

PILOT PROJECT No. 4

"Applied cultural studies"

FINAL REPORT and EVALUATION

PROJECT TITLE

"erlebte Landeskunde" (applied cultural studies) -
outdoor-activities, study trips and excursions in Vienna

PILOTING INSTITUTION(S)

Vorstudienlehrgang der Wiener Universitäten VWU (Viennese University
Preparation Programme)

PILOTING INSTRUCTOR(S)

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PROJECT SUMMARY

Please describe briefly the overall goal and objectives of the pilot project.

Conceiving the whole city as a learning area our project focuses on outdoor-activities (applied cultural studies) as part of the regular curriculum. These mini-projects take place every two weeks within the teaching lessons. The students get the opportunity to extend their communicative, intercultural and social competences as well as to improve on a variety of study skills.

TARGET GROUP

Please indicate age, gender, national profile and number of students in the pilot group and level of their language proficiency according to the European Framework.

< pilot group AV4, level of language proficiency: A1
< 21 students from 11 countries (Turkey 9, China 2, Iran 2, Nigeria 1, Kongo 1, Columbia 1, India 1, Bosnia 1, Albania 1, Bulgaria 1, Poland 1)
< 9 female, 12 male
< age: 18 - 37 years (average: 23,7 years, 9 students are 19 - 21 years old)
< 5 drop-out students, the other 16 students finished the course successfully, passing on to the following levels: 3 students went on to level V, 8 to level F, 4 to level FF, 1 to level WF

PILOT PROJECT RELATION TO CHAGAL PRINCIPLES

Please specify how your project fits into the CHAGAL Curriculum Guidelines.

< helps the students to get orientation in the new country / culture, overcome the initial language barrier and participate in social and daily-life faster ("social inclusion")
< mainly improves the two areas of students' everyday-language competence and problem-solving competence
< strengthens students' learning autonomy and introduces some of the (academic) exit competences such as information management, participating discourse, using learning and working strategies, being socioculturally and interculturally aware, ...

METHODOLOGY

Please give a description of the methodology that you will use to achieve your pilot project objectives. Indicate the tools/instruments that will be developed/used during the pilot project (e.g. visual aids, questionnaires, handouts, teacher-developed materials etc.).

preparation before each excursion, text productions (student-diaries ...), observation sheets by the teachers and evaluation sheets (after each excursion), group discussions, teacher-developed questionnaire on the topic (filled in by our pilot course and 11 German courses of all levels (AV-FF) at the VWU in February 2004)

ACTION PLAN

Please provide a short description of the activities carried out within your pilot (e.g. who was doing what and when).

A survey of all outdoor-activities realized with our pilot group can be found in the appendix.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Please indicate what YOUR idea of the outcomes was BEFORE starting the pilot project (=text of your proposal).

We were expecting answers to the following hypothesis:
(1) Excursions/outdoor-activities are successful if they are prepared well.
(2) A general increase of the learner's learning awareness by showing the learning effect outdoor-activities can achieve.
(3) Outdoor-activities can make the student's use of learning and problem-solving strategies (topics, exercise types, learning partners, sharing of responsibilities, elaboration of time schedules etc.) more transparent by allowing the students a more extended use of their learner-autonomy.
(4) Insights into the nature of factors that attract or distract learners participation in the problem-solving process.
(5) Overall aim: in the long run the institutionalization of similar project types.

ACTUAL OUTCOMES

Please compare the outcomes AFTER the end of the pilot project to the expected outcomes above.

- (1) Good preparation is no guarantee for successful excursions/outdoor-activities. External factors and group-dynamics play an important role, as well as a possible lack of group identity due to excessive fluctuation in attendance/absence.
- (2+3) The learning effect and use of strategies during excursions/outdoor-activities were made transparent.
- (4) Many insights into the attracting and distracting factors were gained.
- (5) At the VWU our project was met with great interest - in many groups excursions are a regular and important part of the curriculum already. The funds for outdoor-activities have been raised, though a higher budget would be desirable.

LIST OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Please list the materials you have developed (e.g. questionnaires, forms, handouts, records, notes, students' feedback etc.). - Please include the documents into the **APPENDIX** .

- < teaching material (handouts etc.)
- < worksheets
- < questionnaires (appendix) and evaluation sheets
- < text productions by students
- < survey (appendix)
- all other materials can be shown onrequest

PILOT PROJECT FINAL EVALUATION

Please answer the guiding questions below as far as possible. Additional comments are highly welcome, though.

