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## The evaluation of BaCuLit-project in Hungary

Ildikó Szabó <sup>a</sup>\*, János Steklács <sup>a</sup><sup>a</sup> Associate professor, Kecskemét College 6-14. Kaszap utca, Kecskemét 6000, Hungary

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### Abstract

Research tells us that there is a critical transition between “learning to read and reading to learn” in the fifth grade, which makes adolescent reading distinctive and literacy instruction in the secondary grades distinctly challenging. Text comprehension, critical appraisal of texts and using texts for content area learning become much more important than in the primary grades. This kind of literacy differs in its requirement-profiles and skill-profiles from one subject area to the other. For this reason, extensive knowledge about effective reading instruction is not only essential for language arts teachers but belongs to the required professional competence of all teachers. The BaCuLit-project intends to develop, test and implement a Basic Curriculum for Teachers' In-service Training in Content Area Literacy in Secondary Schools. This study is to introduce this international research in which Hungary is represented by Kecskemét College.

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### 1. Introduction

BaCuLit has been designed as a reaction to the problem of low achievers in the EU. “Performance on reading literacy of young people deteriorated in the period to 2006. Most recent data for 2009 show a good improvement which is, however, not sufficient to meet the target for 2010”. [1] It means, more effective ways of schooling and instruction have to be developed. In some European counties only mother tongue education in elementary schools serves as reading instruction. On the contrary, the idea of content area reading (reading to learn) and ‘reading across the curriculum’ has to be fostered.

The other main problem is that the ‘selective principle’ within the educational philosophy of some European school systems is hindering the realization of effective support systems for all students. According to BaCuLit philosophy, the idea of the support principle combined with the use of formative assessment in instruction has to be fostered. For improving instruction in the medium term, in-service teacher education is most necessary and the most effective practices of in-service teacher education need to be tried out which have been set up in the template document.

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\* Corresponding author: Ildikó Szabó. Tel.: +36-76-501-770  
E-mail address: [balazsne.ildiko@tfk.kefo.hu](mailto:balazsne.ildiko@tfk.kefo.hu)

## 2. The BaCuLit Consortium

This Comenius project is based on the results of the international ADORE-study: “Teaching Adolescent Struggling Readers – A Comparative Study of Good Practices in European Countries” [2], funded by the European Socrates Program from 2006 to 2009 (Summary of the project’s results can be downloaded from: [www.adore-project.eu](http://www.adore-project.eu)). The BaCuLit-project intends to develop, test and implement a Basic Curriculum for Teachers' In-service Training in Content Area Literacy in Secondary Schools [BaCuLit]. For this purpose, 10 partners from universities and in-service teacher training institutions from 7 European countries cooperate in this project; they are supported and consulted by two American experts (Prof. PhD William G. Brozo, George-Mason-University Fairfax, Virginia, PhD Carol M. Santa, Montana Academy, Kalispell, Montana, Co-Founder of CRISS).

This study represents the common work of the project led and coordinated by Prof. Dr. Christine Garbe (The Albertus Magnus University of Cologne), and it includes the module developed by the Hungarian partner (Kecskemet College). The project started in January 2011 and will end in December 2012.

The project is located within the horizon of "learning skills" but focuses on "reading skills". It intends to extend secondary school teachers' expertise to improve their students' fluency, reading habits and comprehension strategies for diverse texts in all school subjects and to help them building a stable self-concept as readers and learners. Most urgent in this respect is to foster the so called "content area reading literacy" or "reading across the curriculum". The term "content area literacy" refers to teachers' competence to deal with reading/writing/learning instruction not only on the elementary level in the language arts classes, but in all subjects and all school levels. The project uses a "multiplier- and coaching-approach" which means that first, teacher trainers are educated and then will be supported in educating a first teacher cohort and in sustaining those teachers' change of classroom practice.

The basic curriculum will define the minimal knowledge every secondary content area teacher in the EU should have about teaching reading skills in all school subjects. It will provide 6 modules of 6 hours professional development course units each, including teaching material, collaborative tasks for improving one's own classroom practice and online support. Although the basic curriculum will only be implemented in 6 European countries, it will define the first overall European minimal standard for in-service teacher training in content area literacy. After being tested, the concept of the basic curriculum will therefore be downloadable on the project's website in English and the partners' languages.

## 3. The BaCuLit Consortium

BaCuLit aims at enhancing teachers' expertise in content area reading literacy. As one-shot training activities are not enough to actually change classroom practice ("knowledge-action-gap"), BaCuLit will offer a curriculum that can be used on long terms for in-service training. Creating local expertise through a training-of-trainer-model ("multiplier- and coaching-system") is most promising for lasting change in classroom practice. It enables teachers to become part of professional learning communities. This is done by teacher trainers who know their communities and have the respect of their colleagues.

The *Basic Curriculum* consists of 6 modules “see: Figure 1.” which are based widely on the ADORE Reading Instruction Cycle “see: Figure 2.” (downloadable in the ADORE-summary: [www.adore-project.eu](http://www.adore-project.eu)) and actual national and international reading instruction research. The main aim of BaCuLit to support teachers' self concept as teachers for content area literacy.

