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Developing Students' Language Skills through Project-Based Teaching of the Languages for Specific Purposes – A Case Study

Extended summary

The national reforms in school system being conducted in the Republic of Serbia primarily aim to ensure a quality education environment, relevant for the social context wherein we live, and compliant with the European Union standards and education policies. These reforms have encompassed all the levels of education, and created a legal framework which defines new curricula, aims and educational outcomes. The Law on the Education System Foundations and various teaching manuals clearly point to a considerable change implied by the new reformed context – the central focus of teaching is on students, their individual needs, abilities and interests. Teachers are facing a big challenge pertaining to the issue which methods or teaching models are to be applied in order to achieve the educational aims defined by the reformed curricula. In pursuit of this goal, it is necessary to investigate which teaching models support the adequate implementation of these principles.

This paper is aimed at investigating the characteristics of project-based model, applied in the context of teaching English for specific (medical) purposes, with the goal of improving various language skills. Theoretical framework rests on the analysis of the legal documents regulating the education system in the Republic of Serbia, and continues through the survey of the main principles stated within the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages – a vital document the aim of which is to provide a starting point in language policies creation. The analysis of the theoretical portion containing the description of the main principles and characteristics of project-based teaching, as an innovative and interactive teaching methods,

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gives the basis for the investigation which possibilities project-based foreign language teaching provide for the purpose of enhancing all language skills.

In order to test the theoretical notions, a case study has been conducted. The study, conducted on a sample of a group of high school students learning English for medical purposes has illustrated some of the project-based learning principles effective in the context of language teaching and learning and also proved the potential of the model for language skills development.

Project-based teaching, with its principles and characteristics, completely responds to the needs of the new foreign teaching paradigm, and the adequate application and organisation of project-based foreign language teaching can contribute to a qualitative and more purposeful education. Although project-based teaching has a long tradition and its notion today permeates reformed curricula, it poses a challenge in terms of its application. In order to actualise the theoretically based reformed curricula and current national legal regulations, it is necessary to develop the plan for a continuous professional development of teachers, and carry out the research among both teachers and students which will point to the results of the application of the project-based foreign teaching principles.

Keywords: project-based teaching, language skills, English Language for Medical Profession, a case study.

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