Title: Didactical materials for Moodle and online workshops for teachers at the University of Maribor (Slovenia)

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Abstract

The pedagogical process at the University of Maribor (UM), Slovenia, during pandemic COVID-19 has been moved to two major systems: Moodle and Microsoft Teams. Video lectures have been conducted in Microsoft Teams and in the Moodle UM, a learning management system used at the UM as a centralised solution for all its 17 faculties (https://estudij.um.si/), which remains the basic system for providing study materials and conducting other online activities. The aim of this presentation is to give an insight into didactical support for the Moodle UM that is available to university teachers at the UM. The Centre for Teaching Support at the University of Maribor (CTSUM) is a centralised solution for all existing faculties of the UM (approx. 600 HE teachers, 320 members of HE staff, and 14000 students altogether), which provides this kind of support. The CTSUM has been established in the framework of the Didakt.UM project (https://didakt.um.si/) in 2017.

The CTSUM has prepared didactical guidelines, recommendations, and online workshops in the Moodle UM for the use of different Moodle activities to encourage efficient distance teaching and students' active learning. Didactical materials (in Slovene) are provided at the CTSUM website https://didakt.um.si/gradiva in a special category entitled “Emergency Remote Teaching” (slo. Poučevanje na daljavo v izrednih razmerah). There are four guidelines and recommendations available for didactical use of the Moodle UM. The primary guide for easier transition of teaching into the Moodle UM is “10 Steps to Prepare a Learning Unit for Distance Teaching in the Moodle UM” (slo. 10 korakov za pripravo učne enote v Moodlu UM za poučevanje na daljavo), providing a summary of the main steps to start teaching in Moodle. “Moodle 3 – Quick Guide for Teachers” (slo. Moodle 3 – Hiter vodič za izvajalce) presents 12 Moodle activities, encouraging teachers to choose the appropriate activity according to pedagogical purpose (e.g. transmission of information, knowledge assessment, communication, interaction, and collaboration) and activity complexity. Furthermore, a guide entitled “Examples of Activity Use in the Moodle UM” (slo. Primeri uporabe aktivnosti v Moodlu UM) provides diverse ideas and examples for using 12 Moodle activities (e.g. creating the collection of questions and answers with the Glossary activity, encouraging the student self-evaluation about achieving learning objectives with the Feedback activity).

Discussions a teacher has regularly included in their pedagogical process in the classroom can, in an online learning scenario, be moved to a forum in the Moodle UM. Well-organised asynchronous discussions allow students to deepen their understanding of the subject material, develop critical thinking, and create thought-out arguments. Different types of forums allow different types of discussions (i.e. the Standard Forum enables a Free Debate). Teachers must familiarise themselves with how to moderate the forum. They must set up clear expectations, choose suitable topics, actively participate or intervene, and encourage student participation. A moderator/teacher can encourage students to participate by creating an inclusive atmosphere, by assigning tasks, roles, and discussion leaders, by supporting timid or troubled students, and by limiting the loud ones. These guidelines are set out in
detail in the document “Preparing and Leading Online Discussions in the Moodle UM” (slo. Priprava in vodenje diskusije v Moodle UM).

With the aim to train university teachers for teaching and learning in the Moodle UM according to didactical guidelines, the CTSUM offers five online workshops in the Moodle UM. Two workshops have already been presented at the MoodleMoot Hrvatska 2019: »Gamifying the learning unit in the Moodle UM« (slo. Igrificirajmo učno enoto v Moodle UM) and »Didactically organised learning unit in the Moodle UM« (slo. Didaktično urejena učna enota v Moodle UM). The three new workshops are presented below.

The online workshop "With ICT supported flipped learning" (slo. Z IKT podprto obrmajo učenje) is dedicated to educating university teachers on the characteristics of flipped learning phases, wherein the activities are taking place in the Moodle UM. More specifically, university teachers are trained to plan activities for the first phase of flipped learning (i.e. knowledge acquisition before class), to evaluate the knowledge acquired by students and to select the appropriate ICT tools. The workshop aims not only to develop skills for the preparation of didactically and technically appropriate video materials and e-materials (e.g. Lesson, Book, and Quiz activities as a source of formative assessment) but also looks at the aspect of organising resources (e.g. Database and Folder activities) and group collaboration (e.g. Wiki and Forum activities). Finally, a certain amount of attention is paid to familiarising oneself with the changes in teaching that flipped learning activities entail after students have worked independently outside the classroom. The second activation of the workshop will follow in June and will focus on the design of learning outcomes and the use of Moodle activities according to the Bloom taxonomy. In addition, participants will be introduced to tools for recording video lectures (e.g. Microsoft Teams and Educreations) and for online collaboration (e.g. Padlet), highlighting recommendations for achieving the best possible results and encouraging student involvement in academic work.

The workshop "H5P for the inclusion of interactive content in the Moodle UM" (slo. Vtičnik H5P za vključitev interaktivne vsebine v Moodle UM) introduces teachers to the new plug-in H5P and to the option of preparing interactive content in the Moodle UM. Moodle was often used by teachers only for uploading studying resources and likewise seen by students as a synonym for passive storage of content. Additional dynamic elements require active students’ participation or merely provide them with in-depth information. The workshop consists of three main parts: lessons with content, an assignment for participants, and a showroom of practical examples. Through six chapters, the participants learn how to use the plug-in in practice (e.g. adding new activities, including existing ones, acknowledging authorship, and adapting language interfaces) and get familiar with a selection of 23 H5P activities. For the assignment, they submit 3 practical examples of selected H5P activities and share them with colleagues in the Glossary activity. Different examples are presented also through the content (e.g. Treasury of Examples chapter – slo. Zakladnica primerov) so that the participants can easily understand particular activities. The aim of sharing examples from different professional work is also to form a community, where participants can later get new ideas or connect with each other.

In connection to education, learning analytics has gained a lot of attention in the past few years. Learning analytics is interested in understanding and optimising the learning process to maximise its quality and outcomes. Learner interaction in Moodle leaves digital traces behind. There are a number of built-in reports and blocks that provide us with basic information on students’ progress but they are primarily descriptive, telling us only what
happened and when. They do not predict outcomes or advise on how to improve them. The workshop “Monitoring progress in the Moodle UM” (slo. Spremljanje napredka v Moodlu UM) is focused on how to use standard reports in the Moodle UM to recognise students in trouble. It includes examples of actions to be taken to encourage students, such as sending a prompt reminder to students lagging. On the other hand, by using Moodle, teachers can also gain new insights into their teaching approaches, recognising possible positive modifications of teaching. The workshop stimulates participants to reconsider the level of e-learning experience they provide through Moodle and, based on that, contemplate adjustments of the e-teaching level used with relevant Moodle activities.