EDUCATOR'S ABILITIES FOR INCLUSION IN MULTICULTURAL SCENARIOS THRU VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Thomas Prola[1,2], Arturo Ortega[1,2], Emanuel Soriano[1,2]

1-Fundación Universitaria Ibero-Americana
2- Universidad Europea del Atlántico

thomas.prola@funiber.org

This abstract pretends to explore the question: Is it possible a pedagogical model for the inclusion in multicultural scenarios with digital technologies? It is based on the mid-term evaluation of 6 online learning courses, developed by Israeli universities, within the framework of the LOVEDISTANCE project of the European Erasmus + Capacity Building programme. Developed from a phenomenological approach, the work summarizes the main challenges found in each of the courses evaluated by the trainers themselves during the self-assessment sessions, planned within the framework of the Erasmus + LOVEDISTANCE project, to raise the need for an oriented pedagogical model, in line with the social and ethic objectives of the project. Based on the definition of the educational process as a process of dialogue and meeting ("being together and meet you"; Valverde-Molina, 2002), the construction of a pedagogical framework for social inclusion through learning in environments mediated by Digital Technologies is proposed, with special emphasis on the skills and abilities of educators in virtual learning environments (VLE).

Keywords: online learning, multicultural scenarios, pedagogy

LESSONS LEARNT FROM EMERGENCY REMOTE TEACHING - CASE OF GEORGIAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Giga Khositashvili[1]

1-Ilia State University
giga.khositashvili.2@iliauni.edu.ge

After the outbreak of COVID19 in Spring 2020 all Higher Educational institutions in Georgia moved to emergency distance teaching, offering all of the courses and support services online. As the legislation rules did not allow local HIEs to offer fully online courses and programs before, during the pandemic it was the very first approach for the majority of the educational institutions. The majority of the universities did not get back to the campus till Spring 2022, meaning that four semesters were delivered fully online. These experience was unique from the different perspectives – student's attitudes toward the online learning; academic staff's readiness towards the changes; the online infrastructure that the universities offered to guarantee the smooth transformation. As it turned out, in the beginning of Pandemic students were not satisfied with online teaching, but after two years, they prefer to stay online rather to get back to campus. In addition to this, the majority of the students prefer all of the assessment activities to stay online. On another hand, teachers declare that although they have been doing everything to for their online classes to be effective, still it requires a lot of effort to design different activities and make the classes interactive, in addition to this the cheating is also an issue, even if the universities support teachers with providing access to different e-tools to reduce the chances of academic misconduct, still this cannot be fully guaranteed. As the pandemic is going to its end, now is the time when the practice of delivering the online classes should be reviewed with an eye to its further enhancement.

Keywords: online learning, pedagogy, higher education

PODCASTS AS AN ACADEMIC TEACHING AND LEARNING TOOL: A HIDDEN JEWEL IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Yaniv Gvili[1] & Ofer Zellermayer[1] & Tsipi Heart[1]

1-Ono Academic College, Israel
ygvili@ono.ac.il

Podcasting has grown exponentially in recent years (McNamara & Haegele, 2021; McNamara et al., 2020). COVID-19 has boosted online course popularity and diversity of applications (Flores et al., 2021). It has drastically impacted higher education, ~~academic institutions worldwide, and its stakeholders institutions, faculty and~~ students (Barnes et al., 2021). In this work we propose a framework for developing fully online podcast-based academic courses that addresses some key pedagogical issues, particularly relevant to students from marginal populations, which have been intensified by the pandemic. A course will consist of 13 episodes (i.e., sessions/classes) designed in a narrative style, to enhance flow, interest and student-course 'stickiness', each tied around a case or entity of particular interest. First, we outline five key course elements: a pre-recorded audio discussion, theoretical models, reading overview, case analyses, and an interview with an interesting person related to the topic. Second, we provide rationale for the podcast-based format: facilitating distance learning, unique pedagogical advantages, easy/ubiquitous access for diverse students (mainstream and disadvantaged groups), and superb student experience for learners with limited access to broadband Internet and/or adequate computers. Finally, we suggest four criteria for choosing a topic for each episode: relevance to the present professional realm, theoretical explanation for the phenomena discussed, contribution to curious students, and interest. The proposed course format is highly applicable in various academic domains (e.g., business, management, social sciences, humanities, law, and arts) and programs (undergraduate, graduate, certificate programs). We hope that the attached pre-recorded proposal will be used by lecturers and academic managers as a prototype, a template, and even as a toolbox for developing additional courses.

Keywords: online learning, podcast, pedagogy, higher education

Link to the podcast: https://www.buzzsprout.com/1792862/9649795

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