1 Inclusion of Travel Writing, Movement and Sign Languages into University Curricula: Case Study of Slovenia

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As part of Erasmus+ project: "*Active and inclusive teaching of literacy and communication skills for enhanced employment and sustainable economic growth (IN-COMM GUIDE)*", university curricula of Slovenian study programs were analyzed. For purpose of this paper, curricula at Slovenian public and private universities were analyzed. The research focused on the question of which innovative methods were used for teaching communication skills, and whether travel writing, movement, and sign languages are included. Analysis showed that there were no innovative methods included in the curricula. It was shown that among all the curricula, there is none that has as its subject travel writing. In three curricula in total, the subject of sign language was found and six analyzed curricula were related to movement. Being active was found in curricula of Faculties of Education. We can conclude that curricula on communication skills at Slovenian universities still have room for further development, innovation and improvement. This chapter of the monograph also includes interviews that were conducted with representatives from the Association of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Associations of Slovenia and Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing of Podravje, Maribor.

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ACTIVE AND INCLUSIVE TEACHING OF LITERACY AND COMMUNICATION
SKILLS FOR ENHANCED EMPLOYMENT AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC GROWTH

1.1   Introduction

One of the activities of the Erasmus+ project "Active and inclusive teaching of literacy and communication skills for enhanced employment and sustainable economic growth (IN-COMM GUIDE)" was the analysis of Slovenian university curricula that deal with the development of communication skills. A content analysis of Slovenian study programs at all public and private universities in Slovenia was done in February 2022.

For the purposes of this analysis, the following keywords were used: "communication skills", "business English" and "movement". We were interested in which (if any) innovative methods are used for teaching, and whether travel writing, movement and sign languages are included. Curricula of Slovenian universities are publicly available online.

Firstly, what is curriculum? It can be defined as a plan for achieving learning goals, students' learning experiences, and includes subject matter or learning content (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018). Li (2007) defines the curriculum as "expected learning outcomes" and as "an autobiography co-constructed by teachers and students."

Curriculum knowledge is knowledge of what should be taught to a particular group of pupils or students to guarantee an equal and comparable education to students attending different schools in a country. Curriculum includes benchmarks, learning goals, but also knowledge of the variation in instructional material available and knowledge of the reasons why you would or would not use particular material in certain circumstances (Ball et al., 2008; Shulman, 1986).

'The knowledge question' concerning what students need to know and learn in schools, is a question for educators everywhere. The question has gained new relevance due to global trends in contemporary curriculum-making, characterized by some scholars as a curriculum turn or a 'new curriculum'. Researchers have criticized the competency orientation for downgrading the role of knowledge in the curriculum (Priestley & Biesta, 2013; Priestley & Sinnema, 2014). Indeed, at the turn of the millennium, some scholars characterized the competency orientation as a curriculum problem (Moore & Young, 2001; Muller, 2000). Muller (2000) pointed to the unclear boundaries between every day and specialized knowledge in

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competency-oriented curriculum, calling the competency orientation an anti-epistemological movement. Meanwhile, Wheelahan (2007) argued that the shift from a content-oriented to a competency-oriented curriculum in Australia's vocational education locked the working class out of powerful knowledge.

Modern concepts of educational curricula tend to combine two purposes. One purpose is on the process of individual cognitive development and the other on the process of socialization and how one adjusts to the attributes of society and social environments (McComas & Nouri, 2016). Most curriculum studies do not examine the curriculum ideology due to its invisibility. However, ideology plays a vital role in shaping curriculum at various levels (Yang & Li, 2018). According to Ornstein and Hunkins (2018), the major philosophies underlying educational reforms include idealism, realism, pragmatism, existentialism, and postmodernism.

When reviewing the analysis, several different examples and meanings of curricula were found. Where some countries (e.g., Austria, China, Portugal) specifically prescribe the core contents of the reading curriculum and sometimes even require schools to use textbooks that are explicitly approved by their government (Mullis et al., 2016; Zhang et al., 2021), the Dutch government only prescribes attainment targets in the so-called core objectives of the Reference Framework for language and arithmetic. Therefore, educational publishers and schools can freely determine which reading strategies are taught and when (Garbe et al., 2016), and what pedagogical approach is used (Bruggink & Netten, 2017).

