

## **16<sup>th</sup> EURASHE General Assembly and Annual Conference**

Conference Theme 1

"Opening up higher education through links with LLL and Vocational Education & Training (VET)"

WORKSHOPS (introductions & examples of best practice, discussions)

2. Adult education, VET & Higher Education

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### **Different aspects of adult education within University Centre for Vocational Studies in Split highlighting part-time students training and tailor-made courses**

University Centre for Vocational Studies – University of Split has been offering vocational training since its establishment in 1998. We started as a sort of Polytechnic with different study programs. From the very beginning we have had full-time students and part-time students in different fields of study. Since part-time students are involved in LLL we would like to share our experiences with their training and some issues that arose from Bologna process implementation. Part-time students have proven to be highly motivated students since most of them are professionals who find it necessary to continue their education to either refresh and update their skills and learn of the latest developments, or to get an associate degree as a prerequisite for promotion at work. Their vocational & educational training (VET) is often employer-sponsored and to meet their needs we have offered very flexible scheduling during the day, mostly afternoons, evenings and weekends.

We should highlight a very positive response of part-time students coming from all relevant companies that cover the most significant part of the region economy. Completion of study enabled their direct promotion at work and now many of them are interested in gaining extra skills through various on-the-job trainings and a follow-up specialisation study. A great number of employees from the public companies and those from privately owned ones are very enthusiastic about a follow-up specialisation study. Their employers are very satisfied and supportive, willing to finance their additional training and updating of the existing knowledge. This proves us right in our efforts to provide the students with the highest possible amount of concrete specialist knowledge.

Our former and present students have contributed with their suggestions to the creation of our study programmes. The curricula can be complemented by different specialist courses and seminars. At our department, Division of Electronic Engineering has organized a seminar for Dalmacijacement employees training them for adoption and usage of the new equipment for automatic control and maintenance of the production processes. These seminars might be included in ECTS.

Monitoring our students' success and getting feedback from our lecturers' experiences we have noticed insufficient knowledge in certain areas, in those students who enrol in our institution upon completion of three-year high school education and trade schools. This lack is mainly expressed in general knowledge of mathematics and computer literacy. In order to compensate for this inadequate competence in the field of elementary mathematics and adequate computer usage, our curricula have been updated and adjusted. Elementary Mathematic course, as an addition to the high school knowledge, is continuously held in the first semester, while through courses Computer Usage I and II the students gain knowledge and skills for a facilitated understanding of the teaching material.

They become competent computer users, since a computer is a necessary tool in the study process. Knowledge and skills acquired through the aforementioned courses exceed those required for obtaining so called ECDL (European Computer Driving Licence), a certificate acknowledged not only in Europe, but all over the world (ICDL). As the students' entry knowledge becomes higher, our curricula will be updated by introducing new core courses.

However, due to their limited free time to be dedicated to studying, the study curricula have been organized in more semesters than the corresponding program for full-time students, namely 7 semesters instead of 5 (or 8 instead of 6).

With Bologna process implementation some issues have arisen regarding part-time students. The so called Bologna students are supposed to gain 60 ECTS in an academic year which implies 1800-hour workload. It is rather complicated, if not impossible, for working adults to set aside that much time for studying, yet they are entitled to continue their formal education if they are motivated and willing to do so. The problem of part-time students' education is not adequately solved by the existing legal acts, so it remains to be solved by the new acts and recommendations of the Ministry of Science, Education and Sport. As the Agency for Lifelong Learning is being established in the Republic of Croatia, we should hope that this Agency will deal with the problem.

As a higher education institution we have excellent experiences with tailor-made courses as a part of Continuing Education Training.

This means that we have provided some non-credit courses designed to meet particular needs ordered by different companies in the region. Although most tailor-made courses are short in duration, they are long in quality – and maintain the same standards of educational excellence as our credit courses.

Examples:

- A 120-hour course in English for International Tourism for Dalma employees as a part of their prequalification.
- A 60-hour course in " Automatic Control Systems in Industry" for employees in cement industry (40 hours theoretical and 20 hours hands-on training)
- A 60-hour advanced course in " Automatic Control Systems in Industry"
- A 180-hour program in the field of telecommunication for foreign students (Libya) including English course, IT course, Fundamentals of Electrical Engineering, Semiconductor Components and Electronic Circuits and Communication Systems courses.
- Informatics courses for public groups
- Implementation of Bologna process courses for students and staff

I would like to share my experiences in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses.

With ESP courses we presume that the students are professionals, familiar with the content, defining the teacher's role to the specialist terminology supplier.

I have that kind of experience with the **airport ground staff**, namely Ramp agents, Ground Handling operators, Cargo handlers etc., who are bound to take a Refresher training every two years, either to get or to renew the needed licences. They have to attend refresher courses and do the tests in many specialist areas, one of which is **Ground Aviation English Terminology**. I have been a trainer and examiner for six years at Airport Split Training Centre.

It has always been an **interactive approach**, where the students help the teacher understand the content, and the teacher helps them with the specialist terminology and General English as well.

When I started the problem was the lack of teaching material, so at first we managed with texts from different manuals, Encyclopaedia of Transport etc., but in the course of the time I have compiled a sort of a textbook with vocabulary exercises and tests, where the students have helped me choose the topics and commented on exercises and tests.

A 120-hour course in **English for International Tourism** for **Dalma employees** as a part of their prequalification is a totally different experience.

