAGAL Project. Our thanks also go to the enthusiastic and dedicated project members and all those who contributed to the CHAGAL Curriculum Guidelines.

We hope that our project results will assist the target group of students and will serve as a lobby for them. We also hope that many institutions of higher education will benefit from our work and continue with it.

Grete Kernegger
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CONTENTS

| | |
|---|-----|
| INTRODUCTION..... | 13 |
| PART I: REPORT | 20 |
| CHAPTER 1: CURRENT SITUATION | 20 |
| 1.1 Preparatory Courses at Participating Institutions | 20 |
| 1.2 Student Support Provisions at University Level | 24 |
| 1.3 Overview of Good Practice Examples Collected by NGOs | 28 |
| CHAPTER 2: STUDENT SITUATION ANALYSIS | 31 |
| 2.1 Introduction | 31 |
| 2.2 Important Factors for Successful Learning..... | 32 |
| 2.3 The Importance of Social Integration | 33 |
| 2.4 Forms of Acquiring and Processing Knowledge..... | 35 |
| 2.5 Proficiency in the Target Language | 36 |
| 2.6 Assessment of Learning and Teaching Activities..... | 38 |
| 2.7 Intercultural Experience | 39 |
| CHAPTER 3: DIDACTIC PRINCIPLES..... | 44 |
| 3.1 Introduction | 44 |
| 3.2 An Andragogic Approach to Learning | 44 |
| 3.3 Competences as Learning Objectives | 56 |
| 3.4 How to Develop and Implement Student-Centred Course Curricula | 65 |
| CHAPTER 4: THE CHAGAL PILOT PROJECTS..... | 73 |
| 4.1 Introduction | 73 |
| 4.2 Social and Cultural Learning-Oriented Projects | 73 |
| 4.3 Content-Oriented Projects..... | 76 |
| 4.4 Language- and Study Skills-Oriented Projects..... | 78 |
| 4.5 The Value of the Pilot Projects for the Curriculum Guidelines..... | 81 |
| 4.6 Table of Pilot Projects | 83 |
| PART II: TWELVE CURRICULUM GUIDELINES | 85 |
| APPENDIX A: Good Practice Examples Collected by NGOs..... | 102 |
| APPENDIX B: The CHAGAL Project Partners | 113 |
| APPENDIX C: The CHAGAL Pilot Projects' Instructors | 117 |

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Document

The “Curriculum Guidelines for Access Programmes into Higher Education for Underrepresented Adult Learners” are the result of a two-year Socrates Grundtvig 1 “CHAGAL” Project that wanted to promote the implementation of a student-centred approach to teaching and learning as an innovative part of an otherwise traditional curriculum. They are intended for

- Practitioners and instructors engaged in providing access or conducting preparatory courses for the target group
- Academics as well as management and administrative staff responsible for the target group
- Policy and decision makers at institutional and governmental levels.

We hope that those interested in a student-centred approach to teaching adult learners and engaged in planning to develop preparatory courses or programmes will find this document a useful guide.

The document is divided into two parts, first, the REPORT and second, the TWELVE CURRICULUM GUIDELINES.

The REPORT has four chapters:

Chapter 1 consists of a summary of the three studies carried out by the project partner subgroups A, B, and C, that is a comparative analysis of an inventory of preparatory courses at participating institutions, of a survey of university support provisions for international students, and of good practice examples collected by non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Chapter 2 describes the students’ situation from a student perspective and highlights the issues faced by students during the preparatory phase of their studies. It also seeks to identify the competences required for effective learning. Using this

diagnosis, a competence-based model for adult learners can be developed.

Chapter 3 provides the philosophical and theoretical concepts of adult learners and a student-centred approach as distinct from young learners and a teacher-centred approach. This student-centred approach was piloted and evaluated in 16 preparatory courses or “pilot projects” whose results have been used to inform the development of the CHAGAL Curriculum Guidelines.

Chapter 4 describes the 16 pilot projects that have been carried out in the framework of the CHAGAL project by the institutions preparing students for university studies according to the following 3 categories:

- Social and cultural learning-oriented projects
- Content-oriented projects
- Language- and study skills-oriented projects.

With these pilot projects it was possible to implement and test the CHAGAL principles in practice and thus to generate new ideas for their further development.

The second part, the TWELVE CURRICULUM GUIDELINES, explains why a student-centred curriculum will benefit students and institutions alike and concentrates on the practical side of how to develop and implement such a curriculum. It points out that non-academic areas such as student support, guidance and counselling, tutoring and mentoring, intercultural experience and exchange are important for the students’ social and cultural adjustment and for providing a secure background for successful learning. Going one step further, it is argued that a “holistic” approach has to consider the students’ mental and social factors for planning a curriculum. Institutions are urged to adopt this “holistic” approach and embed it in their mainstream student provision and support systems to improve the overall efficiency of their bridging measures for the target group.

Project Background and Context

In response to growing student mobility from an enlarged Europe and the developing countries, institutions within the European Union offer diverse types of orientation and integration measures, preparatory courses, and bridging programmes to facilitate access to higher education for disadvantaged and underrepresented adult learners from very diverse ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds. However, the needs and demands of the target group are very different from those of young learners entering higher education by the traditional progression routes and having a more homogeneous background. Furthermore, the diversity of the target group also brings with it an additional intercultural dimension.

The CHAGAL project was born out of the realisation that education systems have to be responsive to the diverse backgrounds and the specific needs of the target group and to adopt effective strategies to ensure success in the students' undertakings.

CHAGAL adult learners deserve appropriate and targeted guidance and counselling to help their socio-cultural adjustment in the host country. They need innovative and effective teaching and learning methods to acquire the necessary skills to cope with the specific academic requirements. Otherwise, they most likely will not reach their full potential. Failure to succeed will have a negative impact on the students' experience and is a waste of institutional resources. In the context of the economic development and the development of society as a whole, it is a loss not only to the host countries but also to the students' home countries. An innovative and inclusive curriculum sensitive to the students' diversity not only promotes positive student experience and success, but also reflects the host country's acceptance of the benefits these students have to offer. Embracing diversity is one way of achieving social inclusion and moving towards the

goals of the Bologna Process¹. Moreover, developing curricula for this special target group will be a means of improving quality management in the context of worldwide student mobility.

Project Aims

The ultimate aim of CHAGAL is to widen the education opportunities for disadvantaged and underrepresented adult learners by increasing the number, quality, effectiveness, and transparency of access programmes in Europe. Furthermore, CHAGAL aims at

- Harnessing and systematising the expertise in the field of preparatory courses
- Adopting a holistic and student-centred approach tailored to the adult learners' needs to enhance success
- Integrating hitherto isolated guidance and counselling measures into existing teaching and learning strategies
- Encouraging institutions to embed these measures in their mainstream provisions.

The end product of the CHAGAL Project is a set of common curriculum guidelines that offers a means of comparability, transferability, and standardisation to encourage credit transfer and recognition, to facilitate exchange and mobility, and to promote the concept of a European Higher Education Area under the Bologna Process.

Project Partners

CHAGAL brings together a unique partnership of 9 partner countries² and 16 institutions from three different sectors involved in the provision of education and support services.

¹ "Bologna Process" refers to the programme of the higher education ministers from 32 European countries who met in Prague on May 19, 2001, two years after the Bologna Declaration, and launched the process of creating a "European Higher Education Area" by 2010. For further information see:
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/educ/bologna/>

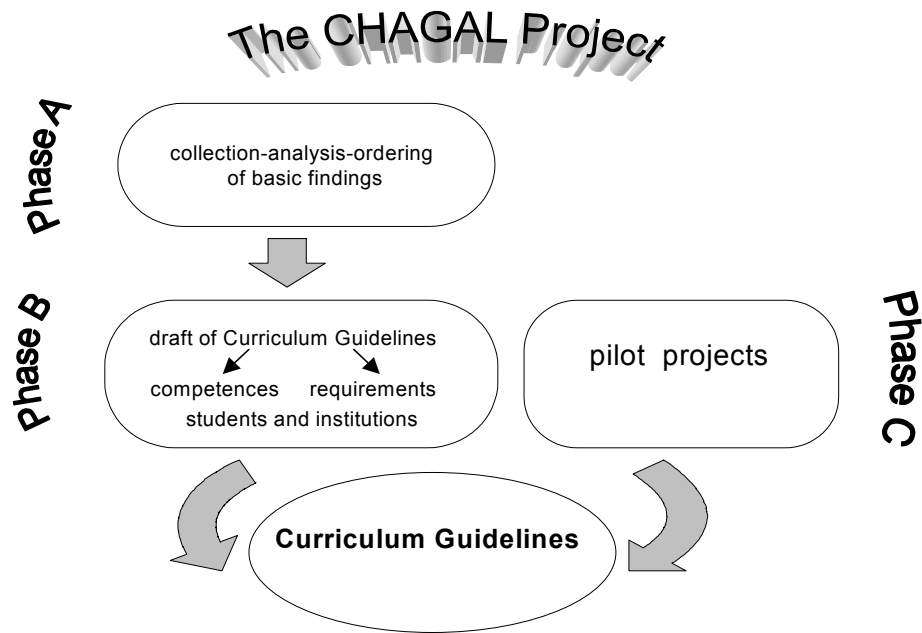
² Austria, Bulgaria, Germany, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, and the United Kingdom.

They are divided into three subgroups and categorised according to their area of expertise. Subgroup A are pre-university institutions offering preparatory courses, subgroup B are universities receiving students who have successfully completed their preparatory courses, and subgroup C are non-governmental organisations (NGOs) involved in non-academic fields of student support, guidance, and counselling. Their synergies shall help facilitate a seamless, integrated, and “holistic” educational experience for the target group.

Detailed information about the CHAGAL project partners can be found in Appendix B.

Project Structure

The graph below illustrates the three phases leading to the development of the Curriculum Guidelines.



Methodology

The Curriculum Guidelines have been developed by using materials drawn from the following four sources:

- The findings of a comparative data analysis of the curricula of preparatory institutions;
- Examples of good practice identified by NGOs;
- The results of a survey of student issues and situations and university provisions;
- Revised curricula tested in 16 pilot projects.

The Curriculum Guidelines also include contributions by experts, workshop feedback, and relevant research findings related to a student-centred approach for adult learners.

Terminology

“CHAGAL target group” or “CHAGAL students” refers to adult learners from ethnic minorities, migrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and applicants from developing countries. Normally they are not addressed separately or as a particular group but subsumed under the overall heading of international students or free movers.

“Adult learners” are learners who have reached the age of 19 when entering preparatory courses.

“Target language” refers to the language spoken in the students’ host country.

“Access” and “preparatory” courses or programmes are bridging programmes at pre-university level to prepare students for university entry.

Since the focus of this project generally is on academic requirements CHAGAL students have to meet, no particular differentiation has been made between “university” and any other “institution of higher education”.

“Pilot projects” refers to the 16 preparatory courses that piloted and tested various aspects of implementation of a student-centred approach to teaching and learning.

“Student-centred approach” refers to the general conditions under which learning takes place in an educational environment where the learners themselves can contribute to their own learning and that of their peers, making use of their own social, cultural, educational backgrounds and being supported by the active professional teaching and mediation of their lecturers or teachers.

“Lecturers” refers to persons teaching at universities and at institutions of higher education.

“Teachers” refers to persons teaching at preparatory institutions.

PART I: REPORT

CHAPTER 1: CURRENT SITUATION

1.1 Preparatory Courses at Participating Institutions

Subgroup A consisted of institutions that run courses to prepare learners for entry into universities and other institutions for higher education. One of the first steps in the process of defining the curriculum guidelines was the completion of a detailed inventory with the most significant aspects of these courses. The information was collected and analysed in early 2003 with the following institutions participating:

- Germany: 28 Studienkollegs that are represented through their AG, a German abbreviation for the working group of the leaders of these colleges, prepare students for entry into universities. The structure in the Studienkollegs is very similar and they comprise a total of about 3700 students.³
- Bulgaria: The Plovdiv Branch of Sofia Technical University prepares learners with a foreign language background for university studies.⁴
- Austria: Two large Vorstudienlehrgänge (University Preparation Programmes), one in Vienna and one in Graz, represent approximately 1400 students.
- The Netherlands: Ten relatively small, but very autonomous institutions prepare students of the target group for a study in higher education. Information about programmes in Utrecht, Rotterdam, Enschede, and Amsterdam (VASVU) was collected.

³ The other 11 German Studienkollegs that prepare students for Fachhochschule, higher education institutions with non-university status, are not part of this inventory.

⁴ In 2003 the number of foreign students at the Plovdiv Branch was 144.

The participating institutions are very different, but the objectives are all very similar: to facilitate access to higher education for groups of students that do not have the regular prior education. The inventory is supposed to contribute to a better knowledge of the various courses and increase the mutual understanding among the various institutions.

Main Features of the Preparatory Institutions

The following is a short abstract of a very detailed inventory taken at the various institutions mentioned above. Since the compilation should be as complete as possible, over 100 items were given to the institutions for an answer, organised in the following five groups:

- General data
- Language issues
- Subject competences
- Skills empowerment
- Intercultural learning.

General Data

Profile

The main task in all four countries is the preparation of international students for future studies at universities or other institutions of higher education. All the preparatory institutions offer intensive language training programmes, with a final examination at the end of the courses. All institutions also offer instruction in other subjects, mainly the sciences, but some also in the humanities and a second foreign language. In most institutions, subjects are compulsory for the majority of the students. In Austria, 90% of the students at Vorstudienlehrgänge attend language courses but do not need to study subjects. Almost all institutions confirm the need for competences beyond language and subjects, such as the development of study skills, scientific reasoning, and intercultural awareness.

Organisation, Staff, and Academic Supervision

All preparatory institutions are established by either the universities or the ministry of education, or by federal or regional bodies. They are either fully or partially publicly funded or receive some form of subsidy. Scholarships are granted only by private organisations. Unlike Austria and the Netherlands, students in Germany at present do not have to pay tuition fees. In all cases the teaching staff members have the appropriate university qualification (degree). The number of staff members varies from 5 to 50. Institutions are accountable either to universities or to secondary school authorities.

Admission of Students

Conditions for the admission of students depend on many factors such as international contracts or historical practice, and they vary according to different national laws. The situation is highly diverse.

Entrance tests and/or language tests examine the degree of proficiency and subject competences. These, therefore, regulate not only the admission but determine the proper level of placement. In some situations, interviews take place.

The Students' Countries of Origin

Students mainly come from countries in the Middle East, Eastern Europe, the Far East, Africa, and Latin America, in the order given. The ratio of application to admission is generally around 2.5 to 1. The drop-out rate during the course is between 10 and 30 %. The success rate on the final examinations varies enormously.

