

**Jana Burgerová**

University of Presov, Slovak Republic

## **Project for improving the quality of education at the Faculty of Education of the University of Presov by means of electronic support**

---

*Abstract: At the Faculty of Education in Presov, there is a long tradition (since 2005) in teaching by using the Moodle virtual study environment. Today, we are participating in an EU funded project, which is designed to further increase the quality of electronic education.*

The Faculty of Education at the University of Presov (PF PU) is a pioneer in the field of an e-learning alternative to traditional education, offering since 2005 accredited study in an external form through the e-learning method. From the beginning, we understood that the form of e-learning distance study as a new innovation of traditional study by using Internet technologies. We believe information and communication technologies bring many benefits, which improve and support education. The educational process is in the abovementioned case mediated, supervised, distributed and evaluated by means of computers, hypermedia education materials and sophisticated programming systems. We had and still have questions, such as whether the form of e-learning is relevant and whether the negatives (e.g. no personal contact, etc.) do not outnumber the positive aspects. Our output analyses have to stem predominantly from pedagogy and psychology; these are projected into the whole process of education – and this is what we are trying to achieve during the actual process of implementing this programme.

Despite initial problems, e-learning has become stable throughout the years and achieved its solid position (with the support of the ESF project

---

"Distance learning in the context of long-life education") in each of the interested parties. This alternative, however, brings both positives and negatives. The advantage of the PF PU is the ability to specify and identify them.

In this phase, we can definitely state we have been successful and that e-learning has become the favourite format in the field of study support (e.g. Adamkovičová, M., 2010). Students show their long-term interest in this type of education: there have been no significant problems in this version of education in terms of students' activity and motivation (although the truth is that the most suitable format for them is a combined form of the study – blended learning). The quality of particular courses at the PF PU varies. However, in an academic environment (and not only in an academic environment), it is natural – there are teachers who are enthusiastic about e-learning. They prepare interesting and challenging courses. On the other hand, there were others who did prepare the essentials and then stopped... They, however, cannot be blamed – at the faculty, there was no motivation and evaluation system for course creators. At present, we are preparing a system - prepared courses meeting publication criteria will be recorded as publication outcomes with their standard publication registration.

The University of Presov is one of the most successful universities in terms of acquired European Union European Structural Funds projects. The operation programmes Science and Research are the platforms our faculty is particularly experienced and successful in.

In Slovakia as well as in most of post-communist countries (but not only in those), questions about the quality of education are very real. In the present conditions, it is impossible for a faculty or a university to ignore quality. There exists a competitive environment: the charts of rating agencies, public interest, public opinion, finances for the faculty and many other factors influence us and which we – as a part of the process of education - experienced all the time. It is very easy to agree with Liessmann (2012), who has doubts about the PISE charts and other factors; however, his views have little bearing at present. Whether we want to or not, we have to compete...

It is therefore natural that the orientation towards the improvement of the quality of education at education institutions is becoming a condition for quality processes at universities. Strategic documents produced in the university focus on the conditions needed for quality improvement and set the framework for the delimitation of approaches towards quality. In terms of education and the social welfare of students, universities declare the following (and other) primary aims:

- Focus on the improvement and evaluation of quality.
- Education activity of a university should be done in a way that will enable the university to maintain its university status.
- Establish proper conditions for study with the accent on innovations.
- In the context of long-life learning, map the needs of the labour market and in cooperation with the external environment offer study programmes for the extension of education or its improvement.

The project "**Improvement of the quality of education at the University of Presov in Presov**" which PF PU was successful in applying for, is a project which has higher added value from the point of view of the quality of activities realised at the PU. A 2-year-project began in January 2012 with a budget of 570 976 EUR. Due to the fact that it has the most extensive experience with e-learning, PF PU was chosen as the only faculty from the PU. The aim of the project is the proposal and verification of the system of direct quality measurement and the proposal for measures to improve the quality of university education in the study programme *1.1.5 Pre-school and Elementary Pedagogy*; the proposal and verification of the environment for the system of education and virtual classroom management and the creation of a methodological and didactic concept of the creation of e-learning courses. The target group are full-time and part-time students in the selected study programme.

We expect e-learning quality improvement to be based on several activities:

- 
1. The establishment of infrastructure for the implementation of e-learning support of education as a tool for university education quality improvement, and as a tool for data acquisition for the system of direct university education quality measurement.
  2. The creation of pilot education combined programmes.
  3. A proposal for a system of direct university education quality measurement. This system shall include the following levels of evaluation (in accordance with the Kirkpatrick model):
    - Reaction: How do students react on the education process? Questionnaire for students which covers the content and its form, education methods, lecturer, support from the lecturer, organisation, as well as the study group.
    - Teaching process: How much knowledge did the students acquire? – Measurement of the knowledge acquired by means of electronic tests, focused on education aims at the beginning and after the teaching process.
    - Behaviour: How did the students change their behaviour? – A change in a student's behaviour influenced by innovative education, observation of the student's work, the recording of individual steps in problem solving, questionnaire focused on the evaluation of the difficulties concerning problem solving.
    - Outcomes: What was the effect of the education for the faculty? What effect does education bring for a graduate and for the practise?

Our task is to focus on quality and why we need to change the tradition; why we need to innovate; why we need to look for the acquisition of the largest amount of clients; what do we have and whether our effort brings social and financial benefits. At PF PU, we expect the abovementioned activities will bring an improvement in the quality of the services offered.