



The Use of Social Media and ICT Based Studying Model for Supporting Learning and Professional Development of Foreign Language Teachers in Finland

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Abstract

In a regional cooperation project 2008-2009, funded by Finnish Ministry of Education, University of Turku and its project partners Åbo Akademi University, Turku University of Applied Sciences and Lingonet Oy, developed a continuing education studying model for adult learners. The central target group of the studying model are the teachers of foreign languages in basic education. The studying model named "LinguaMedia" aims to support language teachers' professional development. It is based on community building, sharing expertise and building of personal learning environments by utilizing the opportunities of the ICT and the new media. Other objectives are to support multilingualism and to create teachers the new possibilities for networking and cooperation despite of the their location. The studying model was piloted by over 350 teachers in a national foreign language teachers' continuing education programme "Language Fair 2009-2010", which was funded by Finnish National Board of Education and organized as a part of a national "POP"-developing programme, aiming to improve the quality of basic education in Finland. The Language Fair programme was planned and coordinated by the University of Turku and organized together with national consortium partners. The studying according to LinguaMedia-model was organised as a process of blended learning to support the developing work of teaching, to strengthen the teachers' didactical and pedagogical skills, to offer theoretical knowledge based on current research and to promote regional and collegial networking between the language teachers. ICT had a central role in the project also to improve the teachers' skills and capacities as "learning by doing" to develop modern learning environments for language teaching and learning by utilizing the opportunities brought by the new digital and social media in pedagogically meaningful way.