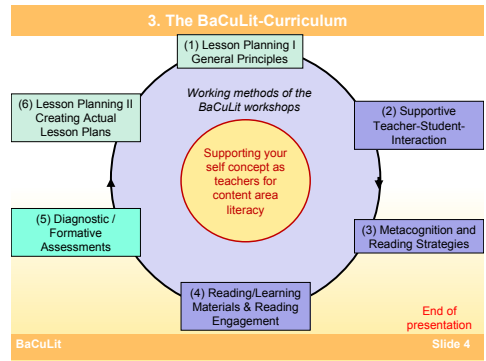


Figure 1. The BaCuLit-Curriculum

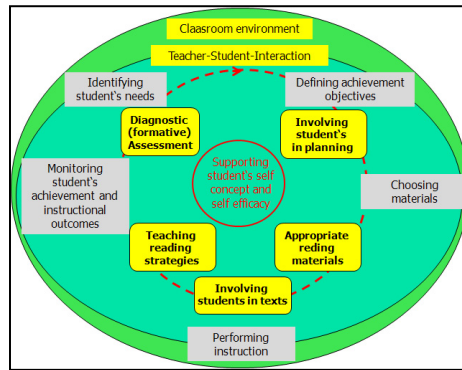


Figure 2. ADORE Reading Instruction Cycle

#### 4. The structure and content of modules

To support the exchange of materials between all BaCuLit partners, we will launch an internet-based work space called /Moodle/.

The “Module-Unit-Plan” is seen as the common structure of all modules “see: Figure 3.”:

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| <p><b>Module-Unit-Plan</b></p> <p>Author(s) of module</p> <p>Title of module</p> <p>Short description of topics / content</p> <p>Goal(s)</p> <p>1. Orientation (<i>Time</i>)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Topic-centred experiences</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;">Activities</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;">Resources</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">(Proposed) main question(s)</p> <p>2. Input or lecture / exercises (<i>Time</i>)</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Activities</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;">Whole group / plenum</p> <p style="padding-left: 80px;">Groups</p> |
|--|

| Pairs |   |
|-------|---|
|       | Resources   |
| 3.    | Reflection ( <i>Time</i> )<br>Forms of presentation of outcomes (phase 2)<br>(Proposed) main tasks<br>Resources for the tasks<br>Discussion & reflection      |
| 4.    | Application ( <i>Time</i> ) / website<br>Main task for application of what has been<br>learned into one's own classroom practice<br>Resources for application |
| 5.    | Evaluation of the workshop  |

Figure 3. Module-unit Plan

The *most important aspects* that all of us should consider when developing the module are to keep in mind when developing materials that BaCuLit aims at students age 12 – 16. However, it is still an option to integrate few examples from age groups 10/11 and 17/18; BaCuLit *focuses on reading literacy* – not on the wider term of learning.; and to keep in mind that the “*ADORE Reading Instruction Cycle*” and “*Lesson Planning*” are the basic ideas behind designing the modules. These modules will be the knowledge base of 4 different outcomes:

- Teachers manual
- Handbook for teacher trainers (incl. basic knowledge on reading theory and research)
- Sustainable trainer support system  
Website with additional materials and examples / communication platform for teachers.

### 5. The implementation of Module 3

This 6-hour module is divided into two, 1,5-hour blocks. Hereby we present the short description of topics / content of the two blocks:

What do metacognition and reading strategies mean? Why are they important and highly recommended for use in the learning and teaching processes?

- 1.1. Questioning the Author
- 1.2. Definition of metacognition, its role in learning and reading processes. Definition, description and sorts, grouping of reading strategies, instruction of them.
2. How to turn theory to personal reading (learning) and teaching practice?
- 2.1. Applying cognitive and metacognitive reading strategies in a complex, unknown text.
- 2.2. Turning general knowledge to personal teaching practice: reading strategies for different kinds of content areas.

Goal(s), Block 1

1. The teachers should understand the definition and importance of metacognition as it relates to reading and learning, and reading strategies.
2. The teachers should know the basic theoretical and scientific underpinnings of metacognition and reading strategies.
3. The teachers should be aware that teaching students how to think metacognitively and employ reading and learning strategies is as important as teaching the content of subjects.

Block 2

4. The teachers should be able to analyze textbooks and other written materials related to their subjects from the point of view of reading strategies.
5. The teachers should be able to generate applications of reading strategies for their subjects and incorporate these strategies into their instruction.
6. They should be able to plan and implement teaching processes which are based on both their students' knowledge of the subject matter and appropriate reading strategies.

In the first phase of the first block we provide all participants with a common text (What's going to happen to you, mankind?) to give them ideas how analyzing text structure works. It is followed by a presentation (Introduction into/ Revision of Metacognition and Reading Strategies) in the second phase of the first block. Teachers are asked to work in pairs. Instructor stops at a natural stopping point and asks teachers to comment and ask questions/ say something during the presentation to check their understanding of the presentation. The instructor makes teachers aware that what they do is being metacognitive (they take two-column notes.) The trainer(s) refer(s) back to the presentation. Certain before, during and after strategies are to be used in practice. They are previewing, schema activation, prediction, scanning, summarizing, reflection of the used strategies, IEPC, sensory imagination system, fix-up strategies. Trainers demonstrate the strategies through pair reading. After co-trainers' demonstration on the strategies, teachers can watch certain periods from the recorded lesson using the same text to see how it really works in practice. Trainers also demonstrate strategies that are not presented on the DVD.

