

MICROECONOMIC ANALYSIS OF MANAGING CROATIAN BUSINESS SCHOOLS WEB PORTALS

MIKROEKONOMSKA ANALIZA UPRAVLJANJA WEB PORTALA HRVATSKIH POSLOVNIH ŠKOLA

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Abstract: *University studies prepare students to perform in science and higher education, business, public sector and society in general. College studies provide an adequate level of knowledge and skills that enable professional occupation, and preparation for immediate employment process. In this paper we made a model for the comparison of the Business schools Web portals. Finally, we investigated educational activities on Croatian business schools Web portals. Some conclusions and recommendations were made at the end.*

Key words: *education, web portal, business schools, microeconomic analysis*

Sažetak: *Sveučilišta pripremaju studente za rad u znanosti i visokom obrazovanju, poslovnom sektoru, javnom sektoru i društvu općenito. Sveučilišni kolegiji pružaju zadovoljavajuću razinu znanja i vještina za profesionalno zanimanje te pripremaju studente za uvođenje u proces zapošljavanja. U ovom radu napravljen je model usporedbe Web portala poslovnih škola. Promatrane su obrazovne aktivnosti na Web portalima poslovnih škola u Republici Hrvatskoj. Zaključci i preporuke dani su u završnom dijelu rada.*

Ključne riječi: *obrazovanje, web portal, poslovne škole, mikroekonomska analiza*



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1. Introduction - Croatian higher business education system

A higher education qualification is acquired at the degree level which takes a minimum of three to five years, have a theoretical underpinning and is usually taught in an environment which also includes advanced research activity. Shortly, higher education mainly and generally means university or college level education [1].

Business school is a higher education institution where students can study economic and financial subjects and learn about managing a business [2]. It provides courses of varying length and level for full-time students, but also offers part-time and distance learning to those already in employment. Subject coverage is broad, and courses cover all areas of business administration, management, technology, finance and interpersonal skills [3].

Although in history education was only available to selected groups of people, today, according to Universal Declaration of Human Rights, every individual has the right to educate. In Croatia, right to equal education is assigned through *Zakon o znanstvenoj djelatnosti i visokom obrazovanju*. While in Croatia there are no human rights violations that consist of a direct prohibition of entry to higher education based on race, gender, physical disability or other characteristics, the fact is that there are number of "indirect" barriers that prevent equal access to higher education to certain groups of society. According to the available data, higher education in Croatia is the most unreachable to families with lower incomes, students from vocational schools and persons with disabilities [4].

At the Ministerial Conference in Prague in 2001, Croatia signed the Bologna Declaration. Thus, students who enrolled in the academic year 2005/06 entered the new undergraduate, graduate and postgraduate programs which provide higher quality of education, the introduction of a common education system and the mobility possibilities [5].

2. Web portals

Web portal can be described like a 'window' into the host company's systems and information which offers a broad array of resources and services for customers and business partners. It allows the customer to track information as well as effect sales transactions. The first Web portals were online services that provided access to the Web. Most of the traditional search engines have transformed themselves into Web portals to attract and keep a larger audience [6]. On Web portals may be found considerable amount of data which might equally be correct or incorrect. It is important for Web portals to attain useful data and suitable information since consumers use it in their everyday tasks. A Web Portal aggregates information from multiple sources on the Web and organizes this material in an easy user-friendly manner. The data found on Web portals should have a sufficiently high quality [7]. Web Portal functions as a single point of access to information on the Web. It provides real time/dynamic access to the stored information [8].

3. Research Methodology and Data Collection

After we collected data about the number and type of Business schools in Croatia and came to the final number of 33 institutions (8 Faculties under 7 Universities, 11 Associate-degree colleges and 14 Colleges) which provide business education, we divided them into three categories as they are confined in Zakon o znanstvenoj djelatnosti i visokom obrazovanju [9]:

First group is consisted from Faculties as a part of University, which are established to perform activities of higher education, scientific, professional and art studies as well as other functions in accordance to Law and their statute. Second group is consisted from Associate-degree colleges and third from Colleges which are institutions that perform at least three different studies from at least three different fields, while they are established to perform functions of higher education via organizing and performing associate-degree studies, as well as performing professional, scientific and art function in accordance with Law and their statute.

Each of the observed units offers a unique program from the aspect of the origin, cost structure, goals, strategies or personality. Faculties have a wider range of scientific and professional programs, while colleges are focused on certain areas (eg. tourism - Opatija, Pula, Dubrovnik; management - ZŠEM). Once chosen as the venue for the study is not easy to change, but however, thanks to agreements, it is possible to study semester or two at one or more other business schools without changing the parent institution of higher education.

We didn't make the difference between public and private higher business education institutions in our research (shown in Table 1).

| Type of institution | Associate-degree colleges | College | Faculties | Sum |
|------------------------|---------------------------|---------|-----------|-----|
| Number of institutions | 11 | 14 | 8 | 33 |

Table 1. Number of Business schools in Croatia on April, 2010

During the research which lasted from April 10-15, 2010, we had to exclude one Associate-degree college from the first sample because it had no Web portal, and therefore it wasn't possible to make the analysis for it, so the final number of institutions in the sample was 32.

