

Educational practices at the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb – further steps towards student-centered learning

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The teacher-centred instruction that dominated much of higher education does not respond to new ways of living and learning and requires pedagogical models in which students are allowed to be active participants. This has caused a plethora of new approaches and initiated new learning paradigms, which are often supported by the application of ICT in educational processes. This assertions are particularly valid and visible in tertiary education in Croatia, which is currently in the process of harmonising its standards with the Bologna process requirements, thriving for curricula modifications, but also for re-conceptualizations of pedagogical processes with a focus on student-centeredness and the quality of education.

The paper will analyse and define a range of international and global trends, with particular reference to the Croatian context. Therefore special attention will be given to the concept of blended learning, which not only represents the thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences consolidating the advantages of both traditional and e-learning approaches, but also constitutes a necessary transitional step towards a more comprehensive ICT application in education.

Having in mind the high convergence level between features of student-centred and blended learning, the ambition to implement educational reforms in line with educational policy statements in Croatia and the challenge to master the first step towards a new 21st century educational paradigm, at the Department of information science, Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb ICT supported classes were organised.

The use of ICT augmented learning at the Faculty of Philosophy was perceived as a prerequisite for the achievement of future educational reforms, since students from this Faculty will get a teacher degree. In other words, educational techniques and practices they get acquainted with during their study will ultimately affect their own future educational practice. Nevertheless, this imperative was potentially inhibited by the complex structure of the Faculty of Philosophy, which consists of 22 departments organising 33 university studies. In such a diverse environment it is difficult to implement a single, common and coordinated system. The nature of the scientific and educational fields and disciplines represented at the Faculty was perceived as an additional obstacle: within the humanities and social sciences the benefits of e-learning applications show lower rates of acceptance, which is mainly caused by prevailing traditions of teaching the respective subjects.

In the second part of the paper therefore different phases and stages of implementation of e-learning systems at the Faculty of Philosophy will be presented (beginning with web sites, power point presentations, asynchronous communication forms, forums and finally the implementation of an e-learning system). Special attention will be given to student's experiences and viewpoints, which were gathered through comprehensive surveys. These encompassed questions regarding features of the e-learning system, assessment modes, learning types, user satisfaction etc. The results and analysis, revealing the mode of student's satisfaction, positive attitudes and their perception of an upgraded educational quality, will be presented in the third part of the paper.

Authors biography:

Jadranka Lasić Lazić, Professor of Information Science, Head of Information Science Department, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Zagreb. Former head of a public library in Zagreb. Fifteen years of teaching experience in information and library science. Director of several national and european projects in knowledge organization and library science. Research and publications on information infrastructure, knowledge organization, science classification, general and technological education of librarians and information professionals.

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Jasmin Klindžić is a system-administrator at Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb. Main fields of his work are Web development and education (special focus on e-learning solutions). Since 1995, he has taught numerous courses and seminars on both computer and Internet literacy to Croatian college students. He is one of the authors of CARNet's official learning material. He is also active on PR position in design studio SB NET from Slavonski Brod.