

Overall Plan of Online Course of Pedagogical Education for Assistants

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Abstract

This paper will briefly describe the online course of pedagogical education assistants, along with its context, its aim and objectives, as well as strategies of teaching and learning methods that would contribute to achieving of planned objectives. In addition, there will be a discussion about the formative and summative evaluation of the students, as well as academic and non-academic support for students. The position of the author of this course is that in higher education, there is a need to increase the level of quality of teaching, and the participants of the course would be those who are in direct contact with the students - meaning the assistants.

Keywords: online course, education, LMS, pedagogy, didactics, lecturing strategy, self-directed learning, collaborative learning

1. Introduction

Course activities at universities have changed considerably with the entry into force of the Bologna process in higher education. The method of teaching at universities is now approaching the method used at of the secondary schools, and requires that teachers have certain level of pedagogical skills. The assistants are now involved in more concrete relationships with students rather than the professors (they teach smaller groups of students, and the nature of their lecturing requires more interactions with students, rather than just lecturing ...) and therefore, they are placed in a situation that they must change their way of work, and they must pay more attention at students. They are the critical, target group, which can be influenced. For that reason, they need pedagogical and didactic knowledge, which at this point, that do not have enough, because during their education, they did not have enough opportunities to get acquainted sufficiently with these subjects (the vast majority of them have not completed some of the Teaching studies). Since they are swamped with commitments (both academic and scientific) the wish of the author of the text is, that through making of online course of adopting of pedagogical skills, to provide them the opportunity to acquire the aforementioned skills, without any additional obligation of attending workshops, or enrolling in pedagogical courses. Prohibitions of attending of this course are neither the space nor the time, but on the long run, it would be more cost effective than eventual reorganizing of workshops.

Besides the Bologna, the second aspect of motivation for the author of the course is raising of the level of teaching quality in higher education, so that, as a product we may have better and more numerous alumni, and therefore become more competitive on the international labor market (which is actually one of the motives of the introduction of the Bologna - to increase the mobility).

2. The Description of the Course

This is the general type course, and it is not limited to the scientific field of activity of the assistants, as it deals with generic teaching skills. The authors of this document (at the same time the authors of the course), are the employees of the faculty. Colleges (hopefully) have the necessary infrastructure for the implementation of the course (platform Moodle LMS), and one of the directions of its scientific action are e-learning and quality of teaching. Throughout the Faculties are being implemented a considerable number of research e-learning projects, for example. Tempus projects and similar projects. Since they have the necessary pedagogical education and the experience with e-learning, the authors of the course would be and its implementers, while the professors of pedagogical subject would be enrolled as the external collaborators.

The course would represent a combined model of teaching: the classes would be held online, and would finish with a demonstration workshop done by the participants on their own institutions. The prerequisites are the following:

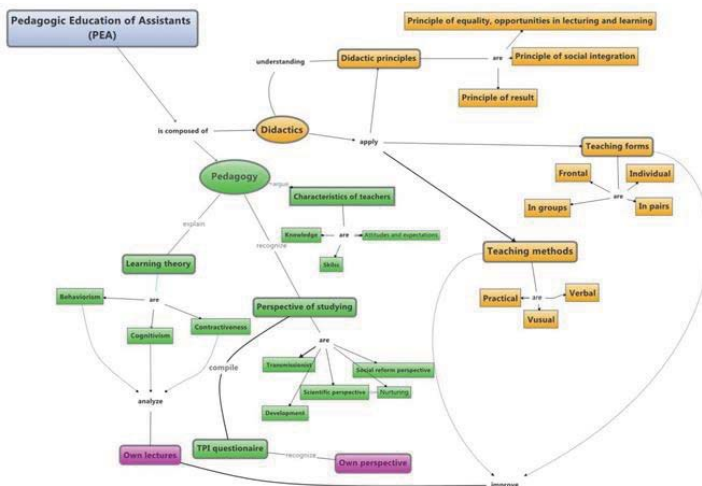
knowledge of the English language, sufficient level of reading and understanding of the professional literature, knowledge of basic Internet services (forum, e-mail, web browsing) and the ability of using computers and the Internet. The first course, composed of two semesters, would be attended by a maximum of 25 assistants employed at the universities. The course would be conducted in the Moodle, if its initial trainees have experience in working with this LMS, no additional training would be needed. For the later groups, one day training of work with the Moodle, would be organized at the beginning of the course.

During the course, three perspectives of teaching would be used, out of which will prevail the perspective of social reform and the development perspective, while the nurturing one will only be marginal. Since the introduction of the Bologna in Faculties is the product of social reform, it is the perspective of social reform that represents the main perspective in teaching. Through the course, we will try to prepare and train the assistants, so they can accept a new way of working which the Bologna brings along. This inevitably requires a change in the previous way of work, and the adoption of new values, as prescribed by the society. During the course, the assistants will acquire new skills and connect them with their own experience and their own teaching practices, and review their previous way of work in order to make improvements. We consider that the development perspective will contribute the most to it, because we wish to change the way of thinking of the assistants-so they would understand that in their former work methods may exist certain shortcomings due to the lack of pedagogical and didactic knowledge. The nurturing perspective will be marginal, but always present. The implementers of the course would constantly encourage and motivate the participants, creating a studying environment in which every participant would be accepted by the group.