At the beginning of the second block teachers do text interpretation in a "safe" learning environment with the main aim of text comprehension. Trainers model with the first paragraph of a text on economic/political etc. issues one of the things teachers are going to do in groups. Trainers preview the text in pairs, demonstrate think-aloud as a strategy. Then teachers go to work in groups of 4 (during text comprehension one member of the group models, demonstrates certain strategies. The rest of the group are representing students, they are listeners and have a conversation on the following issues: 1. Do I have a clear purpose for reading? Do I know what I was supposed to learn? What can I do to develop my own purposes for reading when a helper is not available? 2. Which are the strategies that work best for me when I read? 3. How do the strategies help me stay focused on the content? How and when might I use these strategies on my own? 4. How do writing and discussion lead to deeper understanding? The teachers swap the roles. Everybody has a chance to be a teacher).

In the second phase of block 2 groups of teachers are formed according to subjects taught Adopting newly acquired strategies they work with the one subject –related text from their own content area. The groups answer the following questions: Which reading strategies would you use? What questions would you propose concerning your text? (self-questioning as well) List certain steps to model text comprehension to your students concerning this particular text. Using placemats; teachers in their groups write their answers in the 4 corners of their placemats. In the middle of the placemat each group collects their common answers. Three blankets of paper are to be put on the walls of the room. One of the three questions is written on each of them. Each group writes their three common answers on the three sheets. They use different colours. Teachers stroll around the room and read all the answers.

Finally, teachers should define the similar strategies and text comprehension (modelling) in their subject areas so that they could see how reading across the curriculum can work.

## **6. The evaluation of Module 3**

BaCuLit curriculum was implemented in all the participating countries from October 2011 until June 2012. During the implementation phase three different evaluation tools were used to assess the content of each module: teachers' evaluation sheet, trainers' evaluation sheet and external expert's evaluation sheet. Based on the feedback included in these sheets and following the same evaluation guidelines, the developers of each module were to evaluate their module. The evaluation with possible alterations was presented at the last meeting of the BaCuLit-project in Cologne in August 2012.

The topic of module 3 is very important according to all the trainers. Teachers expect to learn about reading strategies and metacognition throughout the whole BaCuLit course. As there is a great expectation about this topic, one suggestion is to make this module number 2 (as it was originally in BaCuLit plans).

The topic is partly known for the trainers, however, there were remarks on preparation saying that the trainers would need some more materials on metacognition and reading strategies to read. Depending on the implementing place, this need differs. Still, as there is a need, some additional readings/materials could/should be provided for the trainers in the trainers' handbook.

The suggestion of the trainers is to make it clearer what to include in the actual session with the teachers and what to put into their workbook as additional materials. To make a clear connection to the set of reading strategies used in teachers' own curriculum is also a proposal

All trainers agree that there are too many materials in this module, it is overloaded. Some materials should be included in the workbook as additional materials (this is the developer's original idea as well). Although practical examples are very relevant, the video sample we provided did not work with all the teams. It was either too far from the everyday practice of teachers (the Netherlands), or it was not authentic enough for the teachers (Romania, Arad). Other, maybe national, examples should be looked for and found. No teams have suggested adding extra materials. Whenever they mention incorporating new materials, it is done as replacing some of the original materials, so they are listed as changes to the content.

Reciprocal teaching should be modelled as it is not known for everybody. "Thinking aloud" in relation to the introduction of reading strategies should be presented in a short text. All the texts are used in the modules should be relevant to teaching practice.

The trainers assessed this module as a successful and relevant one. Time management was a problem: too many tasks and not enough time. The materials should be simplified.

## 7. Conclusion

This project aims to meet two of the most outstanding goals of the European Commission. The EU Benchmarks for 2010 was to „Decrease of at least 20% in the percentage of low-achieving pupils in reading literacy“. The EU Benchmarks for 2020 is that „The share of low-achieving 15-years olds in reading, mathematics and science should be less than 15%“. By implementing BaCuLit project throughout Europe, both of these expectations are to be met.

BaCuLit aims at enhancing teachers' expertise in content area reading literacy. In order to achieve this aim, the BaCuLit project builds up on the following understanding of professional development for teachers: Instead of relying on a concept of professional development that only presents information, the BaCuLit project relies on principles of professional development and learning that have a positive influence on **teachers' self-concept** as competent and reflective practitioners. Our goal is to support teachers in changing their vision of what it means to be an effective teacher of content. Teaching students *how to learn content* by reading and writing, talking and listening must go hand in hand with content instruction, so that students gain the tools for life-long learning. Content teachers should not only be content specialists but *learning specialists* who are aware of the impact of reading and writing, talking and listening for content learning. When students know how they can use reading and writing for learning content they become more successful learners which leads to feelings of success for both, teachers and students.

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