



Teaching Television Business in Digital Environment during Covid 19. Opportunity not Limitation

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Abstract

The pandemic in which both students and teachers have transferred the learning process entirely or mainly to the digital environment, has been going on for more than a year. Two of my classes of students were affected in this situation, each of which is facing the challenges that accompany this change for the second academic year in a row. Despite the initial difficulties and the necessary period for adaptation for both students and teachers, learning in a digital environment has become a reality. We were provided with a cloud environment for teaching and collaboration but not with the devices. Every student used their own resources to be able to attend the classes regularly and with the necessities needed for a fulfilling participation in all of them – computer device, stable internet, microphone, camera, etc.

For the second academic year I have been teaching 'Television Business' to fourth-year students in a digital environment. At the very start I had to mobilize all my knowledge for the cloud platform that I have used so far in my professional path and adapt that knowledge for the competitive cloud platform that was introduced at the university. Logically, the next step was to adapt the curriculum and the learning approaches that I have used so far in the physical environment. It turned out, as I have expected, that teaching 'Television Business' in digital environment revealed a range of opportunities for interactive learning that would be difficult to implement in the traditional form of attendance. Now the more difficult task remained - to convince the students of this.

Keywords: *Television business, digital environment, cloud technologies.*

1. Introduction

The use of digital tools in the learning process is not new. In the curricula of many disciplines, incl. in 'Television Business', various teaching resources are traditionally used, among which we can identify mainly multimedia products such as presentations and various illustrative materials as digital ones. However, being in a completely digital environment, these tools are insufficient to engage the attention and active participation of students in the learning process. The lack of a smooth transition from a traditionally present to a digital learning environment is usually accompanied by challenges for both the teaching staff and the students themselves. Given the leading role of teachers in this process, the difficult task of restructuring the classes and transferring them to the digital environment in an extremely short time was concentrated in them, as well as striving to ensure the high quality of education.

2. Challenges rather than limitations

In my work with students, I have identified two main but very significant challenges, the overcoming of which was key to conducting full-fledged classes with students in a digital environment.

The first challenge was the technical provision - both for students and teachers. Unlike the system of primary and secondary education in Bulgaria, where funds were allocated to schools for the purchase of devices for teachers and students, although not to the extent necessary to ensure a device for every student and teacher, this was not the case with universities where the available resources were clearly relied upon. Using what we had - laptops, tablets, mobile phones, etc. we all embarked on an online learning environment. This, in turn, posed risks, including misunderstanding or resistance of the technology or cloud platform through which the training was conducted, incompatibility of the device with the platform, or shutting down the camera when entering another application on the platform – and those are only a small sample of everything that could go wrong. The challenge for most of us was to overcome those obstacles if possible and if not - get used to what our devices could offer or of course if possible - invest our own resources into more suitable ones.

The second challenge was related to student engagement during the training. Engaging and retaining their attention in a digital environment turns out to be a difficult task, in conditions of constant temptations such as access to other online content, incl. social media; as well as the possibility of



combining professional or personal commitments during online classes. And here we come to the methods applied during the online training and the fact that they cannot be the same as the one applied so far in a physical environment. Instead of reconciling or ignoring the fact that students are not active and engaged during the online training or even not present at all, I had to discover the right means to attract and hold their attention and engage them in the problematics of the discipline I teach.

3. Opportunities despite the challenges

The experiences and educational implications of the COVID-19 crisis were the focus of a public consultation in the European Union, which received 2,716 replies and more than 130 position papers. It turned out that 60% of the respondents had not used distance and online learning before the crisis. Respondents also share that online learning resources and content need to be more relevant, interactive and easy to use.¹ All of this is taken into account in the preparation of the Digital Education action Plan 2021-2027 [1] according to which in order to enhance digital skills and competences for the digital transformation, both basic and advanced digital skills and competences are needed. The first ones, the basic skills, are acquired during the early age, and the advanced ones produce digital specialists.

And here comes the most important role – the one of the teachers who must possess those basic and advanced skills and if not – to acquire them fast. Only then they will be able to implement them in the teaching process and then transfer them to the students. As Paugel P. states, teachers are the keys to transfer the teacher centred approach into learner friendly learning through technology-based teaching [2].

