



norden

Guidelines for the Distance Education Course

COL – Circles of Learning

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SUMMARY

In the following, there will be focus on the important teaching-related, didactic course considerations related to students with severe learning disorder (LD).

By way of introduction, it is particularly interesting that the definition in the partner countries (Denmark, Finland and Latvia) of students with severe learning disorder includes the concepts: mental retardation, developmental problems and severe learning difficulties.

In this guide, the term “learning disorder” (LD) is used because the guide follows the guidelines recommended by the WHO through ICD-10.

In the following, there will be a brief description of the six courses, including their purposes, potential and recommended teaching methods as well as an evaluation of the participants’ output.

Subsequently, there is a proposed 40-hour course plan targeted at the implementation of IT in relation to students with learning disorder (LD).

The material was tested on teachers, special educators and social educators in Denmark who deal with students suffering from severe learning disorder. Subsequently, it was evaluated at a conference in Riga for special education staff.

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Introduction

The COL project should be seen as a qualified attempt to develop and spread knowledge about students with severe learning disorder, their entry into society, and their use of IT.

Teachers, social educators and parents can help these students by using this knowledge in a constructive way and, thus, the subsequent contribution is made in close cooperation among three partners who are experts in various areas related to students with LD.

The three partners include Denmark represented by Munkholm Course Center with special expertise within the development of in-service training concepts for teachers and social educators.

Finland will contribute with, possibly, the largest and most well-organized parental association KVL/Opik, supporting particularly teachers, parents, further training as well as the development of materials. In Finland, a number of teaching systems showing strong results have been developed. These include TIKAS (http://www.tikas.fi/tikas_in_english/info/)

Latvia will contribute with comprehensive knowledge through Professor Ilze Ivanova, who was ground-breaking in the Latvian formation of a parent-run special education association for further training activities. (Latvijas Tālmācības Centrs) Professor Ilze Ivanova was also the head of the EU

project TICTC which is a project parallel to COL, however, targeted at the group of hard-of-hearing and deaf students.

(<http://tictc.cti.gr/>)

Goals

To promote learning through IT competencies of teachers, special educators and social educators as well as other professionals working with students suffering from severe learning difficulties.

Specific goals

To render visible the special structures of the three partner countries in relation to teaching LD students.

- This is achieved through discussions and the articles selected.

To implement and render visible learning and teaching in relation to students with LD, including critical thinking and the use of IT.

- This is done through studies of the student group described in the articles.

To develop and discuss the use of IT in relation to the student group's learning, training and participation in society – including ethical aspects.

- This is attained by critically evaluating the possibilities and limitations of the student group through the articles described.

To apply different pedagogical methods to promote insight into and the use of the student group's IT competencies.

- This is done through knowledge assimilation, reading, multiple choice tests and discussions of the PowerPoint slides (blended learning) selected.

To create the basis for inclusion through the use of IT as a teaching and learning tool.

- This is done through knowledge assimilation, reading, multiple choice tests and discussions of the PowerPoint slides (blended learning) selected. In the discussions, particular emphasis is assigned to translation into educational practice – described in the log books.

To motivate teachers to use IT learning and teaching in relation to the group of LC students.

- Particular emphasis is assigned to learning principles and the use of easy language in two of the articles described, and this forms the basis for the development of a “new” teaching concept – targeted at students with LD.

Target group

- Direct: Future and current teachers, special educators and social educators wanting to acquire specific knowledge about the LD group's qualifications and learning/teaching in relation to LD through the use of IT.
- Indirect: Using IT as a learning medium (blended learning) which can motivate students with LD, create special training possibilities and insight into the student's own qualifications and contribute to improved learning.

Course output

- That the target group can relate to the IT tool as a learning tool for students with learning difficulties (the LD group).
- That the target group can contribute qualitatively and professionally with insight promoting the inclusive perspective for students with LD.

Course participants will be capable of

- Differentiating teaching methods, materials and learning levels through the use of teaching principles and IT.

- Creating a learning sphere based on knowledge about the student and teaching possibilities – including the use of IT.
- Writing a contribution using easy language and using the learning process steps indicated.
- Creating improved insight into their own professional qualifications and improved cooperation between colleagues based on knowledge about the student group and teaching possibilities.
- Using different types of searches for learning (blended learning).
- Using IT and learning principles for improvement of the learning methods and materials included.
- Creating stronger motivation of students using the learning principles and easy language.
- Knowing the ethical requirements for learning within the IT community.
- Being prepared for requirements from the IT community and

hereby which education and job can be created for the student suffering from LD.

Course duration

The course consists of 40 hours of actual knowledge assimilation, discussions, self-evaluation and log book writing. The course is designed as an individual course but teamwork is recommended.

The course is flexible and can be used during in-service training when there is a need to attain specific insight into LD and the use of IT.

The course can form part of a school-based course, i.e. a course held at a school or an institution. The course may also form part of special education training.

The course can be completely individual. It can also be team-based and form part of a team's skill development.

The course can be used by LD associations wanting to safeguard the interests of students with LD in terms of learning through the use of IT and the ethical principles applying to the use of the internet.

