

CREATING A BUSINESS PLAN FOR A VIRTUAL HOTEL AS A MEANS OF MODERN LEARNING

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to give an example of the implementation of a modern teaching trend in the teaching of tourism subjects. The paper describes the application of teamwork with students on the joint creation of a virtual hotel business plan. The main method of the work is the theoretical inductive principle and the result is a comprehensive hotel business plan and an innovative form of teaching.

Keywords

teaching, teamworks, bussiness plan

INTRODUCTION

Modern teaching methods play an indispensable role in higher education. Nowadays, the importance of innovation in teaching at all levels of education is being emphasized. Project-based learning is one of the fundamental pillars for students to be prepared to compete in practice and learn practical skills and competencies. Tourism education is specific to the need to acquire theoretical knowledge as well as practical skills and competences.

Literature review

A study by Lesinskis et al. (2021) talks about the need to constantly update teaching methods in higher education. They define together with educators what needs to be changed in 21st century teaching to respond to the changing business environment and students. The conclusion from the primary research conducted by the authors is that

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the sample of respondents representing Generation Z highly appreciates the application and effectiveness of modern teaching methods in the study of economics, however, the evaluation of individual methods varies significantly depending on the preferred type of teaching. According to Apelt et al. (2023), achieving a new, modern quality of education, orientation towards the development of students' foreign language sociocultural competence and their cognitive and creative abilities is one of the main tasks of modern education. Analyzing the above methods, their influence on the process of organization and effectiveness of teaching, as well as in the development of tourism education, the authors conclude that such forms of work as project-based learning, practical teaching in the form of excursions and the wide use of role-playing games can be described as active forms of work in teaching. They contribute to the most perfect involvement of students in the learning process and, therefore, to its acquisition.

Modern society poses new challenges to education, one of which is to educate people who are able to express a critical opinion, find a way of communicating in a new world, and effectively establish new contacts in a rapidly changing reality. Intensity, activity, independence, creativity, the ability to adapt to rapid changes – these personality traits are becoming the most important in the current stage of literacy development, and their formation requires the use of new approaches to the process of teaching literacy. Therefore, the aim of the academic paper is to explain the development of the use of innovative, non-standard, but also critically thinking methods of teaching and learning in modern schools (Bilyk et al., 2023).

Education is an important part of life and new modern types of learning are constantly emerging. In the Czech Republic, "ignorance is no excuse", so it is important to be informed about new approaches to education. Nowadays the most commonly used modern types of learning are E-learning, Blended learning, Gamification, Adaptive learning, Microlearning, MOOCs and Networked learning. These teaching methods offer various advantages and allow students to learn at their own pace and with respect to their individual needs. In this article, we bring you the latest news from the world of learning so that everyone can choose the most appropriate way for their own development and education².

According to Nezvalová (2024), a university teacher must be aware of who the teaching is intended for and to what extent the students are prepared for the challenging topics he or she intends to present to them. Therefore, he should know their learning assumptions and learning needs, give room for questions, perceive mistakes and errors, help them correct them and correct his teaching. The student should be the decisive criterion for the design of teaching. Showing interest in students and respecting their personality is an important aspect of professionalism for university teachers. A teacher's interest in students must be substantive and balanced by appropriate learning requirements.

Kasíková (2015) argues that a more accurate knowledge of the beliefs of teachers and student teachers (Straková et al., 2014) and the key components of a teacher's activity – professional knowledge, professional vision and professional action (Janík, 2005; Janík et

2 EVROPSKÁ AKADEMIE VZDĚLÁVÁNÍ. *Moderní metody výuky* [online]. 2023. [cit. 8. 6. 2024]. Dostupné z: <https://www.europeanacademy.cz/moderni-metody-vyuky/>.

al., 2014) – underpins the development of conceptions of teacher preparation in higher education that reflect the characteristics of the profession.