Curriculum

Most of the institutions provide programmes both for the language of instruction and for other subjects, with the latter depending on what will be chosen by the student at a later stage. In addition to final examinations, there are in all institutions intermediate tests and other exercises to monitor

the students' progress. Final examination results and grades are generally accepted throughout the country, although they officially permit only admission to the local university in a specific subject of study.

Language Issues

Language training usually takes one full year. The number of lessons per week varies between 8 and 28 contact hours. The group size is between 12 and 30 students. Most curricula are fully compatible with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. Final examinations in Germany have to meet the requirements of the Deutsche Sprachprüfung für den Hochschulzugang (DSH) or the Feststellungsprüfung: German Language.⁵ In the Netherlands, there is a nationwide national examination, with Dutch as a second language, which is compulsory for all international students starting a Bachelor's programme.

English is often an essential part of the curriculum (2 - 6 lessons per week, usually beginning in the second term).

Subject Competences

Instruction in non-language subjects aims at bridging the gap between the students' previous education and the university entrance requirements. The detailed curricula vary greatly depending on the study chosen by the student. Most preparatory institutions form clusters in which students with similar studies are grouped together.

Mathematics features most prominently throughout with 2 to 8 contact hours per week, followed by biology, chemistry, and physics. But history, economics, and geography can also be found. All curricula are defined to meet the requirements of the later studies.

⁵ The DSH is a language proficiency test granting access to higher education in Germany, while the Feststellungsprüfung is an aptitude test for international students applying for university admission in Germany.

Skills Empowerment

Almost all institutions offer to train students in how to use the computer for educational purposes and how to use e-mail and the Internet. At some institutions the use of computers is integrated into the curriculum (like mathematics or the sciences) or forms part of the final examination.

Study skills are considered extremely important and are fully integrated in the curriculum of all subjects.

Intercultural Learning

Institutions are well aware of the need to integrate principles of intercultural learning into their teaching. There are various means and different efforts to achieve/provide intercultural learning.

1.2 Student Support Provisions at University Level

The survey carried out by subgroup B found out that universities offer a mixture of advisory services, as well as orientation and induction courses for international students which range from dealing with simple everyday questions of university life in the host country to more complicated issues related to the choice of study programme at the university, credit transfer, recognition of prior learning, etc. In addition to these preliminary services, universities also offer classes that support international students during the entire time of their studies.

The following is a summary of the different types of courses and services that can be found at German-speaking, Dutch, Slovakian, Spanish, and Lithuanian universities. The courses are categorised in the following four groups:

- Introductory content-oriented summer courses;
- Orientation and introductory activities;
- Language tuition;
- Additional courses.

Introductory Content-Oriented Summer Courses

These summer courses run for 3 to 4 weeks before the beginning of the regular degree programme. Most of them combine language tuition with information on the social, political, and geographical background of the host country. The courses are usually accompanied by a cultural events programme and are, in most cases, accessible for all the different groups of international students. The courses have to be paid for, but in some cases the students may apply for scholarships or additional funds.

Example 1: International Summer Programme: European Studies (Vienna University)

European Studies: The courses focus on the emerging new Europe and deal with political, economic, legal, and cultural aspects of the multiple transformations the continent is going through.

German Language Programme: The courses are offered at four different levels and consist of 60 contact hours each. Informal conversation is provided by tutorials and language workshops that focus on grammar and pronunciation drills, on listening comprehension, and on creative and features writing.

Example 2: Language and Culture Summer Courses (Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas)

The courses include language classes of up to 26-30 contact hours per week and are aimed at

- Making students familiar with the Lithuanian culture and people;
- Presenting the distinctive aspects of Lithuanian history;
- Providing the students with a basic understanding of the Lithuanian economic situation;
- Socialising (with group members from different countries and cultures).

Orientation and Introductory Activities

The majority of the universities hold welcoming parties for their international students. They also organise information weeks, give details on internet sites, offer language courses for self-

studies, enable contacts with students' groups at the host university, and provide student counselling. Other activities include city tours and sports or cultural events.

Language Tuition

Most of the universities offer international students language courses at different levels, including internationally recognised language diplomas. Most of these courses, however, have to be paid for by the students (e. g., World University Service, Vienna International University Courses). Nevertheless, several universities do offer a few language courses that are free of charge (usually 4 hours per week) and almost all courses offered by the German Studienkollegs are free of charge. Understandably, all these are attended by a great number of students.

Most language courses are offered to mixed student groups, but in some rare cases also to linguistically and culturally homogenous groups (for example, German as foreign language for students from China at the German Institute of Vienna University, summer semester 2003) in order for the universities to meet the special needs of larger groups of students with specific language problems.

Furthermore, numerous universities have started to organise tandem courses based on the principle that, in order to learn the partner's language, there are always two students working together who speak different languages. The students meet regularly and, according to a plan they have worked out together, use the two different languages alternatively. In the meantime, e-mail tandems over great distances are being organised.

Additional Courses

During their first semester, local and international students are provided with courses that introduce them into their study programme. Such courses, which are held during the regular study programmes, familiarise the students with the library system and the different research methods of their respective

discipline, with study techniques and organisational questions concerning their study programme.

Revision classes are offered to international students to help them cope with the demands of different lectures and seminars. Most of these classes are given credit points as part of the regular study programme.

Colloquia for short-term scholarship students are directed at students who want to study at the host university for only one or two semesters; such colloquia guarantee to offer content-oriented assistance and contacts with other international students; they also provide the students with opportunities to work on their subjects in groups.

Tutoring and mentoring programmes are offered at many universities for first-year students. Counselling and mentoring by “peers” is a common practice, involving students from more advanced study programmes. Sometimes tutors and mentors are prepared for this special task by the university and are put to work in specific target groups that are considered vulnerable and most in need. For some of the tutorials that accompany the lectures, European Credit Transfer System (ECTS)-credit points are given.

Furthermore, there are subject-oriented tutoring programmes that follow specific objectives, such as that of the University of Aachen in Germany which helps international students prepare for specific examinations.

One-to-one tutoring is, as a rule, organised by the respective international offices to support international students during their first semester by offering them the help of local students (peers) who, in turn, are highly motivated and want to assist international students in their degree programmes. This form of assistance is also planned by certain institutions for CHAGAL students or could easily be organised for that purpose. It is becoming part of the regular practical programme of teacher training courses. By accompanying and supporting international students, teacher trainee students can acquire a practical work certificate as part of their regular training programme.

1.3 Overview of Good Practice Examples Collected by NGOs

The role of subgroup C in CHAGAL was to evaluate examples of good practice and identify strands that are deemed important for the curriculum design in order to enable disadvantaged adult learners to improve their academic performance and to complete their course of studies without dropping out. The materials and practices examined so far cover a wide range of issues from the simple but, no doubt, tricky question of how to reach the target group in the first place to the more complex understanding of how some projects have triggered off other activities which have a positive impact on whole communities. Considerations like these have been included in the summary to serve as key ingredients for successful support programmes.

The evidence that has emerged consistently points to the fact that while language proficiency, subject knowledge, personal competence, and study skills are crucial factors for student success, there are other important though less obvious factors at play. The availability of additional student support in terms of guidance and counselling and the provision of a conducive, intercultural learning environment are equally important and must not be overlooked. Academic training and non-academic support should go hand in hand in order to instil confidence, help social adjustment, and give students a sense of identity and belonging. This *holistic approach* will go a long way to help learners stay with a course.

Additional student support is important not just at the beginning of the academic year but throughout the students' period of study. The World University Service (WUS) and the Afro-Asian Institute (AAI) organise meetings for new students. Besides getting information about life at university, the formalities, and the educational programmes run by the organisations, the students are introduced to each other at these meetings and thus have the opportunity to get in contact with colleagues from many different regions of the world.

By offering continued support the organisations help and guide students in making decisions about their personal and professional future. This way, dreams and visions are examined so that contradictions can be avoided and different possibilities can be taken into account. Follow-up meetings provide the opportunity to reflect and reconsider previous decisions.

The Value of Intercultural Learning

Intercultural learning is neither merely a methodology, nor is it merely a subject area. It is a composite of both. This type of pedagogical thinking, in which learning takes place when new knowledge can be incorporated as a relevant part of the students' life, is the theoretical foundation for intercultural learning.

Understandably, the content of the established curriculum is naturally aimed at national students and presupposes a wide range of general knowledge of the society and culture they have acquired in their upbringing. Although this knowledge is essential to foreign students or those with different ethnic backgrounds, it is often so far from their own range of experience that it can seem unreal and irrelevant.

In other words, it is important that the subject matters in a curriculum, including language teaching, social studies, and cultural understanding, bear some relation to the students' personal experience and previous knowledge. For example, teaching ethnic students about their own homelands, their culture and politics is a good way to introduce, as a comparative study, their new host country's culture, language, economy, and politics. Furthermore, this type of teaching, when done with care and used in mixed classes, can foster mutual understanding among home and international students and students from different ethnic backgrounds. The internationalisation of the curriculum is an opening for using the cultural background of ethnic students as a resource that everybody can learn and benefit from.

It would go beyond the scope of this report to cite all the

collected materials and every individual project. But Appendix A provides further details of some good practice examples and demonstrates the following principles that are considered as basic for students, teachers, and institutions and, therefore, have to be taken into consideration when developing a curriculum:

- Language competences, both oral and written, for everyday social interaction and for academic learning;
- Intercultural learning as a two-way process between students and teachers;
- Learning skills, including the ability of gathering, processing, and managing information and knowledge, presentation techniques, effective learning, and preparation for examinations;
- Subject competences and subject-based learning;
- Personal development in self-confidence and self-empowerment;
- How to reach the target group;
- Evaluation of activities.

At the end, Appendix A deals with further outcomes of the projects and with the question of course certification.

CHAPTER 2: STUDENT SITUATION ANALYSIS

2.1 Introduction

This chapter summarises the results of the literature search and the findings of various surveys (using questionnaires and interviews) that were conducted in Austria, Germany, Lithuania, and Slovakia on international and adult students either at the time of their pre-university preparatory phase or at the beginning of their university studies. The purpose of this exercise is to better understand the students' situation right from the beginning so that appropriate measures can be identified and embedded in the curriculum and other student-support programmes.

It should, however, be noted that CHAGAL did not use a purpose-designed survey. Instead, subgroup B undertook an extensive literature search and a detailed study of past surveys to obtain the findings that can be applied to the CHAGAL target group. Although this specific group of students cannot easily be separated from the totality of the international students and adult learners who were interviewed, the results of the various surveys represent mosaic pieces that can be fitted together to show the competences students are supposed to possess and develop in their study preparation phase. The literature search has also yielded useful materials for understanding the students' mental and emotional development in the learning process.

In Austria and Germany the surveys of international students also included the specific communication processes and the linguistic and cognitive demands made on the students. From these surveys specific areas of competence, either explicitly named by teachers (objective competence) or expressed by the students themselves (subjective competence), can be identified as important for successful study. From these findings the recommendations for a systematic promotion of specific areas of competence can be derived which, in turn, will form the starting point for the description of competences

for higher education. These specific areas of competence are dealt with more technically in Chapter 3, while this chapter concentrates on issues explored and identified as important for understanding the students' social situation and learning experience while in their host country.

2.2 Important Factors for Successful Learning

In many surveys factors that are deemed capable of severely jeopardising successful learning have become apparent. For instance, there is a correlation between the choice of country, the university, the field of study and the motivation to achieve the study goals. The fact of not studying in the preferred country influences the students' integration and study success in the country that is a second choice or that is assigned to them. Equally, the choice of an unsuitable field of study may often make students less confident. The reasons for this are the students' difficulty in assessing their own knowledge and skills and also, for most foreign students, unfamiliar and confusing university systems, multiple study programmes, and different academic degrees⁶.

As pointed out by Riemer (Riemer 1997a, p. 389) various factors that influence motivation and study success can – here also with a view to the CHAGAL target group – be summarised:

- Attitudes and behavioural patterns towards the target society⁷ and their fellow students;
- (Unfulfilled or frustrated) expectations concerning the field of study;
- (No identifiable) relevance of the contents taught for the intended field of study or, during the course of

⁶ In this context, only western European universities are referred to.

⁷ The personal objectives and expectations which, for instance, the Roma group of students associate with university studies in Slovakia include the aspiration of integration in the target society and the wish to strengthen their own community; but on the other hand, they experience discrimination at the university, though not directly by fellow students they know personally.

- study, for the future professional career⁸ (in their home country);
- The attitude towards the language examination (can this examination provide a reliable prediction of the capability to meet the study requirements as far as language is concerned?);
- (The lack of) career prospects (in the host or home country);
- An additional workload in one's university studies, e.g. compulsory study-parallel language courses;
- (The lack of) academic recognition of particular achievements of the target group, e.g. crediting of study-parallel language courses (as elective subjects) in their chosen field of study;
- The attitude towards learning a foreign language in general⁹;
- The teaching context and its assessment (e.g., that of the teachers, teaching materials, learning activities).

2.3 The Importance of Social Integration

The social contacts of international students (including CHAGAL students) in everyday life and at preparatory institutions or universities differ according to their country of origin, their financial situation, and their personal living circumstances, but they are quite similar with regard to the following aspects:

⁸ The survey of students in Lithuania has shown that "the teaching of knowledge and necessary skills with regard to a professional career" ranks first in their expectations. Such expectation can lead to disappointment in fields of study that put strong emphasis on academic education. Compare also the criticism of the World University Service (WUS) which has emphasised again and again how little university lectures and seminars at German universities open themselves towards the topics that are relevant for African, South-East Asian, and South American students, as well as towards questions with a contrastive approach (Studienbegleitung für Studierende aus Afrika, Asien und Lateinamerika (STUBE); WUS).

⁹ In this respect especially the lack of self-confidence and certain prejudices (e.g. German is a difficult language) have become apparent.

- Contacts with peers from their own countries are described as close and important as they offer mental and social stability.
- Existing contacts with other international students are regarded as important for solidarity.
- Contacts with local students, neighbours, or any other person they interact with in the course of everyday life can be infrequent or superficial.
- The lack of space for informal contacts in the students' halls of residence¹⁰ is considered problematic as often they are the only type of accommodation the students can afford and at the same time enable them to establish social contacts.

A lack of interest in initiating contacts on the part of local students is often cited as disappointing. Local students either already have a network of social contacts or else live a very individualistic life. Contacts with local students are especially desired for facilitating integration in the university and its study requirements, for improving the proficiency in the foreign language, for learning the leisure culture of the local students, and for sharing in their social life.

All this confirms the suspicion that people have reservations about international students (including CHAGAL students), especially those from "Third World" countries. It also leads to a feeling of segregation and aggravates their sense of foreignness. Inversely, a negative self-image and a (negative as well as positive) bias towards the people of the host country and fellow local students also deter international students from making contacts (Feekes 1995; Neseke 2000).