(1) The added value of our pilot project and the benefit for the CHAGAL student target group are obvious (e.g. with regard to all competences, such as, on the one hand, self-competence, subject-oriented-competence and social competence, and on the other hand study skills, intercultural- and sociocultural competences, scientific competence as well as language proficiency). Apart from the acquisition of competences and skills, excursions and outdoor-activities contribute to the students' ability to achieve faster and better orientation and quicker integration into Viennese society.

(2) The students of our target group (language proficiency level A1) will now move on to more advanced levels. We think that the project activities will prove to have been a valuable part of the preparation for these higher levels and for university.

To illustrate the findings above we attach a blank questionnaire (for the final students' feedback in the appendix). Conclusions and general findings of questionnaire-data collected in February 2004 within 12 German as a Foreign Language courses at the VWU Vienna are the following:

Positive results:

Excursions are successful, if ...

- students' interests (e.g. music, books, history, technology, culture of the

host country) are taken into consideration

- students get to know something new (e.g. a new place) that is relevant to them and relates with their daily lives in Vienna
- students have fun and amuse themselves
- students experience for themselves / something "with all senses" and learn by listening, tasting, touching, ...
- students are successfully mastering the tasks and have a sense of achievement
- students realize the usefulness of excursions for their language learning (e.g. extension of vocabulary, practising study skills)
- students get new (inter)cultural information about Vienna and Austria
- information is offered in a clear way that is easy for the students to understand and motivates them to listen to the guide
- the guide shows consideration for the fact that the students are no native speakers of German and has communicative strategies for that special target group (e.g. explaining vocabulary) at their disposal
- students have the chance to get to know their fellow students better and to feel part of a (social) group

Excursions can be successful with some students, if ...

- students get the possibility to take an active part during the excursions (e.g. interviews with Austrians, using problem-solving strategies, focusing on certain tasks)

Negative results:

Excursions might flop, if ...

- students cannot understand the guide
- students are not interested in the topic of the study trip, they get bored quickly
- students are (to a certain extent) prohibited from agreeing on the destination of the excursion (together with the teacher)

Excursions might be refused by some students, if ...

- the entrance fee is too expensive
- too much initiative is expected from them
- the excursion is exhausting (e.g. students have to go on foot through the city for a longer time)
- weather conditions are not good enough (to go out)

(4) Students of all levels of language proficiency like and engage in excursions. To students at the A1 level and their teachers excursions often mean a challenge. With higher levels (B2/C1) students are more at ease with even sophisticated tasks.

(5) Estimating the added value of the project for the academic community at host universities we want to enhance the importance of a well and fully accomplished integration of the students into everyday life to speed up their integration into academic life.

(6) A lot of the pilot project workload has been done within the teacher's normal preparation hours for class. The extra work was carried out in the following areas:

- conceptual work (questionnaire design etc.)
- co-ordinating meetings of the two instructors
- sophisticated evaluation of the feedback received (evaluation sheets, 135 questionnaires, ...) - this is to be continued during summer term 2004

Resuming last semester's experience we consider the cost-benefit-ratio as a good one.

The learning effect (for the instructors and for the students) is outstanding, the feedback (also from the international CHAGAL-partners) is very good, the opportunity to do action-research and networking is a very valuable one, and, finally, the chance of doing scientific research in this particular field is very rewarding.

(7) We want to continue the project in the current spring term (February to July 2004) and distribute the questionnaires again (to students and - for the first time - to teachers of different course levels as well) in order to obtain more data and more valuable results.

The content of our project is to some extent already part of the "mainstream". There is a permanent team collecting materials for excursions and putting them at the disposal of the teachers.

Furthermore the annual four-day excursion to Salzburg is organised in May or June.

It would be easy to implement excursions and outdoor-activities by obliging the teachers to organise at least one excursion per term. Generally though excursions cannot be obligatory for anyone. According to this semester's experience two thirds of the students and teachers will participate voluntarily.

However, better funding for excursions would be an incentive for less enthusiastic students and teachers.

The place and the time for discussing the topic is the annual in-service training-period in September.

The support required by our project team would consist of the following:

- supporting more intervision meetings during the spring term 2004
 - scientific support through the analysis and compilation of scientific data concerning outdoor-activities and excursions
- supply of experiences and strategies for a more effective mainstreaming of our project's topic