**Project Training Company in Slovak Republic**

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**Abstract.** Web-based education has become a very important branch of educational technology. Methods for activating students are very popular in our education system. We joined together these two possibilities. We have subject call Training company where students simulate all activity of real business. The aim of our research was to determine whether teaching via project Training company would bring better knowledge to students. We compared two groups of students. First group of students took part in lectures from economic subjects through classical lessons (interpretation, explanation) and second group underwent classes of economic subjects as a part of project Training company. The final test showed that the knowledge of the students involved in the Training company project is better than the classical theory teaching.

1. **Introduction**

School is no more the main source of information. New methods and sources of obtaining information have come to the fore. The application of new technologies together with their effective potential changed the approach to education. In the current modern age, after graduation, students should not only have a fair amount of obtained new knowledge but they should also acquire economic and financial skills that they will need in each field of work. We would like to prepare students not only with good knowledge but also with sufficient practical skills and competences, owing to which they will find suitable employment in their professional lives.

2. **Web-Based Learning**

At present, activating methods in education are increasingly being promoted. As also indicated by the name, activating methods in education mainly focus on activity and independent work of students, who gradually pass from the passive information method of acquiring knowledge (e.g. interpretation, explanation) towards more active methods of gaining understanding and become more or less absolutely independent implementers of their own education. Activating methods are associated with the individual acquisition of information, particularly through the computer and the Internet, referred to as online education. There are many terms for online education. Some of them are: virtual education, Internet-based education, web-based education, and education via computer-mediated communication. We use web-based education (WBE). It is process of education that uses World Wide Web as a communication medium and supporting technology. Adapting from Keegan (1996), [2] and Paulsen (2000), [4] it can be said that WBE is characterized by:

- the separation of teachers and learners (which distinguishes it from face-to-face education);  
- the influence of an educational organization (which distinguishes it from self-study and private tutoring);  
- the use of Web technologies to present and/or distribute some educational content;  
- the provision of two-way communication via the Internet, so that students may benefit from communication with each other, teachers, and staff.

Since 1990s, Web-based education has become a very important branch of educational technology. It provides access to information and knowledge sources that are practically unlimited.
Web-based learning has both advantages and disadvantages. When comparing them, one can notice that the same factors can be advantages as well as disadvantages depending on the context. For example: New learning theories and approaches enable to learn and teach in a more effective way. Students can experience a sense or equality. Course work and challenging assignments are stimulating for knowledge building. However, teachers and learners have to adopt new learning theories and approaches. Role changes of teachers and learners may cause frustration and confusion. Without the common structures of a traditional class, students may feel lost or confused about course activities and deadlines. Web-based learning provides interaction between students and instructors. Students share their ideas with other students, which may help to understand the material better. On the other hand it prohibits those who are not active learners in a group. It is necessary to have advantages and disadvantages in mind and eliminate mainly disadvantages [1].

3. Training Company

Our students take classical lessons (interpretation, explanation) of several economic subjects such as macroeconomics, microeconomics, business economics, bookkeeping, management, marketing, where they gain theoretical knowledge. During the fourth year of study students are involved in the project “Training company”. Training company is subject for students where we use Web-based learning, at the same time we also apply an activating method – simulation. According to Kips (2005), [3] simulation “helps students understand attitudes, views and dilemmas of people, as well as circumstances of various events so that students assume the roles of characters acting in certain situations.” Unlike role play, simulation is a more complex activity, where a higher number of individuals participates, i.e. the entire class or several classes, who in different roles “experience” on their own skin a simplified model of reality. Simulation may take place during a longer period, sometimes for one day or several days; however, in the majority of cases it may even take several weeks or months. Students may be involved in various simulation projects, e.g. managing a fictional company or activities of a municipality office, and/or of a household, where each of the students assumes a certain function, social position and role. [3] Owing to practical activities within the framework of activating methods, students are able to acquire social skills faster and more flexibly, which are necessary for solving certain situations and problems.

In our course web-based learning is joined with the activating method of teaching via simulation. The overall goal of web-based learning by using simulation is to develop professional skills in company management. Through computer simulation, we are transferred to an extremely realistic business environment, where we operate a virtual company for the period of one school year. During simulation, students may use all the available internet resources, as well as the lecturer, who will on one side provide them with feedback, and on the other hand motivate the business thinking of students. The basic activities included in the simulation are as follows:

- Establishment and creation of a company
- Recruitment and interviews with employees
- Product design for each market segment
- Planning and conducting an advertising campaign
- Price policy
- Preparation and participation in a trade fair
- Cash flow management
- Bookkeeping
- Managing office meetings

Simulation helps students to:

- Develop strategic planning and decision-making skills
- Clarify relations and ties between each decision and financial performance of the company
- Support better decision-making owing to realisation of what impact each decision has on the work of other employees, as well as on the company as a whole
- Experience challenges and awards for establishing and operating an own company
• Build self-confidence through knowledge and experience.

To make learning easier, work in the virtual company is based on working through a web application. The application simulates the activities of the Commercial Register, health and social insurance company, tax authority, as well as of a commercial bank, in compliance with the Slovak legislation.

There are several students cooperating in the team, who represent the business company that competes on the market with other teams. In a successful company, the responsibility for each section is delegated to different employees and hereby work division takes place. Each member of the student teams will be responsible for one or more of the below main activities:

• Company and secretariat management
• Supply activity
• Production control
• Sales and marketing department management
• Financial management and bookkeeping

A team of students may eventually establish further departments depending on the character of company activities.

The company is managed by its director. His/her task is to determine the schedule of works and negotiations, distribute tasks to the departments and monitor company performance.