According to Novotná (1985), pedagogy emphasizes the setting of the goal, the time schedule, the creation of the project output, but also the student's responsibility for the project results and his/her activity. It goes without saying that the methodological modernization of higher education is closely linked to the use of a wide range of didactic technology. The optimization of the teaching process is also effectively influenced by the development of cybernetics and computer science. Didactic automata, computers, displays are widely used. The application of informatics in university didactics also goes in the direction of using informative schemes of thought and the conceptual apparatus of information theory – in the theoretical plane based on the mathematical apparatus – to describe didactic phenomena. The value of activation methods is generally acknowledged, but it cannot be disguised that their implementation in everyday didactic activity is not an easy matter. It not only requires an adequate base of didactic resources, but also requires considerable effort on the part of both teacher and listener. If the teacher himself does not deeply experience the problems of his discipline, if he is not himself an authentic creator in science, technology or culture, he cannot, as a rule, even "translate" the creative restlessness into the consciousness of his listeners. There are other reasons why university teachers make little use of activation methods. Not every subject is equally suitable for this method of implementation and – as experience from practice shows – the full use of activation methods is limited by the lack of time. As a rule, the implementation of an appropriate topic using problem-based methods (as well as its preparation) requires more time than, for example, the choice of a traditional lecture. With oversized teaching programmes, activation methods seem to be of little use.

According to Zormanová (2012), project-based learning is teaching based on the project method (Kratochvílová, 2006). A project is understood as a complex work task in which students independently solve a problem (problem task, problem situation, ...). With the help of this teaching method, pupils are encouraged to work independently on certain complex tasks or solve problems related to life reality. A characteristic feature of project-based learning is the goal, which is represented by a specific output, i.e. a product, a practical solution to a problem. Projects often take the form of integrated topics, using inter-subject relationships. Maxa (2015) also talks about project-based learning, where in the context of teaching economic subjects, project-based learning emphasizes the complexity of the problem to be solved, the goal of which is the acquisition of the necessary knowledge and skills by students. The requirement to link life, learning and work also comes to the fore, in collaboration between teachers, pupils, interested parents, or invited experts, so that the selected topics can be addressed in relation to social and at the same time individual needs. A project in economics subjects is primarily a complex practical task (problem, topic) linked to life reality, which must be solved by theoretical and practical activities leading to the production of the expected output. The teacher only coordinates the processing of the project, the students are the solvers. It is in a way a teamwork of pupils.

Project-based learning is well suited where courses are intended to offer more than a mere 'cookbook' of procedures, and can also be used where the design and development of

a product is to be achieved. As with problem-based learning, projects should be authentic and focused on specific learning objectives; in addition, when students work in teams, the teacher should follow cooperative learning principles, facilitate the acquisition of teamwork skills, and ensure that all team members are individually responsible for the entire content of the project. Along with this, as teachers and students gain experience with project-based learning, projects can be more open-ended, containing fewer instructions needed for completion. In other words, projects may be increasingly structured as problem-based tasks or exercises (Nezvalová, 2024).

Basic steps of the project:

1. Determination of the project's purpose, which is represented by the formulation of objectives, determination of the result of the activity;
2. Planning, i.e. setting out the basic questions, the topic, the type of activities;
3. Execution, independent implementation of the project;
4. Evaluation of the work on the project, which should take place both by the teacher and the pupils evaluating the work on the project in a dialogue in front of the class, and by the pupils evaluating each other. (Zormanová, 2012)

The basic features of the project are succinctly summarised by Coufalová (2006):

- The project is based on the needs and interests of the child.
- The project is based on a concrete and actual situation that is not limited to the environment of school.
- The project is interdisciplinary.
- The project is first and foremost a pupil's enterprise.
- The work of the pupils in the project produces a concrete product, i.e. an output which the participants in the project.
- The project project participant presents.
- The project is usually carried out in a group (it can also be individual).

The authors Rohlíková and Vejvodová (2012) state that project-based learning has many advantages. First of all, in project-based learning we get the opportunity to motivate students by cognitive motivation instead of performance motivation. Students who are used to project-based learning find it much easier to get excited about conventional teaching if it has some connection to the project they are working on at the time. Project-based learning teaches students responsibility for the learning process. A student who has developed this responsibility is motivated to learn and works much more effectively. This responsibility is taken away from the teacher. The teacher moves from the role of leader to that of collaborator or consultant. If the teacher has done enough work in the planning phase of the project and has planned the project correctly, then in the later phases of the project the teacher is just reaping the fruits and the students are working in his place. A major advantage is the blurring of boundaries between subjects and the linking of the curriculum into larger units. This brings unprecedented opportunities for collaboration with teachers of other subjects. It also makes it much easier for pupils to remember knowledge that they have actually used on a project and that they had to look

up themselves or otherwise find out because they needed it. In project-based learning, it is easier to individualise. Collaboration, communication, work skills and presentation skills are developed.

