"Open pedagogy" in the practice of teaching in higher education

Key words: blended learning, free online software, stress-free assessment

The new media compel educators to follow appropriate methods of teaching which make efficient education of students possible. It is also important to adjust forms of education to requirements of employers (most frequently editorial teams, advertising and PR agencies).

In education of journalists, blended learning methods are increasingly used. Owing to implementation of the remote education forms, lecturers can support students through development of practical action strategies encompassing organization of work, quick sending of instructions, assistance on the basis of students’ past achievements and filling the gaps in knowledge at the same time.

**Blended learning**

During university courses it is possible to implement partly remote education with obligatory hours of face-to-face contact with a lecturer. Such a form of teaching is still not very popular in Poland, especially due to a high amount of effort which needs to be devoted by a lecturer at designing courses on e-learning platforms, as well as during classes (it is necessary to frequently visit websites and check the tasks assigned on a regular basis).

However, blended learning is the basis for the information society, which enables development, especially when there is not enough free time (also in the case of adults). As a result, teaching has a flexible form, and additionally computer skills are upgraded, life-long learning is implemented in practice, and the education system is properly organized (Liotsios, Demetriadis, Pombortsis 2006, p. 638).

The future of education is also practical teaching which introduces the social media into the learning process. The social media not only enrich education. Owing to e.g. Facebook, students can share knowledge, solve tasks, find solutions, achieve targets through educational activities and building of social skills. It is also possible to look for foreign partners for cooperation on projects, comprehensive support and knowledge sharing, which leads to achievement of better results and improvement of educational activities. In such a model of education, a teacher can develop better teaching paths, correct them, boost
productivity of actions, motivate to acquire knowledge (from theory to practice), enhance professional and social competence. In e-learning/blended learning, graphic design of courses and assignments is very important, as well as application of appropriate tools which help adapt new solutions, share experiences, add variety to teaching methods, and engage students more in the educational process. Media education is practice-oriented and based on teaching specific skills, (editorial) team work and discovering own creativity through case studies. However, it is necessary to build up trust in online education, as well as to learn how to work systematically and verify knowledge on a regular basis. It is crucial to properly motivate learners to regular study and work, using the elements of remote education.

Some students are focused on the content of the learning process and understanding of the issues discussed, while others concentrate on rewards – grades and final results. In the case of online teaching, proper motivation is important, but also presentation of specific skills (personal, professional, social) which students are going to master during remote learning classes. In such a mode of education, emotional attitude also matters. Students get more involved when they engage in cooperation, creative thinking and practical use of helpful applications. It is necessary to hold discussion face to face and online, to present specific goals of courses and to adjust them to participants’ needs (Beetham, Sharpe 2007, pp. 42-49). However, we should not forget about regular monitoring of progress, reviewing of student’s work by a teacher, and two-way communication, achieved through regular contact with learners. Among consecutive threads and subjects, it is useful to implement knowledge revision projects, based on the social media. Effectiveness of online teaching increases when goals of study are specified, various teaching methods are used, and knowledge is verified from time to time (also in the form of learning through fun). In e-lectures the selection of information is very important, as well as knowledge management, its integration with the results of study, transfer of practical knowledge and appropriate visual setting of the courses (Clark, Mayer 2016, pp. 22-23).

The basis of new methods of education is the practice of skills, group work, on-line laboratories, learning through games and simulations - preparation for use in real situations, training in information and social skills. Trust in on-line learning and verification of learning on a regular basis is also very important. The main goal of the university should therefore be to encourage independent learning and inspiring initiatives, and avoiding imposing top-down guidelines. The university should require that after graduating students have knowledge and skills related to the subject of the field of teaching, based on the effects of the implementation of the education program. However, it is very important to be able to use critical thinking and
practical presentation of your knowledge, also using ICT. An interdisciplinary way of thinking, the ability to implement independent initiatives and large projects is necessary. Independently, analytical skills, problem solving and effective interpersonal communication should be shaped. It is also necessary to have good communication on the international arena, the ability to work as both a team member and its leader, and the ability to think creatively. In turn, the evaluation system should be based on mutual evaluation and self-evaluation. This form gives the student the opportunity to criticize their own research. In the implementation of education, you can also implement interactive quizzes, stress-free for the assessed and so-called shaping assessment. In the latter case, the student should be systematically assessed throughout the semester. A very effective system of work and ongoing student evaluation ensures teaching, at least partially, in a remote system, using ICT, provided that the course is properly designed, the elements of group and individual work are implemented, and transparent cooperation rules are established.