The course can be used by parents to increase their insight into learning principles, easy language and the use of IT/the internet.

In addition, the course is also a solid foundation for psychology and social education students writing their theses.

In Denmark, this course could be included advantageously in the resource centers at schools – using a tutor from the PPR (Psychological, Pedagogical Counseling).

The individual articles contain

Simple Danish (easy language)

This article presents the criteria for a simplification of contents, vocabulary and structure so that texts become easier to read and understand. In addition, the criteria considered necessary when developing easy language are outlined

The six criteria for simplified language are: content focus, vocabulary, simplified language structure, short sentences, logic maintenance and clear layout supported by pictures.

Using IT in society

Through the introduction of IT technology as a learning tool, brand new opportunities were created in our society.

The learning society comprises a group of persons reflecting actively, cooperating, being learning-oriented and promoting growth through their own motivation and value-orientation in relation to solving problems and complex learning tasks. With advantage, IT can be used in these cases, and as IT lets you create both learning compensation and social networks, the learning society is considered a new social order.

Using IT to promote development

The very quick technological change results in different behavior, new educational and teaching requirements as well as new requirements for teachers. Overall, learning can be defined as a change in behavior on the basis of experimentation and actions. To attain learning, learning capabilities are a necessity.

Personal and social learning using IT

In the COL project, a number of relevant subjects have been outlined – all with the purpose of improving learning processes in students with LD through the use of IT. Moreover, it is considered vital that particularly personal and social development is also promoted through learning processes and the use of IT.

Identity development and critical thinking

How to attain critical thinking? “Who am I?” is the subjective sense of one’s personality structure and, at the same time, it is based on an internal psychological structure in the core self. But the subjective sense is also a social construction, so the individual presents himself and wants others to acknowledge the image presented. Well-developed identity shows itself through the personal core being the same over time and in different situations. You could say that the personal core is a specific one with stable features, limits, needs and a specific life story. Thus, through social media, IT will be able to contribute to this self-image.

Teaching IT to students with LD

To teach IT in the most correct way requires: repetition of information and actions, immersion in the use and learning a number of new skills. It is considered very important to have knowledge about the student’s familiarity with IT so that it is possible to motivate based on the student’s specific situation. On the basis of this, it becomes possible to evaluate progress and render visible the progress to the student.

Through these six selected articles, insight into the use of IT as a medium in learning and development is created. Following the articles, the teaching plan is presented for use in the course and as an independent study of the LD area.

Teaching plan

The course presented here can be used by teachers, special educators, social educators, assistants and parents as well as other professional staff.

Purpose of teachings	Contents of teachings, incl. methods	Teaching duration and settings
Introduction to COL – purpose and vision. It is considered necessary to evaluate the definitions of LD and the LD student group’s special learning qualifications in relation to the student’s participation in society.	Reading guidelines for the COL project and discussing with colleagues the necessity of relating to LD and IT as both a learning tool but also as participation in society. You can take each headline and consider your own attitudes towards the subjects outlined. It is recommended that you make a log book containing your most important notes, examples and reflections.	Four hours. Independent reading and possibly a discussion with colleagues. Could be a discussion on the internet in blogs, on twitter or on Facebook.

	<p>This should be done after each lesson and will strengthen your learning effect considerably. If you complete a log book description in your own language (and/or in English) following each of the teaching subjects given and subsequently send them to sh@munkholm.cc, we will send you a course certificate (in English) with the three partner logos and the “norden” logo for your participation.</p> <p>Your participation, however, only with your name and country will then be posted on the internet so that others can see your qualifications in relation to LD and IT.</p>	
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<p>Reading the article about using the IT society.</p>	<p>Reading the article. Discussing the article's concluding questions and completing a multiple choice test. Alternatively, you can use the attached PowerPoint slides with an outline of the most important subjects.</p> <p>Discussing the contents with colleagues and completing the multiple choice test together. REMEMBER the log book.</p>	<p>Four hours. Could be a discussion on the internet in blogs, on twitter or on Facebook. Work with the article can be either independent or in teams. In particular, the critical attitude towards the use of IT should be discussed.</p>
<p>Reading the article about creating and promoting development through the use of IT.</p>	<p>Reading the article. Discussing the concluding questions and completing a multiple choice test. Alternatively, you can use the attached PowerPoint slides with an outline of</p>	<p>Four hours. Could be a discussion on the internet in blogs, on twitter or on Facebook.</p> <p>Work with the article</p>

	<p>the most important subjects.</p> <p>Discussing the contents with colleagues and completing the multiple choice test together.</p> <p>REMEMBER the log book.</p>	<p>can be either independent or in teams.</p> <p>If the latter model is used, we recommend two hours of independent knowledge assimilation and two hours of team discussions.</p> <p>As a conclusion of the independent assimilation and/or the team discussion, your own practical teaching measures should be described, including exercises relating to your own</p>
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		students.
Reading the articles about creating personal and social development through the use of IT.	<p>Reading the article. Discussing the questions relating to the article, searching on the internet according to the specifications in the article and completing a multiple choice test.</p> <p>Alternatively, you can use the attached PowerPoint slides with an outline of the most important subjects.</p> <p>Discussing the contents with colleagues and completing the multiple choice test together. REMEMBER the log book.</p>	<p>Four hours. Could be a discussion on the internet in blogs, on twitter or on Facebook.</p> <p>Work with the article can be either independent or in teams. If the latter model is used, we recommend two hours of independent knowledge assimilation and two hours of team discussions.</p> <p>As a conclusion of the independent assimilation and/or the</p>

