ABSTRACT

One of the paths that lead to excellence in teaching in higher education involves training of faculty members in higher education pedagogy. This study gives a summary of individual surveys and hands-on experience acquired through implementation of methodology courses for faculty members. At the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen and at other higher education institutions throughout the Czech Republic, these courses have been taking place since 2004. The paper describes organizational models of faculty training programmes, which were inspired by international trends and proven by application in practice. These models benefit from combining face-to-face and on-line learning techniques (blended learning). In terms of their content, the above courses were devoted to the methodology of distance and on-line education and conceived as courses in higher education pedagogy for beginning teachers in higher education. The paper also provides a description of “Constructivism in a Nutshell” course.

Keywords: Blended Learning, Faculty Member, Higher Education Pedagogy, On-Line Courses, Teaching Methods, Training Programmes and Courses

1. INTRODUCTION

We have been monitoring trends in educating faculty members over a long term. Inspired by proven models of training programmes, we have developed our own didactics-oriented courses and courses devoted to training teachers in effective use of modern technology. In this paper we summarize the findings acquired through theoretical study of foreign sources and examples of the courses implemented, as well as the practical experience gained by offering courses at the University of West Bohemia in Pilsen and at other higher education institutions across the Czech Republic.

Teachers in higher education are most motivated to acquire teaching skills at the time when they take up teaching at a university or a college, when they develop their own style and face the first difficulties with study groups. Later on, the need for acquiring new teaching competences arises when the teachers (either
of their own will or upon pressure from the management of their institution) need to utilize modern teaching technology or develop course materials for distance education or e-learning activities.

Our courses are designed for the very same target groups:

1. Beginning teachers in higher education (keen to discuss and share their experience, seeking advice on student motivation and drawing inspiration from other teaching methods and strategies)

2. Teachers who intend to teach with the aid of modern technologies (who are in need of training in ICT, due to projects they are involved in, for the purpose of designing distance or blended study programmes, or other).

2. TRENDS IN EDUCATION OF FACULTY MEMBERS

Further education of faculty members should be considered an organic process which encompasses a number of activities ranging from formal education programmes (to earn a diploma or a certificate) to informal acquisition of specific knowledge and skills under the guidance of professional instructors and to various types of informal education (Competency Framework for Trainers and Teachers, 2004). The most common educational activities encountered in the professional development of teachers in higher education include the following:

- Self-contained educational programmes and courses,
- Work activities: problem solving, work on projects, discussions with co-workers,
- Research activities: monographs, papers, research,
- Attending conferences and seminars,
- Consultations with experts and professionals in the field,
- Sharing experience within small groups of specialists,
- Membership in professional associations.

With regard to the objectives and scope of this study, we will only explore the first item on the list, i.e. the comprehensive educational programmes and courses for training teachers in higher education.

The most important current trends in higher education pedagogy, which are reflected in the content of methodological courses for faculty members, are listed below (Fink, Allen, Ianuzzi, 2008, Scudder, 2005):

- Development of an elaborate instruction schedule (as the first rule, preparation for teaching should not consist of a mere list of topics to be covered),
- Student-oriented teaching,
- Formulating learning goals with the aid of established taxonomies,
- Active learning/small study groups,
- Effective mentoring,
- Reflective writing,
- Formative assessment (genuine),
- Feedback – evaluation of the instruction.

Up-to-date educational programmes focusing on preparing teachers in higher education both in the Czech Republic and abroad are developed mainly by (Core Quality Framework SEEQUEL, 2004):
Related Content

Creativity and Innovation in Higher Education Research: Problems and Solutions
[www.igi-global.com/article/creativity-and-innovation-in-higher-education-research/84994?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/article/creativity-and-innovation-in-higher-education-research/84994?camid=4v1a)

Informational and Communicational Explanations of Corporations as Interaction Systems
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/informational-communicational-explanations-corporations-interaction/30362?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/informational-communicational-explanations-corporations-interaction/30362?camid=4v1a)

Information Security Awareness in Academia
[www.igi-global.com/article/information-security-awareness-academia/61125?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/article/information-security-awareness-academia/61125?camid=4v1a)
The Mobile Workplace: Collaboration in a Vast Setting
www.igi-global.com/chapter/mobile-workplace-collaboration-vast-setting/30366?camid=4v1a