All in all, a gap arises between the intended curriculum (i.e., educational objectives) and the attained curriculum (i.e., students' achievements) (Valverde et al., 2002). To some extent, this might be related to the quality of teaching materials. Textbooks form a crucial stepping stone between the intended and attained curriculum, and play a major role in the chain of effective instruction (Penuel et al., 2014) when they are of good quality and chosen appropriately based on goals, age and other relevant criteria. They affect teachers' curriculum enactment and classroom practice (Ball & Cohen, 1996), also with respect to reading instruction (Aaron et al., 2008; Dewitz & Jones, 2013; Harwood, 2017).

1.2   Travel writing

Travel writing is a methodological practice that students, teachers, researchers and others can learn and apply in academic and in business settings. It is gaining popularity and importance among academics, communication experts and researchers (Mansfield & Potočnik Topler, 2023). Mansfield and Potočnik Topler (2023, ix) who extensively write on the subject propose that "the practice of literary travel writing is an inquiry process that can be applied by writer-researchers to spaces where value is being created". In tourism, for example, travel writing is "one of the tools for encouraging active participation, engagement and co-creation of tourism experiences" (Mansfield & Potočnik Topler, 2023, 4). As a genre, travel writing encompasses various texts – from brochures, blogs, travelogues, tour guides etc. Robinson (2004, 303) defined it as "writing about the experience of travel and visits to 'other' places". Furthermore, travel writing is a useful tool in teaching communication skills at the graduate and post-graduate levels. It can be employed in classes teaching English for Specific Purposes, creativity, social media, and digital skills.

1.3   Sign Languages

Despite the legal recognition of sign languages in many countries, many of their Deaf citizens still experience considerable marginalization and inequality through being denied access to sign language for communication (McKee & Manning, 2015) and education (Dotter, Krausneker, Jarmer, & Huber, 2019), and it continues to become less and less common for Deaf children to learn sign language (Snoddon & Underwood, 2017).

There are several ways to integrate sign language into the education curriculum. There are more than 270 signed languages today. They go from languages used in a single village (for example is Ban Khor Sign Language in north-eastern Thailand) to nationally recognized languages such as Brazilian Sign Language (also known as Libras, used in education and government, with 200,000 L1 signers). Signed languages often have both L1 signers (e.g., Deaf children who learned to sign as a first language) and fluent L2 signers (e.g., hearing parents of Deaf children who learned to sign as adults) (Nonaka 2004; Maypilama and Adone, 2013).

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1.4   Movement and Healthy Lifestyle

Schools have repeatedly been proposed as environments to promote active, healthy lifestyles (Scheuer & Bailey, 2021). Given the evidence that many children and young people are inactive to the extent that they are compromising their well-being, both today and in future life and that a decline in physical activity (PA) occurs during schooling, this issue has great urgency (Aubert et al., 2018; Farooq et al., 2018). One response to this situation involves including movement within academic content to increase activity and stimulate better cognitive results at university.

1.5   Analysis

As part of the project, an analysis of curricula in Slovenian study programs that deal with the development of communication skills was prepared. A content analysis of Slovenian study programs at all public and private universities in Slovenia was employed in February 2022. Keywords that were used in analysis were: "communication skills", "business English" and "movement". In the analysis we searched also for innovative methods, travel writing, movement and sign languages in the curricula. Curricula were publicly available online (Slovenian legislation).

Interviews with representatives of the *Association of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Associations of Slovenia* and *Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Podravje Maribor*, Mr. Milan Kotnik and Mrs. Aleksandra Rijavec were made. The interviews were made online using MS Teams tools in March 2023 on the topic of inclusion of Deaf and hard of hearing people in the study process at the university. It is important to record the opinion of those who are in daily contacts with and work with the Deaf and hard of hearing.

The goal of the analysis was to answer the following research question.

Research question 1: How innovative methods, travel writing, movement and sign languages are included in curricula?