		<p>team discussion, your own practical teaching measures should be described, including exercises relating to your own students.</p>
<p>Reading the article about creating identity development and critical thinking.</p>	<p>Reading the article. Discussing the concluding questions and completing a multiple choice test. Alternatively, you can use the attached PowerPoint slides with an outline of the most important subjects.</p> <p>Discussing the contents with colleagues and completing the multiple choice test together. REMEMBER the</p>	<p>Four hours. Could be a discussion on the internet in blogs, on twitter or on Facebook.</p> <p>Work with the article can be either independent or in teams. If the latter model is used, we recommend two hours of independent knowledge</p>

	log book.	<p>assimilation and two hours of team discussions.</p> <p>As a conclusion of the independent assimilation and/or the team discussion, your own practical teaching measures should be described, including exercises relating to your own students.</p>
Reading the article about teaching IT to students with LD.	<p>Reading the article. Discussing the article's outline of learning steps and completion of a multiple choice test.</p> <p>Alternatively, you</p>	<p>Four hours. Could be a discussion on the internet in blogs, on twitter or on Facebook.</p>

	<p>can use the attached PowerPoint slides with an outline of the most important subjects. Discussing the contents with colleagues and completing the multiple choice test together. REMEMBER the log book.</p>	<p>Work with the article can be either independent or in teams. If the latter model is used, we recommend two hours of independent knowledge assimilation and two hours of team discussions.</p> <p>As a conclusion of the independent assimilation and/or the team discussion, your own practical teaching measures should be described in connection with the</p>
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		learning steps indicated.
Reading the article about easy language.	<p>This important part is divided into two lessons of four hours' duration.</p> <p>The first four hours comprise the assimilation of easy language in preparation for the subsequent part with a four-hour duration. During this part, an attempt to use easy language in practice with text and images is made.</p> <p>The first part: Reading the article. Discussing the outline of the "requirements" for easy language. Completing a multiple choice test. Alternatively, you can use the</p>	<p>Eight hours. Part 1: Work with the article can be either independent or in teams. If the latter model is used, we recommend two hours of independent knowledge assimilation and two hours of team discussions.</p> <p>As a conclusion of the independent assimilation and/or the team discussion, your own practical teaching</p>

	<p>attached PowerPoint slides with an outline of the most important subjects.</p> <p>Discussing the contents with colleagues and completing the multiple choice test together. REMEMBER the log book.</p> <p>The second part: This part should include an attempt to rephrase a text into easy language with pictorial support. Critically evaluating the materials used in your own practical work is considered important. How could the text be transformed advantageously? REMEMBER the log book.</p>	<p>measures should be described in connection easy language.</p> <p>Part 2: Work with the article can be either independent or in teams. If the latter model is used, we recommend two hours of independent knowledge assimilation and two hours of team discussions.</p> <p>As a conclusion of the independent assimilation and/or the team discussion,</p>
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		<p>you must prepare a practical assignment in easy language with pictures. You should discuss your own practical teaching measures in connection with the use and lacking use of easy language.</p>
<p>Course evaluation</p>	<p>Eight hours. Part 1 (four hours) with recapitulation of the course essentials. Part 2 (four hours) with completion of all multiple choice tests – To pass the course you must have at least 60% correct answers.</p> <p>Part 1: Place all the printed PowerPoint</p>	<p>Eight hours. Part 1: Four hours. Part 2: Four hours.</p> <p>Part 1: Work can be either independent or in teams.</p> <p>Part 2: Work on completing the tests can</p>

	<p>slides in front of yourself and select the ten most important ones from the stack.</p> <p>Now you must write your reasons for the ten choices – independently – in relation to your students, colleagues and yourself. However, there should be a maximum of five to ten lines per PowerPoint slide. This is your own guide for your future teachings.</p> <p>It is also important to work with this assignment in teams and if this model is used, all participants must select the ten PowerPoint slides independently. Subsequently, you present your own reasons to the other</p>	<p>be either independent or in teams.</p> <p>Discussions of your own practical teaching measures in relation to the use of the six articles.</p> <p>Which subjects do you consider the most important and the ones you will use in future learning and in connection with the use of IT?</p>
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	<p>team members. Afterwards, all the participants' choices must be narrowed down to ten, on which there is agreement, during two rounds of selection. The purpose is to create a common attitude and practice for further teachings. REMEMBER the log book.</p> <p>Part 2: Return to the five sets of multiple choice tests and fill them in again – either independently or in teams – To pass the course you must have at least 60% correct answers. REMEMBER the log book. Now send them to sh@munkholm.cc</p>	
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