Methodology

To conduct the theoretical analysis, an extensive literature review was conducted to identify modern teaching methods that are applicable to higher education. A search for relevant articles was conducted using various academic databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR and Scopus. Articles were identified using specific keywords such as 'teaching methods', 'modern schools', 'technology in education' and 'project-based learning'. Induction – one type of reasoning and a method of inquiry where general conclusions are drawn from observations of individual cases. It is a progression from the particular to the general. Complete induction: a judgment in which the general conclusion follows from premises summarizing all the individual cases, the conclusion is certain. Description of project-based learning in practice.

Results

The actual workflow and involvement in the project

Students were tasked with working in teams to develop a financial business plan including costing, website and staffing allocations. The students were divided into 3 teams, forming 3 e-hotels. The winning team is represented in this article.

Students worked within the project Innovation of professional training of future professionals in tourism using a fictitious educational hotel.

Partner organisations:

- Sia biznesa Augstskola Turība, Latvia,
- Silesian University in Opava, Czech Republic,
- Pannon Egyetem, Hungary,
- Università del Salento, Italy.

We see the creation and subsequent integration of the e-hotel into the educational process as an opportunity to:

- providing an alternative form of education in the hotel industry,
- supplementing hotel training,
- developing transversal competences,
- establishing international cooperation with other hotels,
- bringing real practice closer to the educational offer,
- creating diverse groups (mainly cultural and social) working towards common goals,

mobilising and motivating students to participate in educational and development activities.

The starting point for the development of the business plan (as one of the stages of the project) of each team (3) was the theory related to the issue of business plan. On this basis, students from each department designed a specific hotel. The students were guided by the academic participants of the project. The project resulted in proposals for the creation of specific hotels in the participating countries. Each team is at a different level of business plan development. The project had 5 stages. The phase related to the E-hotel was Stage 3 and started from January 2022 to September 2023. The students were involved in a tourism subject and presented the E-hotel in a classroom setting, with a self-defense and presentation of the developed business plan at the end. The capital project was then presented online at a regular international meeting. The beginning of the work with students was focused on studying the theory of the business plan, then they worked independently. The teacher was only a facilitator who had an advisory role. The students had regular meetings with the tutor where they presented the progress of the work.

Based on the experience of the Hungarian partners, the following structure has been proposed:

- Business data,
- basic functions,
- human resource planning (current team structure, planned front office team structure, planned team structure, housekeeping, planned team structure, sales and marketing),
- market analysis,
- Competitor analysis,
- return on investment/price,
- packages,
- sales and communication strategies (sales strategy, communication strategy, website, viral videos).

The workflow of the students was as follows: market research – market size – market opportunity analysis, analysis of target customer groups – competitor analysis – SWOT analysis, what competitors offer to customers – risk analysis – hotel design: target group, location, type of hotel, hotel quality and services: basic and additional services; objectives, focus of the offer – packages 1–5: brochures and prices, marketing mix, pricing strategy, HR plan for front office, housekeeping and sales and marketing, sales strategy, communication strategy, performance indicators – financial part – web – video. There were 12 students in this group, including the team leader, and each was assigned an area to create.

The main outputs of the E-hotel project

Name and target group: The family hotel Weinberg *** is located in the South Moravian region between the towns of Sedlec u Mikulova and Na Mušlově, in the district of Breclav,

near the Moravian capital Mikulov. The size of the building plot is 4,183 m², it is a third-class hotel and it is aimed primarily at families with children and young couples (newlyweds and couples who are just planning to start a family) who do not visit South Moravia primarily out of interest in wine and wine cellars.

The hotel has twenty-five rooms, 10 of which are double rooms with extra beds and 15 quadruple rooms + the possibility of renting a baby cage. The rooms have private bathroom with toilet and shower, several rooms also offer a bath. The hotel is well technically equipped – in the facilities and accommodation part, where it offers internet connection, TV or air conditioning. The price includes breakfast and the possibility to buy half board in the form of dinner. The restaurant's menu includes regional and regional food and dishes prepared from it. The hotel restaurant will be open to the public during lunch and dinner.

The hotel parking lot contains thirty parking spaces and also two handicapped parking spaces. As an additional service, the Weinberg Hotel offers a shared spa. In our wellness area, it is possible to use the sauna with a capacity of 8 people, there is also an indoor pool that can be used by both children and adults. There is also a whirlpool in the spa, which is equipped with fully automatic technology and can be controlled remotely, for example from the reception. There is also one private spa for romantic evenings. For children there are two playgrounds where they will definitely have fun. The first playground is located outside the hotel building in the form of a supervised playroom and the second one is outside, by the restaurant terrace, but can only be used under parental supervision.