I truly believe and have experienced that this is the essence in transforming the conventional classroom into an effective digital one. This most certainly comes with some challenges or difficulties for some but finding the right means to overcome them could undoubtedly result in transforming them into opportunities. For example, although a cloud platform may be unfamiliar and difficult to learn by a teacher or a student, with the right approach and sharing the necessary learning resources to work with it, both teacher and students will be able to overcome the technical hurdle and enjoy the functionalities and convenience of the platform. Another very important fact that cannot be ignored is that most of Bulgarian students are also working during their higher education. Other students cannot afford to stay at the city where the university they study at is located in. That very often resulted in their physical attendance at the university only for the final exams, and rarely during the whole semester. Transferring education entirely or mainly into digital environment or applying combined education in both physical environment and online, gave those students the opportunity to join online courses and be part of the learning process, and thus part of the student community.

Regardless of the challenges and whether they are such for a group or an individual, the role of the teacher is to identify them in early stages to propose a solution or adapt the curricula and the activities planned for the semester in a way that will help overcoming that difficulties.

4. Methods applied

Having all that in mind, first and most important thing to do, for me, was to adapt all my lectures and planned activities for digital environment. Of course, it could not happen at once and took some time and adaptation according to the needs identified in the process of teaching – both the students' ones and mine as a lecturer. I needed to assess the situation and identify those things that I have always wanted to include during my lectures as activities for the students, but the traditional classroom environment had not given me the opportunity to. And the biggest trigger to that was the fact that now everybody in my class fortunately had unlimited access to Internet and thus – to information.

Here is the time to note that television industry has two very important characteristics:

- first – as being a creative industry it maintains lots of connections with other creative industries in means of main participants, creative products, intellectual property, digital use of products, etc. and
- second – it not only consists of object that can be protected as copyright and/or related rights, but also of objects that can be created as industrial property objects.

The first one, combined with the fact that my students study other creative industries such as musical, radio and film industries and learn how to manage the intellectual property, led me to the idea of combining and intertwining that knowledge during class. In this way students could learn to identify the connections between those creative industries and gain confidence about their knowledge and

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/digital-education-action-plan_en



understanding of the subject matter. That could easily be done in digital environment in the so-called breakout sessions that gave me the opportunity to divide students into groups that could work separately on different assignments, case studies and group projects. Moreover, that could happen in a calm and quite atmosphere in a digital room of their own, without interfering with the other groups – something which was impossible in the physical classroom. From the teacher's point of view, for me it was quite challenging to visit each breakout session to facilitate the discussions and answer questions if needed so that the work in groups could result in the expected results and findings, but the results were definitely worth it.

Another opportunity that the digital environment provided for my classes is the access to different industrial property databases. And here we come to the second television industry's characteristics – due to the access to those databases the students could make research on whether there are registered industrial property objects on different television industry's products such as television programs, TV series or TV shows. The results of those research were presented to the other students in a very comprehensive and illustrative way, by which they gain competence and knowledge not only in copyright and related rights, but on industrial property objects as well, which is very crucial for their professional realisation. Similar practical part is described by Markova M. who stated that among this teaching model's advantages is the students' motivation for searching new trends, new academic research results, for finding the adequate answer for business practice [3].

During the semesters, students had the opportunity to present interactive presentations on a subject matter, chosen by them in the problematic field of television industry. The control and final exams could also happen in the digital environment which favoured students' opportunity to attend them and made it easier to me to grade their works.

5. Conclusion

Being able to transform the challenges and limitations of the digital environment to opportunities to apply different teaching methods that are suitable for digital environment and make the most of them, was the key motivation factor for me to adapt fast to the technology-based education and to support my students to do the same. According to the public consultation held in the EU, over 60% of the respondents felt that they had improved their digital skills during the COVID-19 crisis and more than 50% of them want to do more.² The figures talk for themselves – we are more than ready and capable to adapt, and we are also ready to learn more. By including the interactive and digital methods mentioned in this paper as well as other methods that are applicable in digital environment, we most certainly increase students' digital competitiveness not only in the subject matter of 'Television Business' but also in the use of cloud platforms and other technologies. By doing so we ensure they get the basic and advanced digital skills which are the essentials according to the Digital Education action Plan 2021-2027.

References

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² https://ec.europa.eu/education/education-in-the-eu/digital-education-action-plan_en