Group orientation is often influenced by cultural circumstances (e.g., Asian students = collectivist cultures as opposed to individualistic cultures = western societies). There is a correlation between lack of social contact and learning and study success. Isolation, for example, may affect self-

¹⁰ Compare, in particular, the situation at the Slovakian universities that still need to adapt themselves to the newly added group of international students.

confidence and impede autonomous behaviour and active oral participation in lessons (Waschnig 2001). This drawback is especially difficult for international students, who also regard the ability to interact with university lecturers as an important part of their study and personal development. In order to improve their study success, many would like to work in groups with other students, preferably in mixed groups of international and local students (Karcher/Etienne 1991).

2.4 Forms of Acquiring and Processing Knowledge

In the surveys carried out in Germany and Austria students repeatedly commented on the learning and study techniques in preparatory courses and university studies and pointed to the discrepancies in the teaching methods used at home and in the host country. Many students, however, have difficulty in precisely outlining their problems. The inability to express themselves may not entirely be the students' fault, since the forms of acquiring and compiling academic knowledge are rarely made explicit or explained to them. Very often, by placing the importance solely on academic results or products, the process of skills acquisition is neglected. Skills such as the ways of learning, of acquiring and imparting knowledge, of how to be reflective and analytical, and of how to disseminate information or carry out research or empirical work are either overlooked in academic learning or not normally transferred to the CHAGAL target group.

Developing language competence and the ability to communicate are important for acquiring, processing, and imparting knowledge. Arguing one's point of view and criticising are difficult for many international students not only because of the language barrier but also because of the different ways they learned in the schools of their countries of origin (Wiesmann 1999). The ways in which the students communicate in the context of their studies also often differ very much depending on where the students come from and on whether they communicate directly and utility-oriented and respect the point of view of others, as well as on whether it is

important for them to agree on results that are considered to be right (Protilho de Melo-Rüdiger 1997; Wullner 1997). The following are recurring key components cited by students and teachers:

- The *personal responsibility* in the learning and studying behaviour at universities in western European countries;
- *Initiative of one's own, originality, flexibility, tenacity* are particularly important when lecture-based teaching is being reduced and both teachers and students have to find alternative forms of imparting and processing knowledge;
- The ability to make *independent decisions* on the choice of topics, working methods, introducing questions, presenting oral and written forms of knowledge, using co-operative forms of learning and linguistic forms of interaction.

The surveys show that dealing with course contents and preparing students for exams (transfer of knowledge into new contexts) have to be improved. The techniques of taking notes in lectures, the reading strategies, especially when substantial amounts of reading material have to be worked through, the techniques of summarising and excerpting are very demanding on foreign-language students who have not systematically been trained (Mohr 2002).

International students also encountered difficulties in searching for information, both in the Internet and in library catalogues.

2.5 Proficiency in the Target Language

The students' answers to questions concerning the standards of their proficiency in the language of the host country as a study requirement are, in their own assessment, categorised

according to

- Language skills
- Language learning strategies
- Language learning options available to them.

Lack of language proficiency is most often given as the reason for difficulties in their studies (the only students to whom this does not apply are those in mathematically-oriented courses in the preparatory institutions; Nellessen 2002). Different groups of learners emphasise different problem areas. Their learning approaches and styles are shaped by their educational and cultural backgrounds. For example, Asian students mention problems with the active oral use of the language, whereas South American students often say that writing texts is more difficult. The ability to distinguish between formal and informal styles is considered important in the study preparation phase by many students. Graduates from different preparatory courses assess their linguistic difficulties specifically: those in the humanities find written examinations especially difficult, while those in the sciences find reading technical literature and conducting technical discussions particularly hard (Nellessen 2002).

Ineffective language learning strategies are, in the students' opinions, often the reason for failing to improve linguistic competence, especially in the initial phase of their studies during which many other requirements have to be fulfilled at the same time. To be able to speak, read, and write several languages (multilingualism) is considered a personal asset by most students. Preparatory course teachers and university lecturers prefer students to raise questions if they have linguistic problems and difficulties in understanding.

Knowledge of the correct use of grammar, good comprehension of the spoken language, understanding technical texts (both written and spoken), and producing intelligible texts are seen by most students as particularly important skills to acquire. They express the need for more

exercises to learn these skills to help their university studies. In retrospect, graduates of preparatory courses would have liked more work on subject- or content-based texts and more opportunities for free oral production (e.g. making presentations; Nellesen 2002). Study-integrated language instruction is favoured and the development of self-study materials is suggested by a few.

2.6 Assessment of Learning and Teaching Activities

Surveys in preparatory institutions show little concrete appraisal of teaching and learning activities on the part of the students.

It is imperative that study and teaching activities change according to the student groups, with the increasing demand from students as well as teachers that course contents should be determined more on the basis of the students' preferences (Karcher/Etienne 1991). In this case, the students' communicative goals would have to be set, the communicative tasks and skills would have to be specified, and the linguistic elements would have to be worked out accordingly. It is regarded as particularly important for the development of the students' capacities to act and respond that the topics come from the living environment of the course participants (e.g. student life, inter-culturally relevant topics).

The students' difficulties with teaching and study activities practised in the courses are often caused by differences in the school and study systems. Many students come expecting subject-related rather than interdisciplinary studies, regular checks on their performance, stronger monitoring of their progress, and a more receptive way of studying, i.e. courses that consist primarily of lectures. Contrary to that they are expected to prepare and revise contents independently, to work out answers to questions independently, to participate actively in courses, and to develop a critical view of the contents of their studies. The difficulties might increase if help from teachers is not forthcoming.

2.7 Intercultural Experience

International students have, on the whole, positive experiences in the intercultural field, but sometimes they also encounter difficulties which, in many cases, induce them to withdraw from others in order to protect themselves. Even so, many students would like to learn more about regional and cultural facts of the host culture and to have more opportunities to meet local students and to interact with them. In particular, the lack of preparation for living and studying in the host country is deemed responsible for the fact that the behaviour of the students does not conform to what fellow students, teachers, and administrative staff expect of them and vice versa. This “lack of preparation” can, in some way, be associated with the “international student versus host country” dichotomy.

On the one hand, high expectations from home put the students under enormous pressure to succeed and complete their studies in time. On the other hand, they feel that their abilities and potential are being underestimated or unappreciated by the academic staff and local students. This situation might cause disorientation and dent self-confidence. It is not uncommon for female students from remote areas of some African countries to have difficulties in reconciling the roles they are attributed at home with those in the host country where their personal and professional development takes place (Bubitz/Wehner 1994).

Many of the suggestions for intercultural exchange are based on self-perception and self-reflection as well as on the perception and reflection of others. For example, with regard to coping with everyday life and the socio-cultural conditions in the home and host countries, new insights into the unfamiliar study system are to be evaluated without developing any feelings of inferiority (Mohr 2002). Similarly, conflict situations among fellow students, whether political or cultural, are to be resolved with sensitivity (Karcher 1999; Ebert/Hentschel 1991²).

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CHAPTER 3: DIDACTIC PRINCIPLES

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the theoretical concepts supporting the development of curricula which address the target group of adult learners with different cultural origins and, therefore, with different learning experiences who need to be well prepared for entering higher education institutions in a host country.

Any approach to preparatory courses and bridging programmes should take into account that adult learners have special needs and choose different ways of learning than young learners. In accordance with this principle an *andragogic* approach to learning is introduced here.

Another important issue for the development of a student-centred curriculum as a collaborative effort of learners and teachers is the detailed knowledge of the learning objectives of preparatory courses. Therefore, "exit-competences" as minimum competences of students who enter university are also described here.

Finally, course instructors are addressed and shown how student-centred course curricula can be developed and implemented.

3.2 An Andragogic Approach to Learning

The theoretical framework, within which the CHAGAL Curriculum Guidelines have been developed, derives from the theory and principles of adult learning and a constructivist orientation to teaching with an emphasis on a student-centred approach. This section will briefly outline some of the principal tenets of *andragogy* – the art and science of teaching adults – and it will provide an outline of a constructivist approach to "designing for learning" rather than "planning for teaching".

This section will also examine how these two perspectives can both influence and inform the teaching practice for under-

represented adult learners from very diverse ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic backgrounds.

Principles and Practice of Adult Learning

Numerous studies have highlighted the particular problems which adult learners experience in returning to education. Stephen Brookfield (1986) usefully summarises the major principles of adult learning, which have developed over the past twenty-five years or so. He quotes Gibb (1960), who had been writing thirty years before, as one of the first theorists to present the following principles of adult learning:

- Learning must be problem-centred.
- Learning must be experience-centred.
- Experience must be meaningful to the learner.
- Learners must be free to look at experience.
- Goals must be set and pursued by the learner.
- Learners must have feedback about the progress towards their goals (Brookfield 1986, p. 26).

Whilst Gibb's arguments concerning the nature of adult learning were based largely on speculative grounds, the work of Knox (1977) was firmly grounded on research-based findings from which he drew a number of generalisations. He claims that adults learn continually and informally as they adjust to role changes and other adaptations. Adult's learning achievements are, however, thought to be modified by individual characteristics (the learning context of the physical, social, and personal characteristics surrounding the learning act, as well as the content and pace of learning also affect the learning achievement).

Knox argued that adults tend to underestimate their abilities and, by overemphasising school experience and interests, often perform below their capacity. According to him adults are able to learn as well in their forties and fifties as in their twenties and thirties, when and if they can control the pace of learning. Knox concluded his summary with the optimistic

declaration that individual differences in learning were mostly unrelated to age and that

Almost any adult can learn anything they want to, given time, persistence and assistance. (Knox 1977, p. 469)

In a more recent work, Knox (1986) provides adult educators with helpful advice on how to encourage adult students to become active participants in the learning process. He suggests that an early way to be responsive to adults' preferences for active participation is to include them in the needs assessment and objective-setting process, i.e. to ask them their expectations and reasons for participation.

It is also important, Knox argues, to help adults relate their past experience to current learning, as this contributes to an active search for meaning and sharing with other participants. Active learner involvement in evaluation, he says, is also useful in helping learners to become more independent, creative, and self-reliant in future self-directed learning activities. Providing feedback to the students can help them realise how their ability and effort contribute to their educational achievement.

The work of Brundage and Mackeracher (1980) sets out some fundamental principles in promoting a student-centred approach to learning. They emphasise that the time perspective of adult learners differs from that of young people. An adult, they argue, tends to perceive time as including an ever-increasing past, a fleeting and pressured present, and a finite future. A young person tends to perceive time as including a present and an infinite future. From this proposition, Brundage and Mackeracher develop the following learning principles:

- Adult learning focuses on the problems of the immediate present. The learning content should be derived from the learner's needs.
- Past experience becomes increasingly important, as an adult grows older. Its potential for helping or hindering the learning process also increases with age.

- When learning focuses on problem-solving, the solutions must come from, or be congruent with, the learner's experience, expectations and potential resources rather than being prescribed by an "expert".
- Adults tend to experience a need to learn quickly and get on with living.

Not much later, Malcolm Knowles (1980) introduced the concept of *andragogy*, which he, in the attempt to construct a theory of adult learning, loosely defined as the art and science of teaching adults. His insights have had a huge impact on adult education teaching practice, while at the same time generating much discussion within the academic field. Knowles based his ideas on Piaget's and Erikson's work to study the adult learner.

Knowles believes that the adult learner brings life experiences to learning, incorporating and complementing the cognitive abilities of Piaget's adolescent. As the individual matures,

- His/her self-concept moves from dependency to self-direction.
- His/her reservoir of experiences grows and becomes a resource for learning.
- His/her learning readiness becomes increasingly oriented to the tasks of various social roles.
- His/her time perspective changes from one of postponed knowledge application to immediate application.
- His/her orientation of learning shifts from subject-centred to problem-centred.

There is now general recognition, acknowledged by Knowles himself that his ideas do not stand up as a "theory" but more as a framework or perspective for teaching methods as appropriate to the needs of adult learners. However, his work has been influential in developing new insights in adult education and has influenced especially Mezirow's (1991) concept of "transformative learning".

More recently, Brookfield (2001) in his critique of the work of the preceding theorists warns us to be wary of claiming too high a level of generalisability for theories and concepts of adult learning derived largely from studies of white Americans in the lower-middle, middle, and upper-classes. To base a comprehensive theory of adult learning on observations of white, middle-class Americans in continuing or extension education classes in the post Second World War era, is, says Brookfield, conceptually and empirically naïve.

Brookfield calls for a greater recognition of the range and diversity of teaching styles and more specifically of factors such as class, gender, ethnic backgrounds, cultural traditions and influences and how these “sociological and cultural” issues influence not just the learners’ prior experiences but also how these factors shape what happens in the classroom.

Brookfield (2001) has recently attempted to look at adult learning by highlighting the *post-formal thinking* characteristics of adult learners. He argues that Piaget identified the concept of formal operations as the end point of young adult development. Post formal operations emphasise the adults’ ability to reason contextually.

There is distinctiveness to the learning that does occur in adult life. These forms of learning are visible in a much more heightened form in adulthood as compared to childhood and adolescence. They are discernible at earlier stages in life, but it is in adulthood that they stand out. Brookfield identified four strands which he believes are unique to the adult dimension of learning:

- The capacity to think dialectically;
- The capacity to employ practical logic;
- The capacity to learn how to learn;
- The capacity for critical reflection.

The Capacity to Think Dialectically

The ability to think dialectically is the capacity to move back and forth between objective and subjective frames of

reference, with the ability to reason with universalistic and relativistic modes of thought co-existing. It is the continuous exploration of the interrelationship between general rules and contextual necessities. This is not a higher order intellectual ability, but practical and developed in everyday decision making, especially in the many moral contradictions and ambiguities in today's world.

The Capacity to Employ Practical Logic

This form of adult thinking is the ability to think contextually in a deep and critical way. It is concerned with reasoning within a well-defined structure in a way that pays attention to its internal features. This form of logic springs from a deep understanding of the context of the situation. It is a logic that does not follow the formal rules of deductive reasoning, but that is experiential and inferential. It involves being aware of and attending seriously to very subtle cues whose importance only becomes apparent to those who have the benefit of a lengthy and mindful immersion in experience.

The Capacity to Learn How to Learn

This is defined as the capacity adults possess to become self consciously aware of their learning styles and to be able to adjust these according to the situation in which they find themselves. It is knowledge of our cognitive strategies and an awareness of our predisposition to learn in a certain way. Fundamental to the concept is some form of epistemological awareness of how we come to know what we know, and an evolving understanding of what it means for us to know something. Smith (1990) refers to the importance of teaching adults meta-cognitive skills that he considers so important to help students develop such characteristics as persistence, resourcefulness, and open-mindedness.