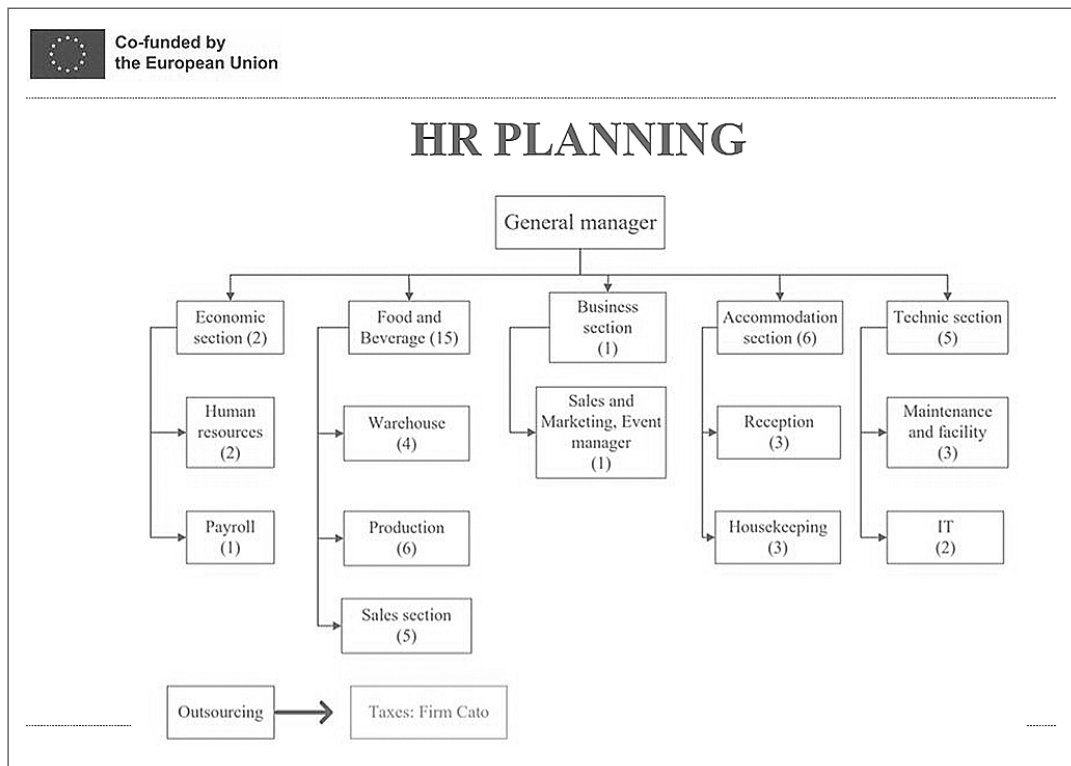
After the general definition of the E-hotel, there is a section describing the individual sections of the hotel. These are the concierge, reception, mailroom, corporate image, security and representatives. The housekeeping section is an essential part of the hotel operation, ensuring a pleasant and undisturbed stay of the guest in the hotel facility. Housekeeping staff are not directly involved in the marketing of the hotel. Their job consists of maintaining order and cleanliness, keeping the facilities and equipment functional and providing minor services to the clients. The marketing and sales positions are filled as follows. The Marketing Specialist is responsible for marketing activities based on the organisation's strategic plan to raise the profile and promote the company, products or a particular brand. It provides comprehensive market research activities, cooperates with advertising, marketing and PR agencies and the company's sales department. The Sales Director coordinates and is responsible for the implementation and development of the company's business and sales strategy. It takes decisions in the implementation of the commercial policy and the use of internal resources. He is responsible for strategic management and influencing development and innovation processes. Represents the company in establishing and maintaining business relationships and negotiations with partners. He is responsible for managing and controlling employees, allocating tasks and then checking their performance. The remuneration process includes a payment policy, rewards for blood donors, benefits and an extra week's holiday.

The employee development and training process refers to all activities aimed at expanding/increasing the competencies of employees (including those on temporary assignment), either to meet the competency requirements for the position or to expand beyond them (in talent programmes, for example). Staff training is organised into the following units:

- Initial training.
- Periodic training/statutory training.
- Development training based on a personal training plan.

The organisation of selection procedures, recruitment and training of new employees is also elaborated in detail.