Table 1: Analysis of the study programs

Faculty	Title of the study program	Communication skills	Innovative methods	Travel writing	Sign language	Active
Faculty of Social Sciences	Communicology - Marketing Communication and Public Relations	5	/	/	/	/
	Marketing communication and public relations	6	/	/	/	/
Faculty of Education	Classroom instruction	4	/	/	/	/
	Social pedagogy	2	/	/	/	/
	Two-subject teacher	2	/	/	/	/
	Special and rehabilitation pedagogy	13	/	/	yes	yes
	Speech therapy and deaf pedagogy	14	/	/	yes	yes
	Preschool education	8	/	/	yes	yes
	Inclusive pedagogy	3	/	/	/	/
	Special and rehabilitation pedagogy	2	/	/	/	/
Faculty of Arts	English studies	13	/	/	/	/
	Slavic studies	Mixed	/	/	/	/

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Table 2: Analysis of the study programs of University of Maribor

Faculty	Title of the study program	Subject/s in correlation with communication skills	Innovative methods	Travel writing	Sign language	Active
Faculty of Tourism	Modern tourist practices	6	/	/	/	/
	Tourism: cooperation and development (UN)	5	/	/	/	/
	Tourist Destinations and Adventures (MAG)	3	/	/	/	/
Faculty of Logistics	University study program	1	/	/	/	/
Faculty of Arts	Different languages	mix	/	/	/	/

Table 3: Analysis of the study programs of University of Primorska

Faculty	Title of the study program	Subject/s in correlation with communication skills	Innovative methods	Travel writing	Sign language	Active
Turistica	Tourism (UN)	2	/	/	/	/
	Cultural tourism (UN)	1	/		/	/
	Tourist destination management (VS)	3	/	/	/	/
	Management of tourism companies (VS)	3	/	/	/	/
FHS – Faculty of Humanities	Communication and media (un)	5	/	/	/	/

Faculty	Title of the study program	Subject/s in correlation with communication skills	Innovative methods	Travel writing	Sign language	Active
	Intercultural language mediation	5	/	/	/	/
FAMNIT	Biopsychology	1	/	/	/	/
Faculty of Health Sciences	Health care	2	/	/	/	/
Faculty of Education	Pedagogy	8	/	/	/	yes
	Preschool education	6	/	/	/	yes
	Classroom instruction	15	/	/	/	yes
	/Social pedagogy	3	/	/	/	/
	Second level study program Slovene Studies, Department of Literary Studies	2	/	/	/	/
	Second level study program Slovene Studies, Linguistics	6	/	/	/	/

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Table 4: Analysis of the study programs of Other Slovenian Universities

University	Faculty	Title of the study program	Subject/s in correlation with communication skills	Innovative methods	Travel writing	Sign language	Active
University of Nova Gorica	Faculty of Environmental Sciences	First-cycle study program Environment	/	/	/		/
	Faculty of Business and Technology	Second-cycle study program Planning and conducting open education	4	/	/	/	/
	Faculty of Humanities	First-cycle study program Slovene Studies	5	/	/	/	/
	Faculty of Viticulture and Enology	Study program Viticulture and Enology I. level	2	/	/	/	/
	Faculty of Postgraduate Studies	Postgraduate study program Cognitive Sciences of Language (third cycle)	2	/	/	/	/
		Postgraduate study program Humanities (third level)	2	/	/	/	/
University of Novo mesto	Faculty of Business and Administrative Studies	Study program - 1st level	1	/	/	/	/
DOBA faculty		Applied psychology	1	Entirely online.	/	/	/

University	Faculty	Title of the study program	Subject/s in correlation with communication skills	Innovative methods	Travel writing	Sign language	Active
Faculty of Media - education of contemporary media creators	Faculty of Media (Ljubljana)	Master's study strategic communication	1	/	/	/	/
College B2		Business secretary	3	/	/	/	/

Table 1, 2, 3 and 4 show the analysis performed. The first column of the table shows University, second column Faculty, then Title of the study program and subject/s in correlation with communication skills. Later on, the table shows if any innovative teaching methods were detected, if travel writing, sign language or being active (movement) are included. At the last column there is a link to the web site of the program. The table only shows study programs where subjects related to communication skills are taught.