Model for the comparison of the business schools Web portals consists of four major areas that we considered to be crucial for the effective educational Web portal (shown in Figure 1). In this paper we investigated: (1) Pre-education activities (description of Business school, pictures and video material, description about programs and courses, official documents, prices, scholarships, history, teachers CVs, student organizations, information about other service departments like library, ICT etc.), (2) Education (e-learning system, lectures and materials, course timetable, teachers consultation hours, Intranet), (3) After-education activities (alumni club, life-long learning courses, cooperation with business sector and conferences).

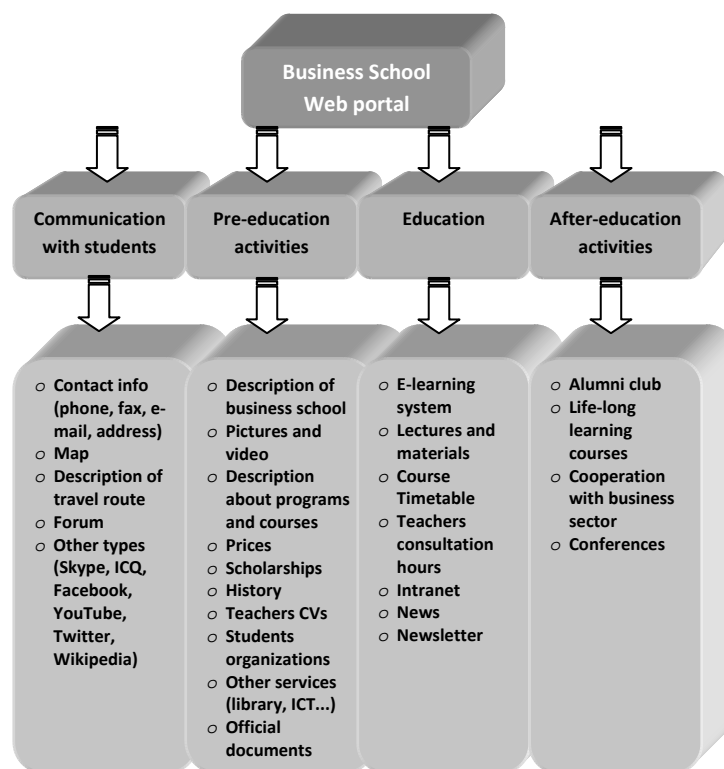


Figure 1. Communication and educational activities on business schools Web portals

4. Research Sample: Microeconomic review of the Croatian business schools

| Description of business school | Program and course description | History | Teachers CVs | Student organizations | Other service departments | Official documents | Pictures | Video material | Scholarships | Prices |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------|--------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|----------|----------------|--------------|---------|
| 90,63 % | 62,50 % | 84,38 % | 43,75 % | 43,75 % | 65,63 % | 75,00 % | 100,00 % | 15,63 % | 40,63 % | 78,13 % |

Table 1. Pre-education activities on Croatian business schools Web portals, 2010

Almost all business schools have description and pictures. About 80% have visible prices and description of school history. Most of them have program and course description, official documents and description of other services and departments, about 60-70%. Poor result is that only 15.63% use video materials.

| News | Newsletter | E-learning system | Intranet | Lectures and materials | Course timetable | Consultation hours |
|---------|------------|-------------------|----------|------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| 100,00% | 6,25% | 18,75% | 46,88% | 71,88% | 81,25% | 68,75% |

Table 2. Education activities on Croatian business schools Web portals, 2010

Every Croatian Business school on its Web portal publishes news about their activities. Most of them have lectures and course materials with course timetable and teacher consultation hours, about 70%. Surprisingly low result is that only 18,75% of Croatian Business schools have e-learning system, and even less of that have newsletter subscription possibility, 6,25%. About 37% of Croatian business schools have alumni club for former students and they also organize life-long learning courses and conferences. Half of business schools have some kind of cooperation with business sector.

| Alumni club | Life-long learning courses | Cooperation with business sector | Conferences |
|-------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------|
| 37,50% | 37,50% | 50,00% | 31,25% |

Table 3. After-education activities on Croatian business schools Web portals, 2010

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

Specific model for the comparison of the Business schools Web portal was made and we analyzed pre-educational, educational and after-educational activities on their Web portals. Every Croatian Business school on its Web portal publishes news about their activities and most of them have materials and all that is necessary for education. In the future, Croatian Business schools should invest more in e-learning systems because people will have less and less time for education and that anybody who wants could learn no matter where she/he physically is. They should also use free and effective promotion tools like newsletter to inform their present and future students. As a future work, we plan to investigate managing Web portals for Business schools and their microeconomic review in region and in EU.

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