

# “The Greek Programme of English for Young Learners –

## ‘Peap’ as a differentiated Instruction Tool: The case study of a special school”

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### Introduction

“...even if we could figure out how to make everyone a brilliant violinist, an orchestra also needs top-quality musicians who play woodwinds, brass, percussion, and strings. Differentiation is about high-quality performance for all individuals and giving students the opportunity to develop their particular strengths.” (Gardner as cited in Tomlinson, 1999)

### Aim

The aim of this project has been to implement the Greek Programme of English (EYL) the 'Peap' to teach English to special but operational adolescents of a vocational school via the 'learning by doing' approach (Total Physical Response TPR), whereby language is viewed as *social practice*, and learning takes place in and through interaction. (The Greek EYL Curriculum, 2010).

### Objectives

- To develop students' school & social literacies in another language, i.e., English
- To cater for differentiated learning in and through appropriate activities for the mental state of the specific adolescents rather than cover a specific syllabus.
- To develop the learners' intercultural awareness to be not near 'native speakers' of a foreign language, but as competent users of two languages as possible.

### Methods/Procedure

The case study took place for 30 hours in total having taught the first two cycles of grade A of the programme. Lessons were adjusted according to students' learning styles and preferences. For instance, the mascot, a duck named 'Papios' was employed, while another mascot, a giraffe called 'Jenny', was brought in by students; the fact that 'Papios' was doing all the teaching while 'Jenny' was kindly intervening to correct 'him' or the students added a hilarious but interesting aspect to the sessions.

Another dimension of the lessons worth mentioning is that activities such as games, songs and rhymes considered by the educator potentially 'childish' proved to be indispensable due to the students' mental and/or psychological state which rendered their use essential. In addition, the variety of the implemented tasks contributed to students' development of creativity, communication via face-to-face interaction for task completion, feasible critical thinking, collaboration, team work. In this way, students have practiced the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills they will 'take' with them when leaving the ideal world of the special, vocational school and prepare to face the real world (Buck Institute of Education - BIE, 2013)

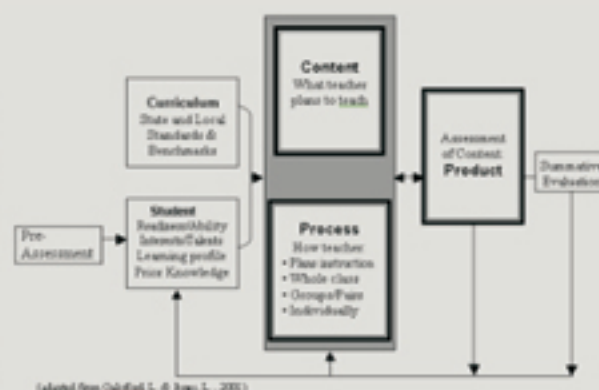
### Results/Outcomes

The implementation of the 'Peap' in a vocational school for special adolescents was conceived with the idea of differentiated instruction in mind in the sense that it constitutes student centered material focusing on student abilities and learning styles (LDA of America, 2004) via employing teaching techniques that promote social literacy (games,

songs, rhymes, role plays). What is more, the EFL teacher of a special school is likely to further adjust the taught material providing opportunities for students with learning disabilities to demonstrate what they have learned with many chances for success (Smutny, 2003).

### Conclusions

“...there is ample evidence that students experience greater school success if teaching is responsive to their learning needs” (Theroux, 2004); this is what peap strives to achieve via “creating learning environments, content, process and products that enable students with learning challenges to succeed with meaningful curriculum” (ibid). Through variety of tasks, guidelines & materials, the Peap caters for students' multiple intelligences thus differentiating EFL teaching in practice taking into account that “as classrooms have become more diverse with the introduction of inclusion of students with disabilities, and the reality of diversity in public schools, differentiated instruction has been applied at all levels for students of all abilities” (Hall, 2002)



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