Fig. 1 Example of organizational structures



Source: own processing by students (Collective of authors, 2023)

In the framework of competitor analysis, students created a SWOT analysis for competitors. They identified a total of 4 competitors:

- Pension U Vinice offers accommodation for about 30 people with parking. In terms of catering, it is possible to prepare meals in a common kitchen, because the guesthouse offers only breakfast. For a fee, they offer the possibility of accommodation with a pet. For cyclists there is the possibility of charging electric bikes.
- Vinařský dům Sedlec is a family-run guest house and winery with a cellar. They focus mainly on cyclists, families with children and their pets. There is a small playground for children and a sauna and outdoor gas grill for adults. There is also a wine cellar. The wine house provides breakfast only.

- Pension Mušlov arranges corporate parties and tastings or holidays for families – it could be the biggest competitor. It has a capacity of 30 accommodation places. The guesthouse has a restaurant, which serves only the guests. Accommodation with pets is not possible. There is an indoor playground for children.
- Towards the town of Mikulov there is the Sedlec Mill, which offers a guesthouse with a restaurant. It can accommodate about 50 guests. There is a possibility of corporate parties in the wine bar which also has a capacity of up to 50 guests. In their restaurant, the chefs focus mainly on Czech dishes, but also world specialties. Free parking is available.

Tab. 1 SWOT of students

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We offer job opportunities for Czech, Slovak, and German-speaking staff. • The dominant position on the UZ market is in the hotel category – the surrounding area has mostly apartments and guesthouses. • The advantage is the use of regional food in the hotel restaurant and the preparation of classic Moravian cuisine. • Strategic location of the hotel near the most famous Moravian historical and natural attractions – Mikulov, Lednice Castle, etc. • There is good transport accessibility – road by regular buses, cars or rail transport. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remoteness of the land from the centre – it may look less attractive and there is no possibility to use such services as in the centre of Mikulov. • Initial high investment. • Lower level of experience with the operation of this type of UZ in an area where guesthouses and apartments predominate.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation with surrounding winemakers, connection with Winberg Mikulov s.r.o. winery, in the hotel restaurant and bar local wines are sold and served. • Accommodation is offered in a stylish but modern hotel, which offers tradition but also the latest trends. • Proximity to tourist attractions such as the town of Mikulov, Lednice-Valtice area, Aqualand Moravia, Austrian and Slovak border area, military monuments, Dolní and Horní Věstonice, wine region Palava and many others. • Construction of our own road leading to our hotel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competition in the vicinity – a large number of guesthouses – their location and price can put us at risk. • The current political situation in the east (the war in Ukraine may limit tourism or people's desire to travel) • Development of anti-pandemic restrictions – with their re-announcement, hotel operations will be limited. • Higher cost of initial inputs – food, skilled staff, UZ equipment. • It is difficult for a new hotel to establish a good and proven name in the market, so it may take time to find a steady clientele in the beginning.

Source: Own processing according to Czech Statistical Office (Collective of authors, 2024)

The students focused on the different price levels within the rooms offered (double, quadruple) along with the holding of additional services such as the possibility of renting a baby stick and bundled services within the stay such as breakfast, half board, wellness or for packages as a whole. Factors taken into account were: cost of price, competitive pricing, varied discount promotions and elasticity of consumer demand. Off-season discounts and off-season packages are used to influence customer traffic. Discounts can be claimed by returning guests with an x% discount or cash-bonus pricing. There is a higher focus on the economically weaker segment such as families with children, hence the price is based on necessities.

Calculation example

Main season – holidays, Easter, Mikulov vintage (approx. 75 days):

- Double room 1,800 CZK/night
- Quadruple room 2,500 CZK/night
- OCC high season = 85%
- Total revenue for 1 night = $8.5 \times 1,800 + (15 \times 0.85) \times 2,500 = 47,175$ CZK
- Total revenue for high season = $47,175 \times 75 = 3,538,125$ CZK
- RevPar = $3,538,125 / (75 \times 25) = 1,887$ CZK

Students also calculated the return on investment. They also created 5 pain points for customers. The last output was a promotional video and a website for the E-hotel (Collective of authors, 2024).

CONCLUSION

The article describes the project objectives, its structure, tasks and achievements of the project researchers. It defines the theoretical basis for the modern method of teaching and that is "project creation". Importantly, the project applies experiential learning and breaks down the more traditional hierarchy between teachers and students, so that the teacher becomes more of a coach and facilitator. Students will be better prepared for a competitive environment, both in the job market and for the opportunity to start their own hospitality business.

Students created a business plan based on an analysis, in a structure corresponding to the theoretical knowledge. The created business plans were evaluated by teachers and experts from practice. Based on the evaluation, a ranking was determined. The representative of the first-placed team presented the business plan at an international meeting.

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