3. The Purpose of the Course

The purpose of the course is to train the assistants for the quality work with students, to teach them basic didactic and pedagogical principles through a variety of texts/articles, case studies, videos and discussions. The learning objectives would generally include all levels which Bloom mentions in his taxonomy, but the emphasis is on the higher levels, which involve complex forms of thinking, not just a mere reproduction of memorized facts.

Conceptual Map



4. Teaching Strategies and Methods

During the course, a variety of teaching strategies and appropriate teaching methods would be used, which would contribute to the achievement of planned learning objectives. The lecture strategy would be applied only at the beginning, in order to introduce the course to the participants, while at later stage; the predominant activity would be the self-directed learning, which will pervade the collaborative teaching. As this is a course that is linked to the teaching practice of the participants, the situational learning will be used, which would allow the participants to solve problematic situations with which they can meet during their work.

Table containing the objectives and the plan of the course.

Objective	Strategy	Teaching method	Activity of evaluation of level of knowledge	Scoring/marking for the summative assessment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognizing different perspectives of teaching of the teachers, and thus their own perspectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> teaching strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> guidelines for reading, listening, observation and reflection (using the obtained guidelines, the participants read the Pratt's (2006) article on the perspectives of teaching, and reflect on their own teaching perspectives) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> discussion* (quality discussion, based on the read literature, and based on their own perspectives of teaching) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> self-directed learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> discussion (discussion about the article and with arguments, to recognize their own perspectives, with reference to examples from their own lectures) home work (to compile the TPI questionnaire) 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognize different types of based on their style of studying, and adapt their own lectures according to these findings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> teaching strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> guidelines for reading, listening, observation and reflection (based on the obtained guidelines, the participants will watch video material on styles of learning and think about it) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> discussion* (quality discussions based on the seen video footage, and on their own teaching practice) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> self-directed learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> discussion(exchanging of ideas and suggestions on how to structure lessons, and adapt them to all types of students (to the maximum possible extent) 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> explain the theories of learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> self-directed learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> individually-controlled reading (reading of Ally's (2004) article of theories of learning) debate (participants are divided into three homogeneous groups of 4 members, and each group represents one of the theories of learning; two debates take place at the same time, with 12 participants in each of the two, while the groups are formed according to the interest of the participants) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> debate* (participation in the debate, with arguments on the input and giving of quality contribution to its development) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> analyze own lectures based on learning theories, and establish which one of those was used in their previous work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> self-directed learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> individually-controlled reading (reading of Ally's article and its analysis) essay(description and the analysis of own context based on the learning theories) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> essay (writing of essays on learning theories in a Word document) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 20% of the course evaluation describe own context (conditions and method of work), and analyze it based on the theories of learning evaluation is performed using the Track changes tool
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> evaluate the good characteristics of a good teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> collaborative learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> collaborative learning groups, brainstorming (6 heterogeneous group of 4 members; each group creates a wiki page on the characteristics which they consider that a good teacher should have) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> group work on creation of wiki pages on the characteristics of a good teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10% of the course evaluation constructive and quality contribution in creation of pages is evaluated evaluation is performed using the Track changes tool changes
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> discussion(joint discussion of the characteristics based on their own experiences-making of conclusions with the assistance of tutors) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> discussion * (quality discussion on the characteristics of a good teacher, referring to the theory and their own experiences) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understanding the basic didactic principles, and their application in teaching situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> self-directed learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> individually-controlled reading(read the articles on the didactic principles found on the course's web-pages) 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> situational and collaborative learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> collaborative learning groups, problem solutions and problem learning (6 heterogeneous groups of 4 members, using wiki, are working on creation of different teaching unit for which is to be implemented the adequate didactic principle in order to obtain the best possible effect) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> group work on wikion the selection of the adequate didactic principle for solving of a problematic situation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 10% of the course evaluation continuation in the creation of pages, innovation and argumentation of the solution are to be evaluated (taking into account the didactic principles) evaluation is performed using the Track changes tool

