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Usage of information technology in inclusive education at universities

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Abstract

Inclusive education at universities offers equal opportunities to all students regardless their individual differences. To acquire maximum educational possibilities of each student means to respect their educational needs and adapt didactic methods and study materials to individual needs, e.g. using information and communication technologies as well. Academic staff could participate in educational courses within the project *Support of tertiary education of students with special educational needs at the University of Ostrava* in order to increase their pedagogical competencies.

The paper introduces experience with tutoring the course entitled *Adaptation of study materials to students with visual impairment*. The course was focused on adaptation of specialised texts which could be used by purblind or blind students during their studies. Course guarantors have been familiarised with the methodology of creating adapted documents and with the requirements on adapting specialised texts in a way that an accessible electronic document would be created. An analysis of study materials and requirements for course completion has identified courses which are not suitable for students with visual impairment.

Key words

Information and communications technology, Inclusive education, Assistive technology, Special education needs, Equal opportunity.

Results

The course *Adaptation of study materials to students with visual impairment* was attended by 68 academic and 10 non-academic staff. Course guarantors analysed study materials which they use or are going to use in their lessons. If the specialised text includes spatial information (e.g. formulas), too much information or combination of several character sets, it is necessary to consider its adaptation into an electronic form for visually impaired students. Before adaptation, it is necessary to decide which information can be described in words, which to transfer into a different output (tactile images), and which to leave out.

Conclusion

The project *Support of tertiary education of students with special educational needs at the University of Ostrava* enlarges knowledge and competences of academic and non-academic staff and enables them to join creation of an inclusive environment at the university. Development of inclusive education prepares equal opportunities for all students and it should stem from respecting individual needs of every student using effective teaching methods and available technology. Information and communication technologies and assistive technologies can be a significant tool help for students with special educational needs during their studies at a university.

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