**Google in teacher’s work**

Creating a Gmail account is useful in lecturer’s work. With this account, we will be able to use e.g. Google Hangouts, broadcast a lesson live from our laptop, provide access to screen view or hold free conversations in groups of ten people. We should also remember about Google My Drive, that is a virtual disc to store any type of material, with which we can make all our resources available to our colleagues and students, also offline. Google Drive offers a chance to implement joint projects, both during classes and in the e-learning system, to conduct research and interviews, prepare tests and upload homework assignments to a cloud. There is also an option to chat with other users of particular material. A teacher will also find it useful to create presentations in Google Slides, which can be made available at will. Such presentations can also include e.g. videos from Youtube.

A very attractive tool for school and university students, as well as for teachers themselves, is Google Cultural Institutes. This platform offers an opportunity to use during classes the materials from exhibitions and photos from over 400 cultural institutions worldwide. It is also interesting to teach classes using resources of a virtual museum, multimedia handbooks, educational films and games available in Google Cultural Institutes.

Moreover, it is possible to create own Google site (these are the options available to Gmail account holders) which shall enable us to develop a classroom website with intranet – an internal network (Google Apps for work) and to conduct classes in the e-learning system.
(synchronously with students), or learners themselves shall be able to communicate with each other directly, without teacher’s involvement. The site’s layout can be edited freely.

**How to use free online software in practice?**

Most of the described software/platforms have been used by me for promotion of postgraduate studies in the English language, e.g. on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/PRandmediamarketing/. These techniques have also been very interesting for PhD students who during classes in English for Special Purposes could, for instance, search for materials concerning museums abroad and forms of their promotion, as well as prepare projects connected with media marketing of particular cultural institutions.

Furthermore, during courses in the Polish language, the applications described can easily be matched to our needs. Some courses can be run remotely, large groups are divided into smaller teams which can effectively work on joint projects, using helpful applications. The final outcomes of students’ work are of course presented live during classes.

Owing to free applications/software it is also possible to remotely work on a university newspaper. Members of the editorial team can work synchronously on edition of articles and send them to the teacher afterwards, on an ongoing basis.

Moreover, Google Drive disc can be used regularly during classes for implementation of joint projects and their archiving. This would also make it easier for a lecturer to evaluate student’s work later.

Classes and labs would also be made more attractive by games which can be a form of testing our learners’ knowledge at the same time. Interesting games are e.g.: playing Millionaires, solving crosswords which can be interactive or classical (printed by the teacher), or a popular word search in an interactive or standard form. All these methods of checking knowledge are stress-free, encourage learning (achievement of high results in games) and are very effective in assimilating new knowledge through fun. Even students at higher years enthusiastically approach various types of games and pay attention to their own learning progress.

I have also learned in practice how useful during classes is creation of Gmail accounts by students. Quality of communication within a group improves as a result of using various applications connected with this account. Design of own Google sites and communication via e.g. a website set up especially for a group or a year also contribute to successful promotion of a given university major or school. Regular publication of interesting facts from the course, photos and movies illustrating the classes motivates students to more intensive work. They
know that the final outcomes of distinguished projects shall be published in internet and shall contribute to achievement of a better grade and to promotion of their accomplishments.

None of the courses ends with a formal examination but with projects, evaluation of specific assignments completed during the semester and activity on Edmodo platform. Several times in a semester particularly active students are granted special interactive “badges” for their committed, diligent and conscientious attitude to tasks assigned to them. Another form of testing is also solving interactive crosswords and quizzes and using many web applications in the English language, including those for creating websites, posters, banners and memes.

Moreover, during classes with PhD students, I use the work with Wikipedia. Students work in teams writing encyclopaedia entries and thus learn how to cooperate and select materials. Wikipedia is a great tool for checking the accuracy of reasoning both by students and teachers. In addition, this kind of work teaches critical thinking, as well as verification and analysis of the group’s materials. I have noticed in practice that compiling entries in Wikipedia (both on the basis of materials received and those collected by students on their own) is a way to integrate the group, cooperate better and do editing work carefully. Having published their entries, students have a lot of satisfaction with their work and eagerly get involved in further projects (also in the e-learning form).

Bibliography: