Digital Education in Crisis Situations: a review of an ongoing Erasmus+ project DECrIS

Tatjana Aparac-Jelušić
Boris Bosančić

Department of Information Sciences, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Osijek, Croatia
Content

• Introduction
• Project’s activities
• Intellectual outputs of the DECriS project
• Concluding remarks
Introduction

• The disruption brought by the pandemic altered the educational landscape

• It challenged
  • the existing higher education institutions (HEI) infrastructure,
  • program curricula,
  • teaching and learning process and
  • administration

• Along with the challenges, this pandemic also created an opportunity for HEIs to incorporate and make greater use of DE, and open education in general.
Introduction – cont...

• The growing body of research as well as different examples of case studies and best practices suggest that
  • there are great benefits and opportunities when using DE tools in higher education (HE), especially during crisis situations such as COVID-19 pandemic
  • However, the research also points out the disadvantages/obstacles

• The benefits could apply to
  • both students and teachers/trainers, and
  • in terms of cost-effectiveness to
    • the institutions themselves.

• However, there is a growing evidence, not only the feeling, that DE – and OERs – are not used as much as one could hoped for.
Introduction – cont...

• Our research is a part of Erasmus+ project Digital Education for Crisis Situations: Times when there is no alternative (DECrISt)
• It aims
  • to create a framework for proper adoption of DE and OER’s in general, and in crisis situations in particular, making sure they will:
    • improve the quality of the DE and expand the possibilities for collaboration and knowledge sharing,
    • which may decrease the feeling of isolation common in situations like lockdowns.
Introduction – cont...

- Partners – University of Osijek, University of Barcelona, University of Librarianship and Information Technology, Sofia, SRCE, University of Zagreb and University of Hildesheim

- Project focuses in particular on:
  - digital competencies;
  - new innovative curricula and educational methods;
  - criteria for evaluation of OERs;
  - international cooperation; and
  - cooperation with business sector
Focus and activities

• Strengthening the cooperation among partners
  • EINFOSE and ILO partners – some dropping out, some joining in
• To offer *in situ* and online learning environment though summer schools and tutorials
Focus and activities – cont...

- What have we organized:
  - Summer schools – Osijek, 2021 and Hildesheim 2022
  - 3 Multiplier events
    - Barcelona, November 2021
    - Sofia, May 2022
    - Zagreb, November 2022 (now)
  - Plus the last one to be held in Osijek, May 2023 (Final Conference)
- Tutorials – one in Barcelona, November 2021 and the other one in Zagreb, November 2022
- Regular Transnational Project Meetings
Focus and activities – cont...

• For the purpose of this presentation I intend to present the DECriS project through its intellectual outputs (IOs) in the following manner:
  • what has been done within the project up to now,
  • what are our current efforts and plans, and
  • what will be done by the end of the project.
Intellectual Outputs of the DECriS project

• What has been done so far within the project’s IO-1
• The aim of IO-1 of the DECriS project was
  • to investigate state-of-the-play of the use of DE and OERs at European HEI in the field of (L)IS during the COVID-19 pandemic.
• The most important findings from the research conducted at 56 (L)IS HEIs from 23 European countries.
  • two most dominant aspects of digital education that were implemented during COVID-19 pandemic were live teaching sessions via video conferencing tools and online communication with students.
  • all (L)IS schools/departments used video conferencing tools while the majority also used learning management systems (LMS) and online anti-plagiarism systems.
IO 1 – results – cont...

- All (L)IS schools/departments used digital learning materials, while 46% of them used digital OERs.
- In that sense, blended learning has proven to be the most used teaching method, along with project-based learning and problem-based learning that were also significantly represented.
- Unfortunately, we discovered that 54% of (L)IS schools/departments didn’t use OERs during COVID-19 pandemic!
IO 1 – results – cont...

- However, (L)IS schools/departments have been also using OERs developed and created by others at national and international level, as well as OERs that were designed, developed and created by their own staff.

- A fact that could shine more light on how OERs have been approached up to now, before and during the pandemic, relates to the lack of institutional policies e.g. more than 2/3 of (L)IS schools/departments have no institutional policy regarding OERs.
IO 1 – conclusion

• The others findings of IO-1 research process within the project will be uploaded at the web page of the project in the report entitled
  • “State-of-the-play of the use of OERs at European higher education institutions in the field of Library and Information Science during the COVID-19 pandemic”
    https://decris.ffos.hr/intellectual-outputs/o1

• Several research papers were or are in process of being published
What is currently being done – activities connected with IO-2 and IO-3

“Digital Education appraisal and quality perception by students, teachers and trainers at the partner HEI during the COVID-19 crisis”.

IO2’s aim is to get insights about the students’ and teachers’ attitudes towards DE and educational resources -in general- and towards canonical OER -in particular-, mainly during the COVID-19 crisis and in contrast with their pre-pandemic experiences.

For IO-2 we used following qualitative methods:
• semi-structured interviews with teachers (39)
• focus groups with students (10).
IO 3 – basic information

• Regarding IO-3, there are two main goals
  • The first goal is to prepare a list of critical success factors which can be used to assess the quality of existing OERs.
  • The second goal is to present a typological classification for the evaluation of the quality of the OERs.

• After the critical success factors have been separated and organized, this deliverable is prepared in form of a methodological framework which will be available to all HEIs wishing to use them in evaluation processes of OERs.
IOs plans

• What is yet to be done – planning IO4, IO5 and IO6

• In IO-4, we mapped the success factors to the practices at partners’ HEIs.
  • The mixed methodology was used in each of the partner’s HEI
In IO-5 we will apply the success factors to the existing OERs from the EINFOSE project in order to improve them and test how the success factors can be applied in practice.

There are five OERs in key areas of:

- Advances of Information Science,
- Research Methodology in Information Science,
- Principles of Information Organization and Information Seeking and Retrieval, and
- Evaluation of Information Services, and
- Curation of Analogical and Digital Material (new)
IOs plans – cont...

• IO-6 aims to explore
  • how the HEIs organized internship/apprenticeship and other forms of students’ field work during the time of crisis, and
  • how these can be improved in an online setting as a basis for developing a methodology for further research that include students’ satisfaction rate as well as a perspective and expectations from hosting institutions.

• The internship practice in the COVID-19 crisis also pointed out to the problem that all forms of field work can not rely only on physical presence in hosting organizations

• We have in particular in mind the online internship/apprenticeship in the business sector, i.e. in private computer companies, and public sector (e.g. libraries, documentation centers, centers for information analysis), in the time of COVID-19 pandemic or similar crisis situations

• With this deliverable we would like to indicate the potentials of online internship/apprenticeship.
Concluding remarks

• Digital Education has the potential to provide better teaching and learning opportunities, especially in regards to the unpredictable circumstances such as COVID-19 which revealed that many HEIs faced problems of
  • technical,
  • socio-psychological and
  • didactic nature.

• In DECriS project we are framing our outputs based on a platform model which serves in a crisis situation and supports the mash up of different services, models, strategies and educational materials so that they respond to these shifted goals and accommodate new set of educational needs.
Thanks for your attention

Tatjana Aparac-Jelusic – taparacjelusic@ffos.hr
Boris Bosančić – bbosancic@ffos.hr

DECriS project - https://decris.ffos.hr/