The Capacity for Critical Reflection

Critical reflection is defined as the process by which adults become aware of the assumptions, beliefs, and values which they have assimilated during childhood and adolescence. This

capacity occurs as adults pass through experiences in their interpersonal, work, political lives, which are characterised by breath, depth, diversity, and different degrees of intensity (Schön 1996). This only comes with time. Critical reflection develops as we as adults experience the world as complex, contradictory, and ambiguous (for example, our ideal beliefs and values about relationships, work, and politics in young people and our real experience of these in life force us to become critical reflectors). What is distinctive about adult learning is the search for meaning in these complex and contradictory, ambiguous realities.

Constructivist Learning Theory and Its Impact on the Teaching Practice

Constructive learning has emerged as a prominent approach to teaching during the past decade. The work of Dewey (1964), Montessori (1965), Piaget (1977), Bruner (1986), and Vygotsky (1986), among others, provides historical precedents for constructivist learning theory. Constructivism represents a paradigm shift from education based on behaviourism to education based on cognitive theory.

Constructivism is often articulated in stark contrast to the behaviourist model of learning. Behavioural psychology is interested in the study of changes in manifest behaviour as opposed to changes in mental states. Learning is conceived as a process of changing or conditioning observable behaviour as a result of selective reinforcement of an individual's response to events (stimuli) that occur in the environment.

The mind is seen as an empty vessel, a *tabula rasa* to be filled or as a mirror reflecting reality. Behaviourism centres on students' efforts to accumulate knowledge of the natural world and on teachers' efforts to transmit it. It, therefore, relies on a transmission, instructionist approach which is largely passive, teacher-directed, and controlled.

Where behaviourism emphasises observable, external behaviours and, as such, avoids reference to meaning, representation, and thought, constructivism takes a more cognitive approach. This subtle difference has profound implications for all aspects of a theory of learning. The way in which knowledge is conceived and acquired, the types of knowledge, skills, and activities emphasised, the role of the learner and the teacher, how goals are established, all of these factors are articulated differently in the constructivist perspective. Within constructivism itself, authors, researchers, and theorists articulate differently the constructivist perspective by emphasising different components.

Nonetheless, there is some agreement on a large number of issues, for example, on the role of the teacher and on learning. In von Glasersfeld's (1955b) earlier radical constructivist conception of learning, the teacher plays the role of a "midwife in the birth of understanding" as opposed to being a "mechanic of knowledge transfer". Their role is not to dispense knowledge but to provide students with opportunities and incentives to build it up (Glasersfeld 1996). Mayer (1996) describes teachers as "guides", and learners as "sense makers". In Gergen's (1995) view, teachers are coordinators, facilitators, resource advisors, tutors, or coaches.

Understanding the role of the teacher in the constructivist classroom provides a useful vantage point from which to grasp how the theory impacts on practice.

Central to constructivism is its conception of learning. Von Glasersfeld argues that: "From the constructivist perspective, learning is not a stimulus-response phenomenon. It requires self-regulation and the building of conceptual structures through reflection and abstraction." (Glasersfeld 1995, p. 14). Fosnot adds: "Rather than behaviours or skills as the goal of instruction, concept development and deep understanding are the foci [...]." (Fosnot 1996, p.10). For educators the challenge is to be able to build a hypothetical model of the conceptual worlds of students since these worlds could be

very different from what is intended by the educator (Glaserfeld 1996).

In this paradigm, learning emphasises the process and not the product. How one arrives at a particular answer and not the retrieval of an “objectively true solution” is what is important. Learning is a process of constructing meaningful representations, of making sense of one’s experiential world. In this process, students’ errors are seen in a positive light and as a means of gaining insight into how they are organising their experiential world. The notion of doing something “right” or “correctly” is to do something that fits with “an order one has established oneself” (Glaserfeld 1987, p. 15). This perspective is consistent with the constructivist tendency to privilege multiple truths, representations, perspectives, and realities.

Vygotsky’s (1986) ideas have influenced a “social constructivist” approach to learning which is pertinent to language teaching as it emphasises the social dimension of learning as well as the importance of cultural “tools”. His main interest was intellectual development and he views learning as a constructivist activity. While Vygotsky’s main work has been on how children learn, these ideas are also applicable to adults, especially adults moving to a new cultural context and having to acquire a new language.

According to Vygotsky, cognitive development is a process in which language is a crucial tool for determining how the child will learn how to *think* because advanced modes of thought are transmitted to the child by means of words. “Prior to mastering his own behaviour, the child begins to master his surroundings with the help of speech.” (Vygotsky 1986, p. 24). Once the child realises that everything has a name, each new object presents the child with a problem situation, and he solves the problem by naming the object. When he lacks the word for the new object, he demands it from adults. The early word meanings thus acquired will be the embryos of concept formation. “A problem must arise that cannot be solved otherwise than through the formation of new concepts.”

(Vygotsky 1986, p. 54). During the course of development everything occurs twice. For example, in the learning of language, our first utterances with peers or adults are for the purpose of communication, but once mastered they become internalised and allow “inner speech”, which, however, “undergoes many changes as it turns into speech”. (Vygotsky, p. 26).

One notion in Vygotsky’s theory, which has been of great interest to educators, is what he called the *zone of proximal development* and which refers to the difference between the child’s capacity to solve problems on his own and his capacity to solve them with assistance.

The zone of proximal development includes all the functions and activities that a learner can perform only with the assistance of someone else. The person who intervenes in this scaffolding process could be a teacher, caretaker, language instructor, or a peer who has already mastered that particular function.

How Can Constructivist Theory Inform the Teaching Practice?

Gagnon and Collay (2001) propose a “Constructivist Learning Design” that builds on the assumptions of constructivism and focuses on the development of situations as a way of thinking about the constructive activities of the learner rather than the demonstrative behaviour of the teacher. This design model has the following six important elements:

- The situation
- The form of grouping
- The bridge
- Questions
- Exhibit
- Reflections.

These elements are designed to provoke teacher planning and reflection about the process of student learning. Teachers develop *the situation* for students to explain, select a process for *groupings* of materials and students, build a *bridge*

between what students already know and what they want them to learn, anticipate *questions* to ask and answer without giving away an explanation, encourage students to *exhibit* a record of their thinking by sharing it with others, and solicit students' *reflections* about their learning.

Conclusion

Teachers who teach a host country language as an integral part of the specific subject discipline must try to enable and ensure competence in both. The appreciation of the principles and practices of adult learning can be a useful framework within which to plan, design, and evaluate courses of learning. These insights should not be viewed as a solution to teaching but rather as a way to understand the factors that motivate and influence adults who return to formal education.

The constructivist approach to teaching highlights a student-centred approach, which emphasises the importance of collaborative learning, of negotiating the curriculum, and of facilitating students to construct their own meaning of the learning experience. These theoretical frameworks are evident in the case studies provided by practitioners within the CHAGAL Guidelines as presented here.

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3.3 Competences as Learning Objectives

This section describes in detail the competences that students need to acquire to study successfully which include competences that are described by the student target group itself and that correspond to their needs (“subject requirements”), and the competences that students must possess because they are required by universities (“objective requirements”).

When referring to academic competences, the following aspects should be kept in mind:

- Studying in a foreign language requires a varying degree of different competences when entering higher education (in the first semester).
- Up to now there is not much empirical research on the communicative activities that are the preconditions for studying successfully (Wintermann 1999, p. 131). It is not known exactly how important the various competences are for studying successfully in the host country.
- There are different academic traditions and styles in European higher education. The ideas of teaching and learning and, therefore, the student's tasks may differ a lot (i.e. mere accumulation of knowledge vs. learning by doing research). Competences must always be described clearly for the different study fields.
- Many students of the target group come with competences they have acquired while studying at universities in their home countries. Therefore, it is important that university lecturers and local students

value these culture-specific academic competences and respect, explore, and promote the positive contributions these students can make.

What are Exit-Competences?

For preparatory institutions, exit competences are those that students should have acquired by the end of their training in order to qualify for university admission. “*Competences*” or “*being competent*” implies abilities that help students act and react adequately in the learning environment, e.g. during language- and content-based activities. They consist of different components such as

- Skills, e.g. reading and understanding subject-specific texts;
- Cognitive strategies or so called mental operations and plans that give structure to newly acquired knowledge and store it in memory;
- Attitudes, e.g. openness, a self-critical attitude;
- Values, orientations, e.g. being orientated towards individualism or community;
- Positive personal qualities, e.g. self-confidence; a personal quality like this can be seen as the result of specific competences like cooperating successfully in group work.

These competences are developed during preparatory courses and studying by

- Perceiving, e.g. context and persons, conditions and requirements, one’s own behaviour and reactions;
- Reflecting and interpreting, e.g. context and persons, conditions and requirements, one’s own behaviour and reactions;
- Interacting (getting in contact and communicating with people);
- Developing or activating knowledge (declarative knowledge [knowledge about the world], procedural

knowledge [knowledge about how to do something], socio-cultural/intercultural awareness, etc.).

Competences for Higher Education

The six areas of competence mentioned in the highlighted boxes below are based on the student situation and needs analysis, reflected from their own as well as their teachers' perspectives. The detailed description of these competences below the highlighted boxes are based on the findings of university teachers' assessment of students' tasks in higher education, on curricula of preparatory institutions that describe learning aims, and on research on university entry tests that refer to contents of study and to language proficiencies.

1. Self-Competence

Self-competence is a necessary requirement for dealing with almost all areas of student life. It involves the ability to orientate, organise, and motivate oneself for tasks. A particularly important aspect of this competence is the readiness for self-reflection in all matters.

- ☑ **Self-orientation and organisation**
 - in private and public space
 - managing working time
 - referring to tasks and individual learning aims
- ☑ **Self-motivation**
 - perceiving and expressing feelings
 - realising tense situations and reducing strain
 - encouraging and rewarding oneself
- ☑ **Self-critical reflection**
 - reflecting one's own needs
 - preferred learning activities
 - personal behaviour patterns - their consequences

2. Social and Interactive Competence

Social and interactive competence is a prerequisite for integrating as a student in the target society and in the institution. It is also essential for establishing and maintaining contacts. When interaction becomes more and more frequent in teamwork during courses, this skill will be particularly beneficial for newly enrolled international students in developing their counselling abilities.

- Establishing and maintaining contacts**
 - putting forward and answering questions
 - asking for explanation, correction, or dialogue
- Cooperating**
 - working on special tasks cooperatively
 - asking competent students for assistance
 - counselling other students
 - adjusting to conflicting situations
- Showing empathy**
 - noticing the others' attitudes and feelings
 - developing knowledge and understanding towards people from other cultures
 - being ready for dialogue
 - being aware of expectations of others (teachers and students)

3. Intercultural Competence

Intercultural competence or the understanding of people of different cultural origins is the ability to take notice of others and to shape and confront situations in a constructive way. It requires interpersonal and communication skills and culture-specific knowledge. When dealing with experiences in the country of study, one's own socialisation experiences are also assessed. This process can be an important learning process in an intercultural respect if it consolidates and strengthens one's own identity (Karcher 1999, p. 105).

Developing and exchanging culture-specific knowledge

- showing interest in the life and culture of different ethnic groups in the host community
- showing willingness for dialogue and cooperation
- expressing one's own culture and being aware of possible misunderstandings in the contact with people of different cultural origins

Showing empathy

- sympathising with others and showing genuine interest in them
- considering and accepting the others' ideas and behaviour after having learned about their background and experience

Mediating

- offering help in critical situations and acting as a go-between

4. Learning Competence

A well-developed learning competence cannot always be taken for granted in this target group, i.e. adult students, some of whom are not used to self-directed learning or else are used to strongly guided (school-style) learning. This competence area requires a fundamental open-mindedness towards unfamiliar topics and study activities, as well as eagerness for experiments and initiatives, which many students have yet to develop. Learning competence implies that students have to be able to plan and conduct their own learning activities and to evaluate the results with respect to the learning objectives. It also includes knowing their preferred ways of learning and learning strategies.

Developing open-mindedness towards unfamiliar topics and learning activities

- overcoming one's own resistance to unknown or unfamiliar topics and activities

- paying attention to the learning activities of others
- taking part in experiments and initiatives in new learning methods and evaluating them

Developing knowledge about personally preferred ways of learning and (language) learning strategies

- preferred types of tasks for learning vocabulary
- preferred time of the day for learning
- preferred places for learning
- reflecting and finding reasons for preferred ways of learning

Bringing learning and working strategies into action

- knowing about different learning and working activities
- developing and giving reasons for adequate learning aims
- being able to evaluate the result of a learning action with reference to personal learning aims
- effective work sharing in groups
- acting independently in projects and other open working situations

5. Target-Language Competence/Language Proficiency

Competence in the target language has to develop in the preparation for university studies in a highly differentiated way. Students should possess verbal and non-verbal communicative competence as well as interactive competence in study-related situations. They should also have the ability to deal with everyday encounters with other people and develop their speaking activities in order to process knowledge in courses and produce written texts as demanded. Text competence, i.e. the ability to understand the meaning of written texts in the target language and to write meaningful texts on specific topics in the context of one's studies, requires a good competence in the target language (Portmann-Tselikas 2002).

Language proficiency should be at least at B2 level (according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages¹¹) when entering higher education

- using the language of the host country fluently and spontaneously in everyday situations
- using the language of study fluently and spontaneously in well-known subject-related contexts
- learning to recognise and analyse structures of the academic language
- training one's "personal language" to develop and express more complex ideas (e.g. paraphrasing, clarifying thoughts by giving examples, expressing connecting ideas explicitly)
- actively training and using relevant communication strategies to master difficult communication situations
- training meta-cognitive strategies to control and evaluate one's own language use.

6. Processing Linguistic and Content-Based Knowledge Independently (Study Skills)

Students need to acquire and be able to use various techniques for gaining and processing linguistic and content-based knowledge in their learning contexts. It makes dealing with knowledge in the study context a lot easier if students can automatically resort to them at the beginning of their studies.

Information management: collecting and dealing with information

- making contacts, putting questions, insisting on relevant answers (e.g. from teachers, administrators, and those in the information centres)

¹¹ See the website of the Council of Europe:
www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Co-operation/education/Languages/Language_Policy/

- being informed about advisory or information centres at the preparatory institution, at the host university, and at the administrative unit
- using new media tools (developing knowledge about ways of reception, effects, and problems of their use: hypertext, hypermedia, virtual worlds)
- learning to use libraries (knowing about (online-) search of literature, systems for lending books and periodicals)
- being trained in different situations involving the public, e.g. gathering information on the phone or during office hours
- being able to fill in application forms properly

Participating in lectures

- being able to follow lectures of longer duration (on general topics)
- recognising structure and contents of oral texts
- identifying thesis, antithesis, and arguments of oral texts
- being able to take notes and use them for oral or written production

Participating in discourse actively (in everyday conversation, seminars, practical courses...)