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collaborative learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discussion (joint discussion on problem solving) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discussion * (making of constructive proposals for solutions in each group) 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-directed learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • essay(each student is maintaining his own diary of learning in the form of a blog, which through essays, with a criticizing approach, refers to their lectures, bearing in mind the characteristics of teachers, and the use of didactic principles) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • essay (essay writing in a blog, on the didactic principles, with a criticizing approach on their own teaching practice) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20% of the course evaluation • in the essay, it is not important to appear in a good light (because we are here to learn), but to recognize their own characteristics and didactic principles that the student had previously applied, and those that he/she could still apply (all to be substantiated with examples) • evaluation is performed using the Track changes tool
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to identify errors in their work, and with the application of appropriate methods and forms of teaching, to correct them and thereby improve their work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-directed learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • individually-controlled reading(read the texts on teaching methods and forms of teaching on the course's web-pages) 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collaborative and situational learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collaborative learning groups, problem solutions and problem learning(6 homogeneous groups of 4 members; each group works in the wiki, on the choice of appropriate teaching methods and forms of learning, which is the same for all groups) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • group works in the wikion the choice of appropriate teaching methods and forms of teaching for the solution of problematic situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10% of the course evaluation • To evaluate the contribution in the creation and the choice of appropriate teaching methods and forms of teaching in order to achieve its goal of learning, as well as the argumentation of the solution • evaluation is performed using the Track changes tool
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collaborative learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discussion (discussion on solutions for problematic situations, sharing of own experiences, and reaching of conclusions on the best possible solution) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discussion * (argumented sharing of own stands and contribution in finding the best possible solution) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to evaluate the work of the students and compile positive feedback information in order to motivate them for further work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-directed learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • individually-controlled reading(read the texts on the elements of positive feedback information on the course's web pages) 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • situational learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • online discussion (exchange of opinions on positive feedback information to the student who work was bad; at the beginning of the discussion, the tutors provide necessary information on the work of the student) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discussion * (participation in the discussion and writing of quality posts, with acknowledging of elements of positive feedback information) 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • problem solutions and problem learning,problem solution, and problematic learning (based on the received brief information on the average work of the student, write the positive feedback information in the blog) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in blog, writing of positive feedback information on the average work of the student 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6%of the course evaluation • Respecting of elements of writing of positive feedback information, with argumented expressing of own stand • evaluation is performed using the Track changes tool
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • understanding the importance of emotional intelligence component, which is more than necessary in interaction with the students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • self-directed learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • individually-controlled reading(read the text on the elements of the emotional intelligence and the empathy, found on the course's web pages) 		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • collaborative learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discussion (discussions on the values and the benefits of the emotional intelligence and the empathy in the situations of teaching) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • discussion * (expressing of own stands on the value of emotional intelligence, basing it on the literature) 	

*Note: scoring/evaluation of the discussions and the debate:each discussion and debate bears 3% of the course evaluation,respecting certain rules of discussions, including the formative evaluation of knowledge (commenting of the obtained score)

5. Support to the Students

The non-academic support. The institutions, which were the organizers of this course, are faculties, which have courses of informatics (as they would cede some space on their servers for the LMS Moodle), da by that, the main technical support for the students. The application for the course would be done online, while all instructions, as well as the advertising materials would be found on the faculty's web page. The payment of the course would also be possible via Internet, and all necessary materials for lecturing (presentations, texts, articles, videos ...) would be found in Moodle, with the possibility of their download to the local computer. For any eventual technical difficulties (with the Internet or the LMS), the participants can contact a person at the university, which is anyway responsible for the maintenance of the LMS. All activities of the participants will be transparent to the tutors, while their evaluations/scoring of the participants would be available online at any time, and would be regularly updated by the tutors.

In order to pass the course, and obtain a certificate, certified by the faculty, the students will have to obtain from each activity at least 60% of the points, and at the end of the course, in their "practical work" (the participants can only have satisfactory or not satisfactory scoring), made by the two-member Committee, composed of one of the authors of the course (who would vary depending on the time and the circumstances), and a professor of pedagogy subjects at the university.

The academic support. The major part of the academic support to the participants of the course would be provided by the authors of the course as tutors, and they would be the main link between the students and the faculty. Each tutor would be in charge of a particular group of students, whose work and dedication would be constantly monitored and assisted whenever there are difficulties in learning. Through constructive criticism, the tutors would try to direct the participants to the important things in each of the chapters. There should be no difference between the tutors, and therefore the manner how the discussion of modeling would be taken over, would be a matter of their internal agreement. All activities would be evaluated in collaboration with the professor of pedagogy, who would draw the attention of the tutors on the key elements of an individual activity.

6. Conclusion

The course of Pedagogical education of assistants represents a combined model of teaching, through which the assistants shall adopt pedagogical and didactic knowledge which they lack, in order to respond to the demands placed on them by the introducing of the Bologna. The course is based on modern taxonomy of knowledge, which are now more in display in the developing countries. The course foresees the duration, the number of participants, and the type of platform, which would be used during the course. The course has its objectives, strategies, teaching methods and evaluation procedures. After the first trainees complete the course, the facilitators would have in mind the evaluation of the participants, as well as self-evaluation of the course, and would eliminate possible deficiencies, and improve the course for the following groups.

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