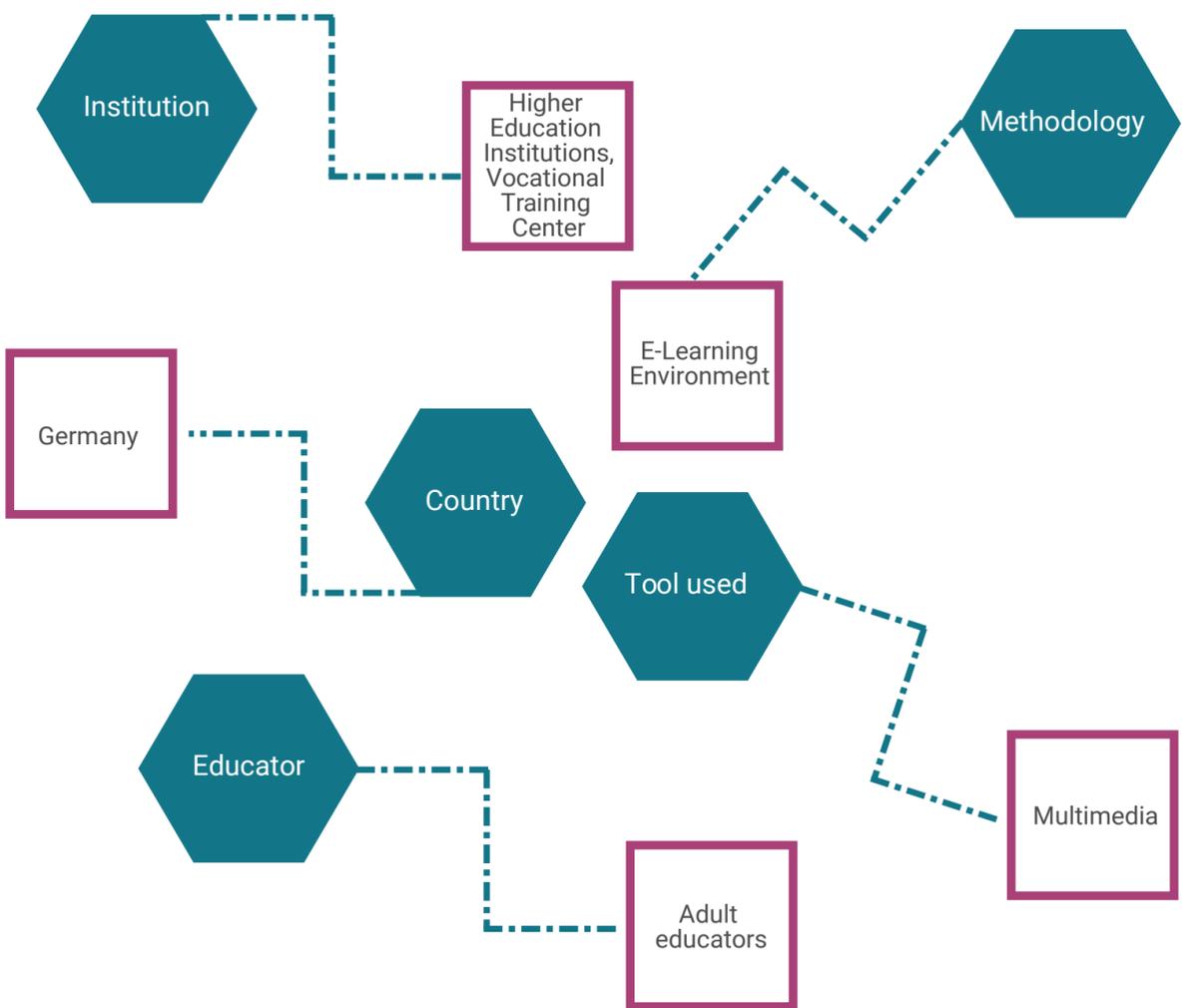


AN E-LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR DEAF ADULTS



The aim of the AILB project was to develop a bilingual web based learning system for deaf adults who want to maintain and improve their mathematical and reading/writing skills. In this project, the special needs of deaf learners were taken into consideration, as e.g. bilingual information (text and sign language), a high level of visualization, interactive and explorative learning, and the possibility of learning in peer groups via video conferencing. AILB is a joint project of Aachen University (content development), Fraunhofer Institute for Applied Information Technology FIT (software development), and bureau42 GmbH (specification and consulting). The project presented a learning management system (LMS) which offers German Sign Language videos in correspondence to every text in the learning environment. The pilot study started with 20 deaf people at a vocational training center in Leipzig. The deaf have been introduced to the LMS AILB by one deaf and one hearing researcher from Aachen who was present to answer questions for several days. During the pilot study, the deaf students used the Learning Management System (LMS) at fixed times at the vocational training center. They were expected to go through a prescribed set of lessons and have recourse to a teacher in case of problems. This ensured a fixed frame for all students who were not used to or who were not capable of self-directed learning. The results of the first evaluation, which included the learning process and progress, the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and the learners' self-assessment, have been used for the further development of the concept and the learning environment.



Main challenge, Key Success and Enabling Factors

- The reading/writing and mathematical skills exhibited by deaf people are well below that of hearing people, although their mental capabilities are basically the same. These results were obtained in the project ATBG. The main reason for the huge discrepancy between the skills of hearing and deaf people is due to the socialization of the deaf.
- The LMS was adapted to the specific learning problems of the target group. Essentially, this software presents a specific after-school enhancement for the preparation for working life. The provided content is bilingual

Lessons Learnt and Recommendations

- The use of sign language furthers the reading competence of deaf people and enhances their acceptance and understanding of learning content presented to them. But most of the German deaf adults lack basic reading and mathematical skills needed for further vocational training
- Providing sign language videos helped the users improve their reading skills and enabled them to learn more independently. Adapting a learning management system was given the preference in comparison to proprietary solutions, because facilitated content creation and content adaption and the learners got a wide range of standardized user interaction possibilities.



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The coordinator



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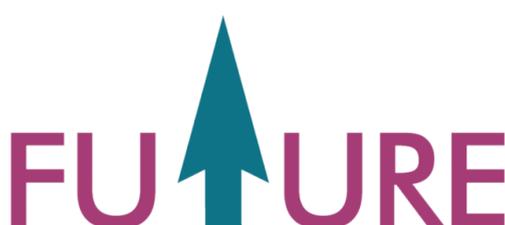
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