The analysis included eight (8) Slovenian public and private universities: University of Ljubljana, University of Maribor, University of Primorska, University of Nova Gorica, University of Novo mesto, the Faculty of Media, DOBA Faculty and College B2. Altogether, forty-two (42) study program were analyzed. The analysis showed that one program is entirely conducted online, that the study is dynamic and that modern technology is used in that program. Among all the curricula, there is none that includes travel writing. In three study programs, the subject of sign language was found. Subjects with sign language are taught at the Faculty of Education at the University of Ljubljana. Subjects/courses related to movement were found in six study programs. Being active is included in programs at the University of Ljubljana and the University of Maribor (in both cases at the faculties of education).

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At the University of Ljubljana, subjects regarding communication skills are taught at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Faculty of Arts and Faculty of Education. At the University of Ljubljana many study programs, especially linguistic study programs, include various communication skills. At the University of Maribor, we found communication skills subjects in the Faculty of Tourism and Faculty of Logistics. At the Faculty of Arts of the University of Maribor subjects related to languages teach communication skills as well.

At the University of Primorska communication skills subjects were found at Turistica, Faculty of Humanities, FAMNIT, Faculty of Health Sciences and Faculty of Education. At University of Nova Gorica communication skills subjects are taught at the Faculty of Environmental Sciences, Faculty of Business and Technology, Faculty of Humanities, Faculty of Viticulture and Enology and Faculty of Postgraduate Studies. At the University of Novo Mesto at the Faculty of Business and Administrative Studies. At the Faculty of Media and DOBA faculty, one communication skills subject was found. At the College B2 the analysis detected communication skills teaching in one study program. Among the subjects appear: Foreign language - English or German, Rhetoric and Business communication. Analysis showed that the Faculty of Education has study programs such as Pedagogy and Preschool Education, which are very specific and subjects such as Literacy, Phonetics and Phonology, Linguistics were found.

It can be concluded that in Slovene universities, there are just a few subjects related to movement and sign language, there are no subjects on travel writing at all and no innovative teaching processes can be found (at least not documented in the curricula, but it is believed that often innovation happens in the classroom). Based on this analysis, authors see opportunities for improvements in the future. It needs to be noted that probably more courses related to communications skills, sign languages, movement and travel writing are taught at the universities and within the analyzed programs, but our keyword analysis did not detect them.

Still, based on the analysis, it can be concluded that sign language, movement (being active) and travel writing are important topics that should be more represented in the curricula of universities in Slovenia.

1.6 Inclusion

To reveal the practical aspect of communication inclusion, two representatives of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing societies were interviewed. The interlocutors of the interview were representatives from the Association of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Associations of Slovenia and from the Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing of Podravje, Maribor. They revealed that Deaf and hard-of-hearing people do not choose to study at university, only 1% of them are included in university education. They find that there are too many obstacles for studying. The two interviewees report that information from the field is that the faculties cannot provide what students with disabilities need, as universities do not have the resources required. Deaf students need an interpreter, subtitles in the classroom and/or additional help with learning and studying. They also sometimes need additional materials, additional e-classrooms where the lecture with subtitles can be found. An interpreter is needed by the student in all subjects, and one is absolutely necessary at tutorials. Interviewees also reported that study material is improperly written and difficult for someone who uses sign languages, for example. There are 22,000 words or gestures in the Slovenian sign language. The vocabulary of someone studying is significantly larger. 22,000 words is the vocabulary of a 12-year-old person, who is in 6th grade of a primary school. All these are the reasons why many students who enroll in colleges cannot complete the 1st year. The right to use an interpreter in all study segments should be mandatory in the study process, interviewees believe.

1.7 Conclusion

The analysis that included eight Slovenian public and private universities showed that in forty-two study programs only one program is entirely conducted online. There was no curriculum where travel writing would be included. In three study programs of the Faculty of Education of the University of Ljubljana, the subject of sign language was found. Courses related to movement were found in six study programs. There are just a few subjects related to movement and sign language at Slovene universities, but no subjects on travel writing at all. Based on this analysis, there are many opportunities for inclusion of the discussed topics in the future. The consequence of weak knowledge of communication skills and exclusion is that the excluded students' potentials remain unused on the one hand and on the other hand,

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economic damage occurs, because companies and society are unable to capitalize on it.

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