Setting up of the work team may also take place in two variations. In case of a lower number of students, in cooperation with the teacher, they can agree on each job position. However, it is much better, if the team elects the director and then other team members write their CVs and cover letters and apply for the job positions. They will appear in front of the whole group and will try to get the given job. The decision and distribution of positions will be performed by the director in cooperation with the teacher. The company director holds regular work meetings with his/her team and discusses issues, distributes and evaluates assignments.

Time management has crucial impact on success during the simulation. Due to this fact, it is necessary to divide the work among all the team members. In case that during simulation conflicts arise or uneven distribution of tasks is identified, changes may be made among the individual team members. Such changes are made by the director, and/or he/she consults them with the teacher.

In the framework of activities related to company establishment, the team must prepare the documents necessary for establishment of a company, choose its legal form, select the scope of business activities for the company and elaborate the business plan. These activities may be performed jointly by the whole team through brainstorming method. Afterwards, selection procedures for each job position will take place, and then the organisation structure of the company will be formed. Other activities performed in the simulation:

• Marketing research: analysis of market opportunities, determination of company mission, choosing the target segment, cost analysis
• Price policy
• Production, budget for one year
• Opening a virtual account with the bank, company bookkeeping
• Review of pro forma cash flow
• Preparation of trade fair, preparation of promotion materials, documents, preparation of the stand at the trade fair
• Evaluation of performance on the market
• Evaluation of financial performance

4. The Specifics of This Teaching Process

First of all, it is necessary to draw attention to the different position of the teacher in this way of teaching compared to other economic subjects. In case of a simulated company, it is exactly the position of the teacher that is different. The teacher acts as an advisor, tutor, instructor, coordinator, consultant. He/she does not stand at the board, does not hold a presentation and does not test using
traditional methods. He/she may apply several motivation and consulting techniques. There is also a big difference in the professional competence of this teacher. The teacher must have knowledge in company economy, accounting, legal theory, informatics, economic calculations and statistics, banking, insurance, taxation, personnel management, marketing, management and other professional, as well as language skills. The teacher's professional competence also involves knowledge in the field of statutory regulation of different economic activities, in the field of company activity organisation in a small and medium enterprise, knowledge in the area of economic software, in the field of domestic and international payment systems, ability to process different business agenda, and ability to work with modern communication technologies [5].

As far as the students are concerned, it is important to assess their maturity and readiness for an activity managed this way. Students enter into new things with expectations. They are affected by each impulse, act, activity and social attitude in this simulation. Students must have professional knowledge for working in a company, mainly from the subjects of company economy, accounting, legal theory, marketing, etc. Apart from professional preparedness for this work, it is also good if the students have certain personal prerequisites. The most important prerequisite is enthusiasm for the given work and the desire to learn something new. Responsibility for the given job is shown in the quality of the company's work. The students must work independently, take certain decisions and bear responsibility for the consequences of their work that arose. An important prerequisite for the students is also the ability to work in a team. The student should not be afraid to express their opinion in front of their fellow students, who act as co-workers, or even in front of their business partners.

5. Research Methodology

The aim of our research was to determine whether teaching via project Training company would bring better knowledge to students. We compared two groups of students.

First group of 50 students took part in lectures from economic subjects through classical lessons (interpretation, explanation) in 13 weeks. After the lecture they took a knowledge test. Results of the test were compared with the results of the second group.

The second group underwent classes of economic subjects as a part of project Training company. The group consisted of 40 students. These students established their own business and during the lecture they simulated all activities that usually take place in a firm. At the end the second group wrote the same knowledge test as the first group.

6. Research Results

First question was: What documents need to be attached to the trade authorization application? Students should list five documents including administrative fee. The results are shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. The Results of the Answers to the First Question.
Figure 2 shows results for the second question: What documents need to be attached to the application for registration of a limited liability company in business register of the Slovak republic? The correct answer should include seven documents, including court fee.

![Figure 2. The Results of the Answers to the Second Question.](image)

Figure 3 shows results for the third question: In which the main documents are enshrinement organization of the company? The right answer continues four documents.

![Figure 3. The Results of the Answers to the Third Question.](image)

The fourth question in Figure 4: What mandatory terms must be agreed with the employee in the employment contract? Students should list 6 points for complete answer.

![Figure 4. The Results of the Answers to the Fourth Question.](image)
In Figure 5 we can see results for fifth question: Appoint all insurance funds to which wage insurance premiums are paid through the Social Insurance Company? The right answer should point seven funds.

![Figure 5](image)

Figure 5. The Results of the Answers to the Fifth Question.

Figure 6 shows results for question 6: At least which parts should be included in business plan? Students shout named at least 7 parts of business plan.

![Figure 6](image)

Figure 6. The Results of the Answers to the Sixth Question.

The seventh question sounds: Name as many company activities as possible. Students named up to ten company activities. Results are showed in Figure 7.

![Figure 7](image)

Figure 7. The Results of the Answers to the Seventh Question.

The last one question: List the four basic elements of the marketing mix.
Figure 8. The Results of the Answers to the Eighth Question.

7. Conclusion

We found out that students included to project Training company have better results in each questions. The training company combines the theoretical knowledge with practical experience. During the semester, students simulate all activities as in real business. They begin with the establishment of a company and go through all the necessary activities such as management, supply, production, marketing, financing, accounting, etc. Students prepare all necessary documents for the establishment of their business activities. They conclude supplier contracts, employment contracts, report to the social insurance company, bookkeeping, make a tax return. Students are taking part in the Training Company expo where they can compare their knowledge and skills and conclude new contracts and participate in the contract days. All these practical activities help students better remember their theoretical knowledge. Evidence is that these are better results in the knowledge test.

References