- understanding spontaneous speeches
- understanding authentic discourse of changing speakers
- being able to describe facts, to reason, to explain one's own point of view, to draw conclusions...
- being able to put topic-related questions and to understand the answers
- using communicative strategies if necessary
- developing various linguistic means for arguing, discussing, commenting... during team work or plenary sessions

Making use of (subject-related) texts

- using different reading strategies according to personal reading aims
- getting used to read longer, complex texts
- getting to know the structure of different text types, e.g. newspaper articles, subject-related texts, encyclopaedic articles...

- writing excerpts
- getting acquainted with the particular intentions of texts
- being able to understand information presented in the form of illustrations: tables, diagrams, drawings...

Writing texts

- by using a word processor programme
- being able to produce different text types such as summaries, minutes, records, position papers...
- writing texts within a shorter time (e.g. to be prepared for (exit) examinations)
- knowing the different test formats
- writing texts by using other content-related texts; knowing about techniques of citation
- knowing the complex process of text production and the realisation of its components (strategies for text revision ...)

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3.4 How to Develop and Implement Student-Centred Course Curricula

Curriculum theory and planning can be seen as a systematic attempt by educationalists and teachers to specify and study planned intervention in the educational enterprise.

Traditional approaches to curriculum development (Tyler 1949) see the development of curricula as a linear process that follows a rather simple means-end view of education and does not consider what actually happens in the classroom.

More recent models of curriculum development (Stenhouse 1975; Nunan 1988; Richards 2001) provide a more process-orientated view which considers the elements that are described below as important.

Student-Centred Course Curriculum Development

An alternative approach to curriculum development which indicates a close relationship between curriculum, planning goals, learning objectives, and implementation is the learner-centred approach (Nunan 1988).

In a student-centred curriculum, although the teacher is the prime agent of curriculum development, both teachers and students share full responsibility for the learning process.

A student-centred curriculum should include the principles and procedures for planning, implementing, and evaluating the curriculum and should consist of the following key elements:

- Initial and ongoing students' needs analysis;
- Content selection and setting priorities (including goals);
- Methodology (including the selection and gradation of learning activities and materials);
- Monitoring, assessment, and evaluation.

According to these elements the teacher's task can be described in terms of a cycle consisting of the following steps:

- Initial needs analysis for students;
- Setting goals and selecting contents;
- Selecting learning activities and materials;
- Assessing and evaluating the teaching outcome.

On the basis of the teaching outcome the teacher, who monitors the whole process, begins the cycle again and carries out a new needs analysis ...

Traditional Curriculum Development versus Student-Centred Curriculum

A student-centred curriculum within an adult learning context contains many elements that are similar to those in traditional curriculum development, i.e. planning, implementing, and evaluating. The key difference between the two models is that, in the former, the curriculum is a collaborative effort of teachers and learners, since learners are closely involved in the decision-making process regarding the content of the curriculum and the way it is taught.

As far as the curriculum process is concerned, a student-centred approach can be characterised and distinguished from traditional approaches by its *initial planning procedures*. These procedures include the collection of information about learners in order to diagnose their *objective* needs that are needs which are external to the learner.

This initial data collection, which is usually superficial, has to be supplemented by more subjective information on the preferred length and intensity of the course, the preferred learning arrangement and goals, as well as by information relating to the preferred methodology, the students' learning-style preferences, and so on. However, this sort of information, relating to the student's *subjective* needs as an individual in a learning situation can often only be obtained once a course has begun. Instruments have to be developed and used that help teachers and students to become aware of the individual objective and subjective needs.

Content Selection and Priority Setting

In a student-centred curriculum clear criteria for content selection give guidance on the selection of materials and learning activities and assist in assessment and evaluation. By making explicit the content objectives of a course and, eventually, by training learners to set their own objectives, the following benefits can be accrued:

- Students come to have a more realistic idea of what can be achieved in a given course.
- Learning comes to be seen as a process of gradually reaching achievable goals.
- Students develop greater sensitivity to their role as learners, and their rather vague notions of what it is to be a learner can become much sharper.
- Self-evaluation becomes more feasible.
- Classroom activities can be seen to relate to the learners' real-life needs.
- The development of competences can be seen as a gradual, rather than an all-or-nothing process.

A crucial distinction between traditional and student-centred curriculum development is that, in the latter, the structure is fluid and open to adaptations. It is, therefore, important that the contents selected at the beginning of a course are not seen as definite; they will vary, and will probably have to be

modified as students experience different kinds of learning activities and as teachers obtain more information about the students' subjective needs.

As most learners find it difficult to articulate their needs and preferences, the initial stages of a course can be spent in providing a range of learning experiences. Additionally, with low-level language learners, developing critical self-awareness can best be facilitated by the use of resources in the mother tongue. In some cases the use of bilingual assistants may be useful.

Since contact hours often are limited, class time has to be used as effectively and productively as possible to achieve the following aims:

- To provide students with effective learning strategies;
- To assist students to identify their preferred ways of learning;
- To develop skills needed to negotiate the curriculum;
- To encourage students to set their own objectives;
- To encourage students to adopt realistic goals and time frames;
- To develop the students' skills of/by self-evaluation.

Teaching Methods

Teaching methods, which include learning activities and materials, are generally the area where there is the greatest potential for conflict between teacher and students. In a traditional curriculum this conflict would be ignored on the grounds that the "teacher knows best". In a student-centred curriculum it is imperative that conflicts be resolved by specific techniques and procedures for negotiation and consultation.

Evaluation

Traditionally, evaluation occurs at the final stage in the curriculum process. In a student-centred curriculum, however, evaluation is parallel with other curriculum activities and may

occur at various times during the planning and implementation phases, as well as during a specified evaluation phase.

In a traditional curriculum model, evaluation is identified with testing and is seen as an activity which is carried out at the end of the learning process, often by someone who is not connected with the course itself. (In other words, the emphasis is on “summative” rather than “formative” evaluation.)

In a student-centred model, evaluation generally takes the form of an informal monitoring which is carried out alongside the teaching and learning processes, principally by the participants in that process, that is the teachers and learners. By building evaluation into the teaching process, learners can evaluate learning materials, study activities, and their own achievement of objectives. By encouraging teachers to evaluate critically their own performance, evaluation becomes an integral part of both curriculum and teacher development.

Any element within the curriculum may be evaluated. At the planning stage, needs analysis techniques and procedures may be evaluated, while, during implementation, elements to be evaluated may include materials, learning activities, sequencing, learning arrangements, teacher performance, and learner achievement.

Support for Teachers

If the ideals of a student-centred curriculum were to become a reality, teachers would need assistance and support in several areas. As Bartlett and Butler (1985) have indicated, several problem areas seem to be of particular interest:

Needs Assessment Skills

Teachers require instruments and processes by which they can efficiently gather and prioritise student needs.

Course Guidelines

Teachers need a broader framework within which they can negotiate the curriculum. They need to know what the students have done before and what will come after in a form

that does not stifle the negotiated curriculum. Minimum competences that are required by universities must be defined as thoroughly as possible (for *exit competences* see Chapter 3.3: Competences as Learning Objectives).

Course Planning Skills

Teachers need better planning skills that help them to negotiate a coherent, achievable set of objectives for a course, and then to plan a sequence of lessons to assist the students to attain the objectives.

Bilingual Help in Negotiating the Curriculum

The information exchange that is so crucial to a negotiated curriculum requires bilingual assistance in many classes.

Continuity in the Programme

The needs-based model can easily give rise to a fragmented programme. Some teachers are caught in this bind and are asking for some form of programme management to help them lead their students on a direct path to their goals.

"Model-courses" that give an idea of where to go in a course could be one way to solve that problem.

Educational Counselling

In a needs-based model the size of the problem that confronts any individual teacher is directly related to the range and diversity of the students' needs. Teachers report that to negotiate the curriculum becomes an impossible project if the students' needs are very diverse. This is a key area where the teacher's stress can be reduced by forming a class group with a narrow range of needs. This requires the most efficacious use of educational counsellors who may be curriculum developers themselves, and who can direct students on a continuing basis into groups that match their needs. As far as CHAGAL students are concerned, different ways of grouping should be taken into consideration and alternative ways of differentiating with individualised teaching must be developed.

Conflict Resolution

Opening up the curriculum to negotiation will inevitably lead to instances of conflict. Teachers reported in a survey that such

conflict had arisen, but many of them had found suitable processes for resolving it.

Teacher Role Specifications

The task of continually negotiating the curriculum with the students puts enormous strain on the teachers as is clearly evidenced in the relevant literature (see also Chapter 2: Student Situation Analysis).

Advantages of a Student-Centred Curriculum

The advantages of a student-centred approach to course curriculum planning are

- A stronger bond between teaching and the curriculum;
- Greater emphasis on the students' needs, an aspect which could be especially helpful for CHAGAL students who attend courses that are not primarily intended for them;
- The research on teaching (e.g. action research) can concentrate on more relevant issues;
- A more realistic description of the role of teachers who have always been and will always be curriculum developers;
- The development of instruments which help teachers to do their jobs more efficiently;
- A stronger demand on universities to define their requirements more thoroughly;
- As part of "higher education teaching" (i.e. teaching at university level) this approach will also help CHAGAL students.

Literature

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CHAPTER 4: THE CHAGAL PILOT PROJECTS

4.1 Introduction

From September 2003 to April 2004 the CHAGAL principles were put to the test in a series of pilot projects carried out at various preparatory institutions in the CHAGAL partner countries. The aim of these pilot projects was not just to test out in practice but also to gather further evidence to support some of the provisionally formulated CHAGAL principles (e.g. student-centred approach, promotion of study competences or learning skills, intercultural awareness, etc.) by using

- The data collection and analysis of the curricula of the preparatory institutions (subgroup A);
- The needs analysis from the universities (subgroup B);
- The examples of good practice identified by the NGOs (subgroup C);
- Contributions from external experts acquired in workshops, through the presentation of research findings, etc.

During this period, 16 pilot projects were designed, implemented, and evaluated by 32 practitioners at the participating institutions. Given the large spectrum of possible topics and methodological approaches, the pilot projects demonstrate considerable variety in terms of didactic goals and can roughly be categorised into the following three groups:

- Social and cultural learning-oriented projects
- Content-oriented projects
- Language- and study skills-oriented projects.

4.2 Social and Cultural Learning-Oriented Projects

A considerable number of pilot projects focused on some aspect of intercultural and social learning. It seems that teachers and lecturers at the preparatory institutions felt that

this issue had been neglected most in recent years and that there was a lot of catching up to do, especially as concerns students that belong to the CHAGAL target group. At the same time, it is highly interesting to see the many different ways in which the often rather controversial concepts of cultural awareness, cultural diversity, etc., have been approached.

Pilot Project 3 “Introducing German Cultural Studies through Songs” [*Studienkolleg Saarbrücken*, DE] used different kinds of contemporary German songs in an upper-level course to enhance the students’ awareness and perception of specific cultural aspects (youth culture and the problems connected with it such as drug taking, generation gap, finding one’s identity, etc.) that are often disregarded in regular instruction. It was also assumed that “music” as a topic of high interest especially for young people would tighten social relations within the learner group. Finally, the use of Internet search engines to gain information on the biography and the artistic work of different singers and musicians contributed to developing some of the important study skills students should possess.

A fairly different approach was taken by Pilot Project 4 “Applied Cultural Studies – Outdoor Activities, Study Trips and Excursions in Vienna” [*Vorstudienlehrgang Wien*, AT]. By expanding the classroom to the whole city, this project aimed at increasing the learners’ communicative, intercultural, and social competences through planning and realizing “real world activities” outside the classroom. Each activity was thoroughly prepared and negotiated in advance as well as evaluated afterwards by means of student diaries and observation sheets made up and analysed by the piloting teachers. In a nutshell one can say that through its “task-based approach” the project succeeded in speeding up and increasing both second language acquisition and competences such as problem-solving strategies, different study skills, and, above all, the ability to obtain faster and better orientation and integration into the daily life of a big city (“social inclusion”).

With a strong focus on the issue of cultural diversity, Pilot Project 5 “Cultural Awareness Training (and Language Teaching)”, and Pilot Project 6 “Some Dos and Don’ts in Multicultural Settings: A Good Guide to Bad Manners” [both *Vorstudienlehrgang Wien*, AT] engaged students in intensive information exchange and awareness-raising processes as regards differences in terms of nonverbal behaviour (body language), communication styles, values and taboos in their respective home countries. It is particularly worth mentioning that the projects managed to break up a largely monocultural group of almost 80% Chinese learners and to make them transcend classroom and in-group borders by leading in-depth interviews with fellow students of different cultural backgrounds. On the basis of the interviews and classroom presentations on cultural peculiarities, a booklet “On Dos and Don’ts in Different Cultural Settings” was compiled and distributed, presenting a “tangible” product as the final outcome, an important goal in these projects.

The authors of Pilot Project 7 “Learner’s Biography” [*Studienkollegs Aachen/Köln/Köthen*, DE] made quite a different aspect the focal point of their investigations: the extent to which biographical factors might interfere with the learning process. The basic assumption was that to gain insight into the learners’ educational and cultural background would be beneficial to classroom management in various respects, e.g. teachers could possibly avoid problems arising from a mismatch between the roles and expectations of the teacher and those of the learners; lesson planning could be conducted in a more student-centred and effective way; the familiarisation process towards the host society could be eased and shortened. The questionnaire-based survey showed that it was already helpful for students to be offered the opportunity to express their feelings, expectations, and disappointments. By doing so, typical “culture shock symptoms” could, at least partly, be reduced.

4.3 Content-Oriented Projects

The seven Pilot Projects presented here contain elements of social-cultural learning and also important aspects of language training and study skills. For example, more or less all these projects aimed at developing an essential subject-related vocabulary. So the division is somewhat arbitrary, but in all seven projects language and cultural aspects are a vehicle for mastering the subject matter.

A common thread in the projects was the didactic principle of teamwork and in most of the projects (9, 11, 12, and 16) students had to submit a paper on a specific subject. An important aim was to become familiar with presentation techniques such as the use of visual aids, verbal and non-verbal behaviour, and interaction with the audience. In projects 9, 15, and 16 a video recorder was used for peer- and self-evaluation of the performances.

In the first phase of Pilot Project 9 “Second Language Oral Presentation for Content Classes” [VASVU Amsterdam, NL] students worked a few weeks on presentation skills, including a video-taped short presentation during Dutch lessons. In the second phase students did experimental work in a physics laboratory, which resulted in a written report and an oral presentation of the report.

Pilot Project 10 “Implementation of a Learner-Centred Curriculum in Subjects Other than German as a Foreign Language – Needs Analysis” [Vorstudienlehrgang Graz, AT] operated on a somewhat broader scale, covering a variety of subjects, among them biology, chemistry, history, mathematics and physics. Subject matter tests and questionnaires were developed for diagnosing individual gaps in knowledge and the students’ wishes for extra support. Another element of this project was to equip students with the general skills needed at university such as electronic information gathering, presentation techniques, time management, etc. One of the interesting outcomes of the final evaluation was that students themselves regard the absence of family support as one of the major handicaps to study success.

In Pilot Project 11 “Integration of English and Mathematics” [VASVU *Amsterdam*, NL] students were asked to read English texts on different mathematical topics and discuss them in Dutch. The switching between two different foreign languages was mentioned in interviews with former VASVU students as a major problem in their first year at university. At Dutch universities most of the literature is in English, while lectures and examinations are in Dutch. In close cooperation with the English language teacher, task sheets were constructed by the Mathematics teacher but were focused on the language aspects of the texts.

An important aim of Pilot Project 12 “Chemistry – Practical Training: The Measure Analysis” [*Studienkolleg Coburg*, DE] was, as in project 9, to make students familiar with laboratory techniques and give them the opportunity to do experiments. Students made reports of their work and presented the reports to their fellow students. Apparently preparatory institutions in Germany and the Netherlands lack facilities for experimental work, so in both cases the neighbouring universities allowed the preparatory students to use their laboratories.

One of the outcomes was a plan for integrating “chemical” texts in the German language lessons.

The development and training of meta-cognitive strategies was the focus of Pilot Project 14 “Elements of Self-Regulated Learning” [*Studienkolleg Münster*, DE]. Two mathematics classes were intensively trained towards enhancing the capability of self-monitoring and self-evaluating their learning processes. To achieve this aim, the following aids were given/steps were taken:

- Initial mathematics test for individual diagnosis of strong and weak points;
- Teaching materials that raise the students’ awareness of working principles and learning strategies at an early stage;
- Additional offers of working materials (books, websites, etc.);

- Visiting university lectures in order to support the students' orientation and motivation;
- Task sheets for regular self-monitoring and self-evaluation.

A final evaluation of the project suggested that most of the learners found the measures very conducive to becoming more efficient and conscientious learners.

In Pilot Project 15 “Role Playing in the Consulting Room” [*JBI Utrecht, NL*] the target group consisted of physicians, partly or wholly educated in a foreign (non-western) country. The participants learned about the cultural aspects and the specific Dutch language used in the consulting room.

The main objective of Pilot Project 16 “Developing Presentation Skills in English for Specific Purposes (ESP)” [*Technical University Sofia, Plovdiv Branch, Bulgaria*] was to develop an essential, topic-related English vocabulary. The target group was somewhat different from the other projects, as it consisted of native Bulgarian university students. The project aim of preparing students for more international contacts with EU-countries was very much in line with one of the main objectives of the Bologna Declaration, i.e. to increase the mobility of students across the European Higher Education Area.

4.4 Language- and Study Skills-Oriented Projects

A small number of projects dealt with the development and enhancement of linguistic and learning competences in study-related contexts. They were aware of the fact that certain aspects of academic proficiency – learner autonomy, oral presentation techniques, academic writing skills, note-taking, to name just a few – are often underestimated or not perceived at all as essential entry competences by students coming from different cultural contexts.

Pilot project 1 “Speech Communication” [*Studienkolleg Saarbrücken, DE*] was an intensive training course in one-way oral communication. The participants (language levels B1-

C1)¹² were systematically trained in how to make well-considered, structured oral contributions in academic or professional settings, alone or in teams. Starting with exercises in free speech, they moved to speeches based on keynote concepts, and finally arrived at longer presentations using media. All speeches and presentations were videotaped, analysed, and discussed in plenary sessions (speaker, presentation team, peer group, and teacher). It was interesting to see that analysing the speeches of other people and to give adequate feedback was not a problem for participants from more orally-oriented cultures, whereas for others there was a need for systematic introduction in how to handle feedback and assessment procedures.

By focusing on one single aspect of second language acquisition, pilot project 2 “Grammar Consciousness-Raising (CR) Tasks” [*Vorstudienlehrgang Graz*, AT; in cooperation with *Technical University Sofia-Plovdiv*, BG] examined the effects of selected grammar tasks on acquiring the knowledge of how to differentiate between the definite and the indefinite articles in German with learners whose mother tongue does not have such a system (e.g. Slavic, Albanian, Turkish, Arabic, Chinese). It was assumed that this learning difficulty was not sufficiently addressed in currently available teaching materials, a fact that puts learners of the above target group at a disadvantage, especially as concerns their writing skill in academic contexts. To make up for these shortcomings, two grammar consciousness-raising tasks (CR task; is a communicative task with a grammar problem to be solved interactively in groups as the task content) were employed in an experimental group of low-level learners. Final test scores showed that for about 50 % of the learners in the experimental group the instruction through CR tasks lead to a noticeable improvement in the use of the German articles and yielded results that were significantly higher than those of the two

¹² The levels are described in the “Common European Framework of Reference for Languages”, published on the website of the Council of Europe:
www.coe.int/T/E/Cultural_Co-operation/education/Languages/Language_Policy/

control groups when related to the learners' overall proficiency.

The overall aim of Pilot Project 8 "Improving Study Skills by Social Learning in Class" [*Vorstudienlehrgang Wien, AT*] was to develop study skills by training competences in the following three different areas:

- *Self-competence*, i.e. the ability of students to orientate, organise, and motivate themselves (including readiness for reflection on preferred study activities and personal behaviour patterns);
- *Social competence*, i.e. the ability to establish and maintain contacts, to cooperate, and to be sensitive towards needs and feelings of others;
- *Cognitive competence*, i.e. the ability to apply adequate learning strategies, to evaluate results in relation to learning objectives.

At the end, the gains in competence were investigated and analysed by means of questionnaires.

Irrespective of the fact that Pilot Project 13 "Evaluation of VGU by Former Students Presently Studying at one of the Graz Universities" [*Vorstudienlehrgang Graz, AT*] cannot be classified into any of the headings above, this retrospect needs analysis of CHAGAL students came up with some interesting results. Analysing data derived from the use of a teacher-developed questionnaire in face-to-face interviews with former students at the University Preparation Programme of the Graz Universities, the piloting team established a number of "deficiencies" the students experienced during their course of studies. The most striking of these shortcomings were: listening comprehension (especially as not all lecturers use Standard German); subject-related terminology; multi-tasking during lectures (listening, analysing, and note-taking); writing reports and seminar papers in German; dealing with multiple-choice formats in tests; social problems like getting in touch with Austrian students or being ignored by fellow students and even lecturers. The study recommends that

these aspects should receive special attention in future revisions of the course curricula.

4.5 The Value of the Pilot Projects for the Curriculum Guidelines

The pilot projects performed a two-fold function for the curriculum guidelines:

- In the first place, they served as a “practice field” for the implementation of initially formulated CHAGAL principles.
- By analysing and evaluating these “samples of good practice”, new aspects and insights for the final conceptualisation of the CHAGAL Curriculum Guidelines could be gained.

In summary, one can say that the pilot projects have addressed and at the same time fostered the major CHAGAL concepts by focusing on the following aspects of teaching and learning:

The Promotion of the Target Group’s Integration

A considerable number of projects aimed at helping students to integrate more quickly and with ease into the target society, thus trying to reduce “culture-shock” symptoms.

The Raising of Awareness

Awareness-raising as a cognitive concept is a crucial element of a student-centred approach which can be conceived from the perspective of *the teaching-learning relationship*. Then it becomes obvious that there is no direct or automatic relation between teaching and learning. Learning which remains “on the surface” (i.e. the mere reproduction of knowledge) is unlikely to lead to successful performance in academic settings (the “surface” vs. “deep” learning dichotomy).

In this context a big challenge to every institution is the question of how to accredit students’ achievements. The

CHAGAL approach favours a flexible, “learner-friendly” system that accounts for the nature of adult learning styles and preferences and also accredits the production of partial results.

Awareness-raising can also be seen from the perspective of *self-regulated (autonomous) learning/student’s self-reflection*. This meta-cognition, i.e. the ability to think about one’s own learning process and the development of skills which can be applied in different settings is of great importance. In a large number of projects the enhancement of study skills in a more restricted sense (e.g. note-taking, using media and the Internet, presentation techniques, receiving and giving feedback) was a major concern. In a broader sense, it is also important that students are able to reflect on their whole “learner biography”, comprising their cultural and educational background, their individual learning styles and strategies, their techniques and world knowledge.

Finally, awareness-raising touches upon the *language training vs. discipline training dilemma*. Awareness as such has to be developed according to the different learning demands posed by learning a second language as compared to the acquisition of knowledge in a natural science discipline.

A number of pilot projects showed ways in which these different learning areas could be fruitfully combined. Group work and group presentations especially foster social learning and the development of soft/personal skills; so does time management. Students learn how to cooperate and accept different opinions which seems to be a fundamental prerequisite especially for multicultural groups. Besides, cooperative learning can enhance the learning of other students who are not at the same level of “understanding”.

The Use of Questionnaires

One major concern of CHAGAL is to find out about students’ objective and subjective needs. As a tool for information retrieval questionnaires are very useful. Questionnaires are very useful, since they enable the students

- To express their needs, feelings, and expectations in an anonymous way;
- To reflect on and evaluate their learning process and performance;
- To give guided feedback to teachers and fellow-students.

At the same time, feedback from questionnaires can provide a basis for teachers on which to improve their teaching concepts and methods.

Process- and Product-Oriented Approach

While it is clear that learning as a whole is best conceived as a process, some projects deliberately aimed at having a “product” (e.g. a booklet) as a final result. This accounts for the need of some learners to have some “tangible” outcome of their learning effort as proof of their achievements.

4.6 Table of Pilot Projects (by thematic groups)

Social/Cultural Learning-Oriented Projects

PP 3: “Introducing German Cultural Studies through Songs”

PP 4: “Applied Cultural Studies – Outdoor Activities, Study Trips and Excursions in Vienna”

PP 5: “Cultural Awareness Training (and Language Teaching)”

PP 6: “Some Dos and Don’ts in Multicultural Settings: A Good Guide to Bad Manners”

PP 7: “Learner’s Biography”

Content-Oriented Projects

PP 9: “Second Language Oral Presentation for Content Classes”

PP 10: “Implementation of a Learner-Centred Curriculum in Subjects Other than German as a Foreign Language Needs Analysis”

- PP 11: "Integration of English and Mathematics"
- PP 12: "Chemistry-Practical Training: The Measure Analysis"
- PP 14: "Elements of Self-Regulated Learning"
- PP 15: "Role Playing in the Consulting Room"
- PP 16: "Developing Presentation Skills in English for Specific Purposes (ESP)"

Language- and Study-Skills-Oriented Projects

- PP 1: "Speech Communication"
- PP 2: "Grammar Consciousness-Raising Tasks"
- PP 8: "Improving Study Skills by Social Learning in Class"
- PP 13: "Evaluation of VGU by Former Students Presently Studying at one of the Graz Universities"

Information on the pilot project partners is given in Appendix B, while the pilot project instructors are listed in Appendix C. Further information on the individual projects is available under <http://www.vwu.at/chagal/>; please click: "piloting".

PART II: TWELVE CURRICULUM GUIDELINES

TWELVE CURRICULUM GUIDELINES

The following twelve Curriculum Guidelines should help preparatory institutions to provide a conducive learning environment that gives CHAGAL students the opportunity to thrive and that eases their integration into university life to become as smooth and successful as possible.

- ❑ The first guideline highlights the positive contributions of CHAGAL students to society and university life.
- ❑ The second, third, and fourth concentrate on the process of defining goals and objectives for course curricula, and the fifth points out the necessity to negotiate these goals and objectives with the university. Guidelines two to five, therefore, deal with developing course curricula on a rather general and somewhat abstract level.
- ❑ Guidelines six to nine describe the process of implementing the curriculum by means of a student-centred approach. They concentrate on the individual student and his/her learning process.
- ❑ Guidelines ten to twelve focus on the implications guidelines one to nine will have for the preparatory institution and its staff.

First Guideline

Embrace diversity, acknowledge the positive contributions of international students and convey the message appropriately.

CHAGAL students make a positive contribution to both university life and society in general. This is acknowledged by the mere fact that preparatory courses are set up for them. But that in itself is not enough. Preparatory institutions should actively disseminate this information widely.

Motivation:

There are many and valid reasons for supporting CHAGAL students seeking entry into higher education in European countries. The Bologna Process defines diversity as an important characteristic of European universities. Diversity is also defined by the number of international students at university among whom CHAGAL students are an important group. European societies can benefit from the contributions of CHAGAL students in economic, political, and cultural terms. In a global context there is a growing responsibility of more developed countries towards less developed countries. By supporting CHAGAL students in taking part in higher education this responsibility can be taken on by the host countries.

References:

Prague Communiqué¹³, Introduction (Project Background and Context, Project Aims), Pilot Project 5.

Proposed actions:

- Preparatory institutions should have a specific policy to acknowledge CHAGAL students in their institutional profile.
- Preparatory institutions should organise special events (e.g. exhibitions, reading sessions, multicultural events involving former CHAGAL students) to showcase the positive contributions of these students.
- Preparatory institutions should promote intensive exchanges of ideas about the positive contributions of these students among representatives of the preparatory institution and its environment.

¹³ The higher education ministers from 32 European countries met in Prague on May 19, 2001 and launched the "Bologna Process" of creating a "European Higher Education Area" by 2010. For further information see:
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/educ/bologna/>

- Lobby for these students at the university and other institutions using publicity materials and references in speeches, etc.
- Universities admission policies should be transparent.

Second Guideline

Define the content and goals of the curriculum by establishing the students' needs.

Curricula are sometimes developed by merely looking at the structure and content of certain subjects (= "subject-oriented curricula"), rather than considering the learning needs of CHAGAL students at university level (= "student-centred curriculum"). To properly prepare students to meet the requirements and challenges at university, there should be a direct relationship between content and goals of the curriculum and the students' needs.

Motivation:

A student-centred approach helps CHAGAL students since they very often have specific needs which are not considered when curricula are only subject-oriented.

References:

Chapter 2: Student Situation Analysis, Chapter 3: Didactic Principles, Pilot Projects 1, 5, 9, 11, 12, 13, 15, and 16.

Proposed actions:

- Efforts should be made to find out about objective student needs by
 - Consulting CHAGAL students through the use of questionnaires and discussion groups for example;
 - Referring to studies that deal with the particular needs of the target group and implementing them if necessary;
 - Initiating research in this area.

- Objective student needs should be reflected on and should become part of the curriculum.
- There should be a common understanding of the concept of “key-competences” of preparatory institutions and universities or institutions of higher education.

Third Guideline

Develop a curriculum with clearly defined key areas of competences but be aware of the competences students already possess.

Sometimes curricula are developed by looking mainly at the subject matter rather than by defining relevant competences and skills that students should have or should have developed before entering university. In order to define the goals and objectives of preparatory courses, there should be a concise notion of the competences and skills students should bring with them or should have developed when entering university. At the same time, preparatory institutions should be aware that CHAGAL students might have competences that are not yet considered to be requirements for university studies but might be of value in the future.

Motivation:

In the long run, international students will benefit if courses help to mediate and develop key competences. Teaching becomes more efficient as it, apart from presenting and testing content, aims at changing attitudes, strategies, and skills and at developing “procedural knowledge” (knowledge how to do something; see Chapter 3.3: Competences as Learning Objectives). The existing concept of “key competences” could be challenged by competences CHAGAL students bring with them.

References:

Chapter 3: Didactic Principles, Pilot Projects 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 15, and 16.

Proposed actions:

- Make an effort to define relevant competences for the student target group.
- Try to support your definition by means of scientific findings and theories.
- Initiate studies about students' needs.
- Find out about skills and competences that are required for different university studies.
- Try to apply scientific concepts about students' competences to your teaching practice.

Fourth Guideline

Identify different ways and methods to help students develop and achieve the relevant competences.

Even if there is a precise notion about key competences, at times there are only vague ideas about ways and methods that are available to achieve the defined goals. Different strategies should be identified and chosen to help students develop certain competences and skills. There is always more than one way to achieve a goal.

Motivation:

Since one of the main aims of preparatory courses is to develop relevant competences and skills, there has to be an idea about how this can be done. Furthermore, there should be a collection of adequate activities and one should know the time needed to mediate and develop key competences. As there are always several different ways that lead to the same goal, different approaches should be applied. Students' individual learning habits should be considered.

References:

Chapter 3: Didactic Principles, Pilot Projects 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8 and 16.

Proposed actions:

- Identify different teaching and learning methods and approaches.
- Provide necessary resources and time for developing skills.
- Consider scientific findings.
- Consider motivational aspects.
- Initiate action research projects.

Fifth Guideline

Negotiate with the university to formulate a suitable curriculum with achievable goals to maximise student potential.

In order to maximise the academic potential and enhance the performance of CHAGAL students it is important that universities support the work of the preparatory institutions. Curricula of preparatory institutions should be discussed and negotiated with university representatives in order to set realistic and meaningful goals which enable students to succeed in their further studies.

Motivation:

Universities as institutions have an obligation to understand the difficulties international students face when starting their studies and should give adequate support. If there are limited resources at the preparatory institutions, sometimes a compromise has to be found between what universities want students to bring with them and what they can expect. The teaching methodology at university level might also have to be reflected upon and to be adapted.

Awareness has to be developed concerning the different learning demands posed by learning a second language, as

compared to the acquisition of knowledge in a natural science discipline, for example.

References:

Chapter 2: Student Situation Analysis, Pilot Project 13.

Proposed actions:

- Regular meetings with university representatives teaching different subjects.
- Presentation/negotiation of course curricula to/with university representatives.
- Suggestions on how university courses could be modified to become more CHAGAL-student-friendly without giving up the course goals and objectives.
- Feedback about CHAGAL students' performance by university representatives.

Sixth Guideline

Provide full institutional support for teachers in the implementation of a student-centred curriculum.

Even if curricula are based on an analysis of the students' objective needs, individual CHAGAL students might have difficulties in relating to the teaching and learning process in a positive way. Furthermore, working with a student-centred curriculum has certain implications for the organisation of the preparatory institution. Consequently, the preparatory institutions should set up the necessary organisational structures and supply appropriate facilities.

Motivation:

In order to support CHAGAL students it is necessary to individualise teaching, which can best be done by means of a student-centred approach. Individualised teaching is even more vital for CHAGAL students if they take part in courses that are also attended by students who do not belong to the CHAGAL group. A student-centred approach which

accompanies the individual learning process seems to be an adequate way to help CHAGAL students to develop self-confidence crucial for successful studies at university. However, teachers will not be successful in the process of implementing a student-centred approach, unless the management and the non-teaching staff share their notion of this approach and provide them with organisational support.

References:

Chapter 3: Didactic Principles, Pilot Project 14.

Proposed actions:

- Develop a mission statement (if there is none).
- Provide close cooperation between teachers and management.
- Provide research and development time for the teachers.
- Set up a flexible course structure.
- Make it possible to implement a student-centred approach by
 - Finding out about educational systems, curricula and teaching methods in the students' countries of origin;
 - Communicating with students to find out about their background and needs.

Seventh Guideline

Implement the curriculum on the basis of individual student's needs via regular analysis, taking into consideration the socio-cultural background, age, and gender aspects.

CHAGAL students' backgrounds differ considerably and have an influence throughout the students' learning process. The setting up and implementation of course curricula should be based on a thorough analysis of the individual student's background and needs and take into account that the needs

of female and male students might differ. The analysis should be repeated during a course as students' individual needs may change over time.

Motivation:

An objective needs analysis can provide a framework for defining possible aims and goals in the courses. Students at preparatory courses are diverse in terms of ethnicity, age, prior experience of gender role models and the socio-economic as well as cultural and educational backgrounds. Consequently, they have very different subjective needs. It is necessary, therefore, to collect data about those needs and set goals and objectives which are based on these data. As competences and needs change, these data should be collected during the whole course. By doing so teaching and learning will become more productive.

Teachers should use the appropriate apparatus to detect and gauge the students' subjective needs. They should be aware of the fact that the student-centred approach and methods of direct needs analysis (questionnaires) in itself might, as such, be unusual for CHAGAL students, and they should, therefore, subject themselves to intercultural learning.

References:

Chapter 3: Didactic Principles, Pilot Projects 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 14, and 16.

Proposed actions:

- There should be methods of finding out about the students' backgrounds in regard to
 - General cognitive competence, Pilot Project 10;
 - Social competence, Pilot Project 8;
 - Intercultural competence, Pilot Project 5;
 - Linguistic competence, Pilot Project 14;
 - Strategic competence - learning strategies, learning styles, Pilot Project 2;
 - Education;

- Family;
- Financial situation.
- Organisational structures should react to these findings.
- Grouping should react to the findings.
- Course curricula should react to the findings.
- Teachers should have adequate instruments to detect the students' subjective needs (Pilot Projects 1, 2, 14, and 16).

Eighth Guideline

Establish the course goals, objectives, and delivery methods with the students.

The goals and objectives of a course are sometimes not clear enough for the students, leading them to believe that the content of a course and/or particular activities are not relevant for them. Consequently, they will not become engaged. It is, therefore, important to encourage reciprocity, for example, by demonstrating the direct links between the curriculum and the future academic goals.

Motivation:

In a learner-centred curriculum students are consulted on what they want to learn and how they want to go about learning (needs analysis). They are actively involved in setting, monitoring, and modifying the goals and objectives of the programmes being designed for them. Particularly, adult students want to know why they should get involved in certain activities. It is important to maintain motivation, since it fosters autonomous learning. A “negotiated curriculum” might need some modifications of goals and methods during a course.

References:

Chapter 3: Didactic Principles, Pilot Projects 9, 10, 11, and 14.

Proposed actions:

- Make goals clear by means of leaflets, folders, or homepage, and invite senior students as resource persons.
- There should be regular course evaluations.
- Criteria for course evaluations should be negotiated with students.
- Give reasons for activities you suggest in a course.
- There should be students' representatives who can articulate problems students have with the curriculum.

Ninth Guideline***Put in place a mechanism for monitoring procedures through student feedback and assessment.***

It is important that feedback on the courses not only concentrates on the final learning outcomes but also on the whole learning process. Thus, learning could become more productive and efficient. There should be relevant feedback through assessment procedures that enable students to reflect on their individual learning process. Assessment procedures should take into account the nature of adult/cultural learning styles and preferences, and also accredit, for instance, the production of partial results.

Motivation:

Clear and easy to understand assessment procedures encourage autonomous learning, provide students with an opportunity to try out different strategies and approaches, increase their self-confidence, help to develop skills and competences, and sustain motivation.

References:

Chapter 3: Didactic Principles, Pilot Projects 2, 3, 8, 10, and 14.

Proposed actions:

- There should be individual counselling.
- Activities should enable teachers to mediate the learning process.
- Students should have the opportunity to try out different learning strategies and to discover their favourite learning strategies in various situations.
- Learning outcomes should be related to the learning process.
- There should be self-evaluation.
- Teachers should have adequate instruments to assess and evaluate the learning process.
- As a tool for information retrieval questionnaires are very useful. Questionnaires enable the students both to be critical on their performance and to articulate their own achievements. At the same time, questionnaires can provide a basis for teachers on which they can improve their teaching concepts.

Tenth Guideline

Provide appropriate staff development training for teachers to help them implement the student-centred curriculum.

Teachers are much more than mere presenters and testers of the contents of curricula developed by other people. They can add value to the quality of a student-centred curriculum, and many of them would happily do so, given the right encouragement and support from their institutions. The role of the teachers has to be re-examined in the light of the student-centred approach. Teachers should be trained for the task to set up and implement a student-centred curriculum and should be supported by their institutions according to their role as the main agents of curriculum development.

Motivation:

In a student-centred curriculum, the teacher is the main agent of curriculum development. Teachers carry out the individual needs analysis, set the goals, choose the activities and evaluate the learning process. To help them, teachers need to be trained in the right skills and given the right instruments to make assessments. Last but not least, they also need strong institutional support for these tasks.

References:

Chapter 3: Didactic Principles (3.4 How to Develop and Implement Student-Centred Course Curricula), all projects show teachers in the role of curriculum developers.

Proposed actions:

- To plan, implement and evaluate a student-centred curriculum teachers should
 - Be aware of the different backgrounds of their students;
 - Know adequate tasks and activities;
 - Have adequate teaching skills.
- There should be adequate feedback for teachers regarding their skills in developing a student-centred curriculum.
- Peer observation and dissemination of good practice examples among teachers should be encouraged to maximise the acquisition of appropriate teaching strategies.

Eleventh Guideline

Provide adequate support in terms of facilities, staff, and financial resources for the effective implementation of the student-centred approach at preparatory institutions.

Well-managed and responsive organisational structures as well as sufficient resources are prerequisites for implementing a student-centred approach.

Motivation:

Apart from the methodological issues the implementation of a student-centred curriculum requires a number of resources. They can range from running a sufficient number of courses to tutoring in small groups, from having a service-oriented management to providing generous consulting hours for teachers, and providing self-study-centres.

References:

Amount of work for teachers who did a Pilot Project.

Proposed actions:

- Provide adequate buildings, rooms, and equipment.
- Make the status of the preparatory institution a strong one: legally accepted, well established and reputable.
- Analyse the organisational needs and choose priorities.
- Provide systems development according to the needs.
- Provide quality management.
- Cooperate with other preparatory institutions – do further networking (exchange of experience on an institutionalised level).
- Employ qualified staff.
- Employ staff members with migration background.
- Provide good contracts and working conditions for the staff.
- Provide regular teacher training and team development.

- Develop academic expertise of staff / update expertise in cooperation with specific university departments (using scientific concepts).

Twelfth Guideline

Involve other organisations in the creation of a welcoming and supportive environment conducive for learning for the benefit of all students.

CHAGAL students flourish in a stable and conducive environment where they can develop their full potential and give their contribution. There should be a network to help CHAGAL students to integrate smoothly and easily into the society of the host country. Social integration is important as it will make students feel that they “belong” to the host society and are accepted by the people. In creating a supportive learning environment the interests of both the female and male students must be taken into consideration.

Motivation:

The social situation of students affects their self-confidence and performance. Therefore, effective learning communities at the preparatory institutions are key factors for successful learning. Networking and cooperating with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), student organisations, representatives of local and legislative authorities could help to provide the necessary non-academic support for students.

References:

Chapter 1: Current Situation, Chapter 2: Student Situation Analysis, Chapter 3: Didactic Principles.

Proposed actions:

- Provide an initial orientation period to explore cultural issues and academic expectations.
- Establish a robust teaching/learning relationship for the duration of the course.

- Provide availability of teachers (office hours for students, student advisors).
- Encourage peer support; an appropriate gender balance and ethnic balance of peer tutors would be beneficial.
- Provide a system of guidance, monitoring/assistance and counselling – e.g. peer mentors (student coaches), personal tutors, student advisors - supply a sufficient number of female tutors, mentors etc.
- Make ombudspersons accessible to hear grievances.
- Be aware of disadvantaged groups' possible financial limitations when setting tuition fees.
- Initiate and assist empowerment strategies such as learning communities and female students' networks.
- Invite non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and local students organisations to cooperate with respect to the issues mentioned above.
- Initiate events that provide opportunities for students to get in contact with fellow students and people from the host country.

APPENDIX A: Good Practice Examples Collected by NGOs

On Language Competences

The following strategies are used to help students acquire language and writing competences.

Excursion *Information Weeks on Development Politics* – AAI/AT¹⁴

This excursion, which takes place once a year, is held in English. It gives non-English speakers the opportunity to brush up their English and enables those who are not yet fluent in German to take part in activities laid on for students.

Coaching on *Writing Practice* – AAI/AT

In response to requests from students attending preparatory courses for entry into universities, extra lessons and writing courses are organised for speakers of languages that do not use the Latin letters.

Seminar *Presentation in a Foreign Language* – AAI/AT

The use of non-verbal tools (pictures, graphics) is encouraged in order to help

- Prepare texts concisely;
- Avoid long and complicated sentences;
- Acquire methods to describe unknown words.

Project *Write On* – Napier University, Scotland

In this 12-week evening course for adults to improve writing and literacy skills (in their native language) concrete projects are included for

- Meeting guest speakers such as published writers or local news editors;
- Getting the opportunity to publish their own articles in the community newspaper.

¹⁴ For the abbreviations used here see: Appendix B and Appendix C.

On Intercultural Learning

The following are some basic principles concerning educational approaches in intercultural learning.

- Confidence and Respect

These are the cornerstone of intercultural learning which creates the openness that is necessary for mutual understanding and sharing.

- Experiencing Identity

The departure point of intercultural learning is one's own culture, which means one's own background and experience.

- Constructed Realities

Nothing is absolute. There are many ways to read and discern reality. The thesis that everyone constructs their own worlds or that every reality is its own construction, is one main factor in intercultural learning processes.