The needs' analysis was a very short one: we were told that they needed an English course connected to the hotel industry, since Dalma was switching from trading business to hotel business, (they already have a hotel called Ruskamen, and a new one is being built in Split), so the employees aged between 40 and 50+ should pre-qualify from clerical jobs to hotel-related jobs.

The needs' analysis ended with the placement test which helped us form two groups, Pre-intermediate and Intermediate.

I'd like to refer once again to the LLL very shortly and paraphrase a sentence that I found somewhere:

We believe that learning is **the key means** of equipping people to meet the demands and challenges that face them in managing their lives and work, and also **the key means** to a person's success in achieving self-fulfilment and esteem

This, or at least part of it, was proven true with my **Dalma Intermediate group**.

We have been lucky in choosing the textbook English for International Tourism by **Peter Strutt**.

The book was an excellent choice because, not only did it provide the language of tourism, but gave also an insider's occupational perspective. The author also stated in the Introduction that "neither teacher nor students need first-hand knowledge of the industry" which was the case. The topics include Careers in tourism, Destinations, Hotel facilities, Tour operators, Dealing with guests, Hotel reservations, Eating out, Seeing the sights, Traditions etc.

I'll say a few words about three aspects of this Dalma group:

- 1) CHANGE IN ATTITUDE (from resentment to enthusiasm)
- 2) SELF-CONSCIOUS at first, SELF CONFIDENT eventually
- 3) MY GAIN

- 1) Change in attitude

When they first appeared in the classroom after the placement test you could feel how awkward and reluctant they were. When I asked a question, just to get them started, they would often answer in Croatian, and comment something like: What's the point? None of us will ever get a decent job in a hotel. Who knows what they (the managers) have in mind? They'll probably sell the hotels. Back to school like children!

Their anxiety caused by a possibility of losing a job was by no means motivating. However, as conscientious people they did whatever the teacher told them to do, and gradually, thanks to the interesting topics and their personal qualities, sense of humour among others, an excellent atmosphere developed in the classroom. At a point they genuinely got interested in English and tourism related topics. The first course took 60 hours and instead of an exam they had to give a presentation. They did it perfectly, and one of them wrote the poem: **Now we trust that English is a must!** (Hand-out 1)

They insisted on finishing the book, so they got another 60-hour course. They are interested in an advanced Informatics course!!

## 2) Self-conscious to self-confident

I've already mentioned tendency to speak Croatian and avoid using English at first. Lack of confidence was not only English related; that resignation had everything to do with their permanent jobs being jeopardised.

I can give you a very illustrative example: In the first unit of the book there is a vocabulary exercise dealing with skills. They had to use various phrases like: have skills, be skilled at, highly-skilled, unskilled etc., and, of course it was only natural to ask them about their skills. Although there were some suggested ideas, their answers could be summed up as follows: some of them were skilled at fishing, some at mushroom-picking and some at cooking. Some stated that they had no skills at all, none whatsoever!

However, with time, when they practised a job interview and had to present themselves in the best way, they suddenly remembered that they had IT skills, organizational skills, that they were skilled at leading by example and so on.

They also started talking English at breaks!!

## 3) My gain

I've already mentioned the importance of LLL, the necessity of updating one's knowledge, skills and competencies. We, as teachers are aware of that. We have always been the ones who have homework to do, look up words, master new terminologies etc.

This course has been very useful for my LLL.

Not only have I learnt a lot about tourism and hotel industry, but I have acquired, at least temporarily, a completely new terminology, or is it a jargon?

I used to think that hotels have rooms, a lobby, reception, car park, swimming pools, restaurants, bars.....and they do, and many other things, but they are referred to differently.

## Hand-out 1

### NOW WE TRUST THAT ENGLISH IS A MUST

Now, when our meetings are at end  
We have a message to send  
It was a very pleasant time we spent  
Although, it would be difficult, we ment.

And it was very useful  
Because our heads are with English full  
We have lots of skills  
Now when we have to make bills.

And now we trust that English is a must!

Everyone is grateful to our beloved teacher  
Because she made of each a useful creature  
Useful to work in the hotel that will be done  
And the tragedy of Dalma will be that way won.

And splendid days will come soon  
And we will live like on the Moon.

And now we trust that English is a must!

**Hand-out 2**

Where do you check in when you arrive at a hotel?	<b>FRONT OFFICE - RECEPTION</b>
Who is in charge there?	<b>FRONT OFFICE MANAGER - RECEPTIONIST</b>
And what must he/she look like?	<b>WELL-PRESENTED - SMART APPEARANCE</b>
If you want a job you send a CV +	<b>COVER LETTER-LETTER OF APPLICATION</b>
The person producing daily biz figures is a	<b>NIGHT AUDITOR</b>
He/she doesn't sell as many rooms but	<b>MAXIMIZES OCCUPANCY RATE</b>
Prices are not in, they have turned into	<b>RATES or TARIFFS</b>
You are not a communicative person but you have	<b>COMMUNICATION SKILLS, PEOPLE SKILLS AND TELEPHONE SKILLS</b>
Reservation clerk has become a	<b>RESERVATION AGENT</b>
Travel agent has been promoted to a	<b>TRAVEL SALES CONSULTANT</b>
If I went to Zagreb to visit my son I am a	<b>VFR TOURIST</b>
No-one and nothing has qualities but	<b>FEATURES</b>
Everyone is either a	<b>MANAGER; or a COORDINATOR, or an OFFICER or a CONSULTANT , or a REP</b>