- In Dialogue with the Other

Intercultural learning places "the other" at the heart of understanding. It starts through dialogue, but yet is a step further. Our different beings complement each other. In this understanding, the other becomes indispensable for a new discovery of the self.

- Questions and Change

The experience of intercultural learning is one of constant change (as the world is) and, above all, process-oriented. Discussing culture, the tension between stagnation and change, the longing for security and balance appear constantly.

- Comprehensive Involvement

Intercultural learning is an experience which involves all senses and levels of learning such as knowledge, emotions, and behaviour in an intensive way.

- The Potential for Conflict

From the variety of perceptions of different cultural behaviour, of time, space, social and personal relations it becomes

evident that conflict is at the heart of intercultural learning and needs to be explored, expressed, and resolved.

On Learning Skills

The World University Service (WUS) and the Afro-Asian Institute (AAI) offer similar seminars for international students to help them deal with difficult situations related to their studies. They assist them to improve their study skills and, most significantly, to distinguish important from less important issues, focusing on the following four areas:

Information and Knowledge Management

- How to deal with the masses of information;
- How to find relevant information (e.g. in the Internet, in books, magazines, CD-ROMs);
- How to make excerpts and summarise texts.

Presentation-Techniques

- Introduction to techniques with different media;
- Planning the timing of a presentation;
- Feedback on individual presentations.

Effective Learning and Preparing for Examinations

- Information about lectures and seminars;
- Enrolment/entrance-requirements;
- Materials: hand-outs, scripts, material in library etc.;
- Examination modes;
- Homework;
- Learning groups/tutors/contact hours;
- Compulsory participation in lessons or work groups.

Examinations

- What are the modes of the examinations?
- Collection of material;
- Making a time schedule;
- How to study effectively;
- How to deal with the fear of examinations;
- Reflection after the examination.

Project *WITS (Women into Science)* – Huddersfield University, England

Recommendations for teaching learning skills:

- Encourage students to share their fears about the curriculum and develop strategies to overcome them, e.g. by working together, meeting other women students, women scientists, and engineers;
- Enable the students to become independent learners able to access information from a range of sources;
- Encourage cooperative working and use of support networks. Stress this is not “cheating”;
- Encourage an active rather than passive approach to their process of learning;
- Inform students how the assessment system works;
- Encourage them to see assessment as a form of feedback on how to improve performance rather than a final judgement;
- Provide feedback on strengths, weaknesses, and on how to improve each assessed piece of work;
- Provide opportunities to develop skills and become familiar with the format of different types of assessment, e.g. written reports, oral presentations, etc. before the assessment point;
- Award additional credit for taking examinations but do not make them vitals for successful complementation;
- Provide detailed feedback on exam performances and opportunity to see the examination scripts;
- Introduce self- and peer assessment;
- Encourage students to monitor their development and problem solving by keeping a learning diary;
- Provide opportunities for feeling proud of newly acquired accomplishments, e.g. by holding an annual exhibition of work, awards-day ceremony.

Subject Competences

For acquiring and developing subject competences the *WITS* Project is an outstanding example.

The aim of the project is to prepare unqualified and unemployed women for university study in science and technology subjects. Introductory modules in science, technology, maths, computing, and study skills are provided, which assume no prior qualifications, skills, or knowledge. It has demonstrated that success factors are related to student confidence. Below are recommended strategies:

- Avoid moving on too fast until students feel competent;
- Avoid overloading the curriculum to allow time for reflection and discussion;
- Topics should be chosen in a way in which they are seen to be relevant, contemporary, and interesting for the group;
- Bring diversion and variety into the curriculum – it is also necessary to integrate field trips, visits to factories, and guest speakers into the curriculum;
- Draw the achievements of women scientists and technologists to their attention to serve as role models.

It is important to ensure that students can see the practical results of their new skills and efforts, e.g. by producing a curriculum vitae with the help of their information technologies (IT) skills, calculate the costs for a DIY (do-it-yourself) project at home.

Last but not least, opportunities should be provided for the students to show off their new skills to employers, friends, and family, e.g. mounting an annual exhibition of work.

Personal Development

Self-Empowerment

Self-empowerment in its simplest form means taking charge of your own life. The concept of being the expert about your own life is something that many people have difficulty adjusting to initially.

Self-empowerment also means that you become an active partner in determining what is best for you, what course of action you wish to pursue regarding your plans for the future. To encourage ethnic minority students to act self-empowered means that trainers must accept them as equals. They must respect the students' attitudes, views, or opinions (including sometimes critical ones) and not feel offended if not all of their suggestions are accepted.

Self-Confidence

One major point of being able to act empowered is to know one's abilities and to trust them. This requires self-confidence. Strengthening one's self confidence is one of the aims of the following projects:

Project *REINS* – DEMA/ES

This occupational training for unemployed workers in the field of Internet and Telework also deals with the personal situation of the course participants.

Cooperative games are used to raise their awareness and motivate and encourage them to deal positively with their personal circumstances. The upsurge in motivation and the adoption of a positive attitude will help increase their self-esteem and their chances for active re-integration into the labour market.

Project *TRENCA* – DEMA/ES

The target group in this project are young people from different quarters of Barcelona who show similar characteristics: low level of self-esteem and motivation, weak social skills, little capacity in conflict solving, resistance to change acquired attitudes. The project aim is to provide them with an introduction to basic techniques in finding a job. But it also tackles other aspects in their behavioural patterns to help raise self-esteem and create self-contentment. They are encouraged to

- Form affective relationships;
- Recognise and value their own achievements;
- Develop the capacity to complete a project;
- Set and realise goals;
- Fulfil obligations and resolve conflicts;
- Make plans for the future.

Project *WITS* – Huddersfield University, England

Giving the female students renewed confidence in their abilities is seen as the key to success. In practice, the process of instilling confidence-building into the programme entails two stages:

First, identify with the students why they are lacking in confidence and

Second, address these issues as proactively and creatively as we/you can.

The major point is to make the approach consistent throughout all aspects of the course. This is to ensure that an increased confidence in one area is not dashed by another.

Project: *Construction of a Bread Factory* – ECHOSOC/RO

A woman in the project, being trained as a baker and now working in the new bakery that was built as one part of the project, reports that school has given her that “sense” for good business, raised not only her self-esteem but also her esteem towards the local community.

How to reach the target group:

Experiences have shown that underprivileged and under-represented groups tend not to actively seek help or do not know where to find support. Hence, various strategies have been developed to reach them:

- WUS has offices in different countries of the world where students intending to study in Germany can get information about subjects, study visa, etc.
- AAI has published a booklet on all relevant issues about studying in Austria (and especially in Graz)

which can also be found in the Internet in several languages.

- WUS-Germany provides the programmes of all seminars of the last years on its homepage. Additionally, reports of all seminars can be found there.
- The Austrian organisations which run programmes for international students have a joint publication, the booklet *Treffpunkt Bildung*. It is published once a year and describes all the activities offered. Some of them are open to all scholars of the “Eine-Welt” scholarship programme in Austria, but some are restricted to local students only. Scholars are given the booklet when they sign their scholarship contract; others are informed via e-mail about each event throughout the year.
- In the WITS-Project the recruitment and selection stage is carefully planned as most applicants to WITS are frightened by the thought of university and university study. They report enormous feelings of anxiety at the prospect of walking onto the campus and entering their first class.

Methods used by WITS:

- Produce publicity material stressing that no prior qualifications are required and addressing a range of anxieties that prospective students hold.
- Place publicity materials where women are likely to come across it in their daily life, e.g. doctors’ surgeries, job centres, and nurseries.
- Invite all applicants to an informal open day.
- Ensure that the open day event gives students the opportunity to meet staff, to ask any questions they wish, and to become familiar with the university campus.
- Provide the opportunity for applicants to meet and talk privately with current students. This is particularly

helpful in providing positive role models whom the applicants can relate to.

- Ensure that selection interviews are non-confrontational and friendly. Never combine them with testing, not even for diagnostic purposes.
- Reassure them that hours of attendance and term dates are designed to accommodate women with child-care responsibilities.

The ECHOSOC project “Stimulating the employment of Roma public servants by local public administrations and public services” is promoting and reaching its target group through

- Local and national mass-media: local newspapers (1-2 dailies in each town), national distribution newspapers, local TV channels;
- Informal contacts at the level of local authorities: County Councils, Mayor’s Offices, Labour Departments, School Inspectorates;
- Posters in public places of interest for the project: Labour Departments, high schools and vocational schools, universities, etc.

Evaluation of Activities

The evaluation of activities has become a necessity for the improvement of the students’ own work. It is important for students to feel that their needs are recognised by staff and peers and that support is available if required. Some good examples for the evaluation of student needs include the following recommendations:

- Students should be asked to evaluate each seminar.
- A summary of this evaluation should be given in the report of the seminars published on the homepage.
- A weekly review session for all students should be held with the course coordinator.

- Students should chair these meetings and should set the agenda; thus, providing an opportunity to address any matters of concern, they can collectively share problems and highlight ways forward.
- Aims and methods used on the programme can be explained and come to a joint agreement of procedures and protocols.
- Students make evaluations of all aspects of the programme and suggest improvements. Thus, they are encouraged to have an active and important role in the smooth running and overall directions of the programme.

Further Positive Outcomes

The “Ripple” effect: Students become multipliers

As seen in the Project *Write On* the carrying-out of a concrete project during the course improved the participants’ self-confidence and engendered a greater potential for participation in ongoing learning and self-development. It resulted in the following further activities:

- Students formed independent community writing groups.
- A number of students were keen on becoming volunteers at the local newspaper.
- At the moment a follow-up project is being planned: Publishing the work of members of the groups and using this as a vehicle for raising funds to support other projects.
- This project was also successful among male participants who were found to be particularly difficult to motivate.
- The dissemination in the local community of the creative work done by the group will encourage further participation.

One result of project *WITS* is that attitudes to women in science and technology are being changed by the students. 240 confident women, the majority still working and living locally, make a significant impact on the university, employers, and the local community.

Project *Construction of a Bread Factory* has been replicated. When it has been recognised that one project was successful other local firms proposed to start new projects.

Certification of Courses

Many of the projects described (e.g. *Write On* or “New qualifications for young Roma”) seek to develop a curriculum and a system of credit levels so that the students can get a certificate which is recognised by institutions of formal education. Thus, a new progression route into further and higher education might be established.

APPENDIX B: The CHAGAL Project Partners

Subgroup A: Course-Running Institutions

AG - Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Direktorinnen und Direktoren der Studienkollegs für ausländische Studierende an den Universitäten und ihnen gleichgestellten Hochschulen in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland

AG – Association of the Heads of Preparatory Institutions at Universities

Studienkolleg der Johannes Gutenberg-Universität in Mainz

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SHE - Saxion Hogeschool Enschede, Academie Mens en Maatschappij SHE – Department of Social Studies, Preparatory Courses

Postbus 70.000, M.H. Tromplaan 28, NL-7500 KB Enschede, The Netherlands

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**VASVU - Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Voorbereidend Jaar
Anderstalige Studenten Vrije Universiteit
VASVU – Free University of Amsterdam – Preparatory Year for
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De Boelelaan 1105, NL-1081 HV Amsterdam, The Netherlands

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**VGU – Vorstudienlehrgang der Grazer Universitäten / University
Preparation Programme of the Graz Universities**

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**VWU – Vorstudienlehrgang der Wiener Universitäten /
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Subgroup B: Universities

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**Universität Wien – Institut für Germanistik, Lehrstuhl für
Deutsch als Fremdsprache / University of Vienna – Institute for
German Studies**
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**Univerzita Konštantína Filozofa v Nitre / Constantine the
Philosopher University of Nitra, Department for International
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Subgroup C: NGOs, Networks

AAI Graz – Afro-Asiatisches Institut / AAI Graz

Afro-Asian Institute, Study Department

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DEMA – Asociacion Department d'Estudis dels Medis Actuals /

Association Department of Studies of Current Means

Trafalgar, 25 2n 2a, ES - 08010 Barcelona, Spain

Contact : Joan Font Perez demaproj@infonegocio.com

<http://leo.worldonline.es/demaproj>

EAN - European Access Network, University of Westminster

16 Little Titchfield Street, W1W7UW London, UK

Contact: Mee Foong Lee m.foong@westminster.ac.uk

<http://www.ean-edu.org>

ECHOSOC - Fundatia Pentru Recuperare, Integrare Si

Promovare Sociala

ECHOSOC - Foundation for Rehabilitation, Integration and Social Promotion

Strada Elev Stefanescu, nr. 15, bloc 452, apartament 93, sector 2, Bucuresti, Romania

Contact: Corina Cace corsorin@mailbox.ro

<http://www.catalctica.org.ro/echosoc>

WUS - World University Service, Deutsches Komitee e.V.

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APPENDIX C: The CHAGAL Pilot Projects' Instructors

1) Speech Communication

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2) Grammar Consciousness-Raising Tasks

VGU - Vorstudienlehrgang der Grazer Universitäten / University
Preparation Programme of the Graz Universities / AT
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3) Introducing German Cultural Studies through Songs

Studienkolleg der Universität des Saarlandes, Saarbrücken / DE
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4) „Erlebte Landeskunde“ (Applied Cultural Studies) – Outdoor Activities, Study Trips and Excursions in Vienna

VWU - Vorstudienlehrgang der Wiener Universitäten / University
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5) Cultural Awareness Training (and Language Teaching)

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Preparation Programme of the Vienna Universities / AT
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6) Some Dos and Don'ts in Multicultural Settings („Gute Ratschläge für schlechtes Benehmen“: A Good Guide to Bad Manners)

VWU - Vorstudienlehrgang der Wiener Universitäten / University Preparation Programme of the Vienna Universities / AT
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7) Learner's Biography

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8) Improving Study Skills by Social Learning in Class

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9) Second Language Oral Presentations for Content Classes

VASVU - Free University of Amsterdam – Preparatory Year for International Students Amsterdam / NL
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10) Implementation of a Learner-Centred Curriculum in Subjects Other than German as a Foreign Language – Needs Analysis

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11) Integration of English and Mathematics

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12) Chemistry - Practical Training: The Measure Analysis

Studienkolleg bei den Fachhochschulen des Freistaates Bayern in Coburg / DE

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13) Evaluation of VGU by Former Students Presently Studying at one of the Graz Universities

VGU - Vorstudienlehrgang der Grazer Universitäten / University Preparation Programme of the Graz Universities, in cooperation with Afro-Asian Institute, Graz / AT

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14) Elements of Self-Regulated Learning

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15) Role Playing in the Consulting Room

James Boswell Institute, Utrecht / NL

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16) Developing Presentation Skills in English for Specific Purposes (ESP)

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