

COMMUNICATION WITH STUDENTS THROUGH CROATIAN BUSINESS SCHOOLS WEB PORTALS

KOMUNIKACIJA S UČENICIMA KROZ WEB PORTALE HRVATSKIH POSLOVNIH ŠKOLA

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Abstract: Higher education is today an integral and very important part of educational systems. For this research, we chose only one type of higher education institutions – Business schools. Business schools are educational facilities that are specialized in the field of teaching materials relevant to businesses or business services. We have made a model for comparison Business schools Web portals and then analyzed communication with students. Emphasis was on new ways of communications such as Web 2.0 applications. At the end we have shown results of our study and gave recommendations.

Key words: Education, Web portal, Business Schools, Communication, Web 2.0

Sažetak: Visoko obrazovanje sastavni je i vrlo važan dio cjelokupnog edukacijskog sustava. Za potrebe ovog istraživanja uzet je samo jedan oblik visokog obrazovanja – poslovne škole. Poslovne škole su edukacijske ustanove čija predavanja su specijalizirana za poslovanje ili poslovne usluge. Napravljen je model usporedbe Web portala poslovnih škola i analizirane su mogućnosti komunikacije sa studentima. Posebno su istaknuti novi načini komunikacije kao što su Web 2.0 aplikacije. Na kraju su prikazani rezultati istraživanja te su dane određene preporuke.

Ključne riječi: Obrazovanje, Web portal, Poslovne škole, Komunikacija, Web 2.0



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1. Introduction - Education system in Croatia

Higher education is today an integral and very important part of educational systems. In ancient times, it was designed only for elite and well endowed, but now every prosperous citizen is looking at this post-school opportunity. Education system is the laboratory in which are tested competing solutions to the problems of personal liberation and social equality and the arena in which social struggles are fought out [1]. A number of continuing educational facilities offer every kind of education in every segment of the world populace. Education is being delivered as a prelude to research and the final choice of a vocation. Colleges give students the chance to research and study their preferred subjects in detail [2].

In the last few years, higher education in Croatia passed through a significant reform in line with the Bologna process that has brought many important changes and one of the most important goals is certainly the introduction of quality assurance in higher education institutions. It is precisely under the Bologna process to increase autonomy and with it, the responsibility of the higher education institutionalization to encourage startup areas of quality assurance as one of the essential factors for comparability of quality academic programs, the introduction of a common education system and the mobility of students and teachers [3]. Therefore, we did a research how successful is communication between the higher education institutions and their students through modern ICT technologies, especially Web 2.0 services.

At the moment, in Croatia are established many varieties of educational institutions which are doing their activities as public service according to Zakon o znanstvenoj djelatnosti i visokom obrazovanju. This Law distinguishes four main groups of institutions and they are as follows [4]:

(1) University is an institution which establishes and conducts scientific studies in at least two scientific and/or artistic domains in larger number of fields as well as interdisciplinary studies as autonomous and integrated process, directly or through their faculties, arts academies and departments which are established in accordance to Law

(2) Faculty is a part of University which is established to perform activities of higher education, scientific, professional and art studies as well as other functions in accordance to Law and their statute

(3) Associate-degree colleges and colleges are institutions which 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 professional studies, as well as performing professional, scientific and art function in accordance with Law and their statute

(4) Private Associate-degree colleges and colleges have the same function as previously mentioned institutions; with the difference that private person established them.

2. Business Schools in Croatia

Business schools are educational facilities that are specialized in the field of teaching

materials relevant to businesses or business services. Business schools usually offer a variety of different business programs (accounting, administration, finance, information systems, marketing, organizational behavior, public relations, strategy, human resource management, and quantitative methods), which students can choose based on the affinities toward specialization once they graduate. Business schools may operate as a certain entity or may be available within another institution [5].

This is a special kind of industry in which the final products are highly educated people with knowledge in economic field, and whose business is assigned by Zakon o znanstvenoj djelatnosti i visokom obrazovanju as well as with other Laws and regulations from this domain [4].

This industry is relatively consolidated, i.e. there is a moderate number of competitors with a high concentration of most business schools in the city of Zagreb, and with a predominance of one or a small number of large ones, all of which are highly interdependent in a way that their actions affect the profitability of each other and their market shares.

3. Web portals and Web 2.0

Web portals provide a centralized application to access information from various sources distributed across the Web. Recently, the number of organizations that provide Web portals has grown dramatically [8]. They collect information and then present them to the users and at the same time are able to process large number of users' requests [7]. Users make the use of Web portals to obtain information for their work and as help with decision making. Therefore, they need to be sure that the data obtained are appropriate for the use to which they need them, and on the other side, data provided on Web portals should meet user requirements and help these users to achieve their goals [6].

Web2.0 includes new forms of social computing which bridge over cultural differences and have the impact on development of the new Internet services. The most known services are Facebook, Twitter, Wikipedia, YouTube, Skype, etc.

4. Research Methodology and Data Collection

Model for Web portals of Croatian Business schools comparison consists of four major areas we considered to be crucial for the effective educational Web portal (shown in Figure 1). In this paper we investigated Communication with students, namely contact information (phone, fax, e-mail, address), business school location (map and description of travel route), forum and other new types of communication like Web 2.0 applications (Skype, Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Wikipedia, ICQ and others). After drafting the model through which we'll make the analysis, we moved over to identifying the research sample. Empirical research lasted from April 10-15, 2010 and we found out that there are currently 8 Faculties inside 7 Universities, 11 Associate-degree colleges and 14 Colleges which provide business education in Croatia. After collecting data about all of them, to begin the analysis it was

necessary to systematize the final list and it seemed logical to divide them into three main categories: Faculties as part of the Universities, Associate-degree colleges and Colleges. Although, sample comprised 33 Croatian Business schools, one Associate-degree college didn't have Web portal, so 32 institutions entered the analysis. Objective of this paper is to make a review of types of communication with students on Croatian business schools Web portals.

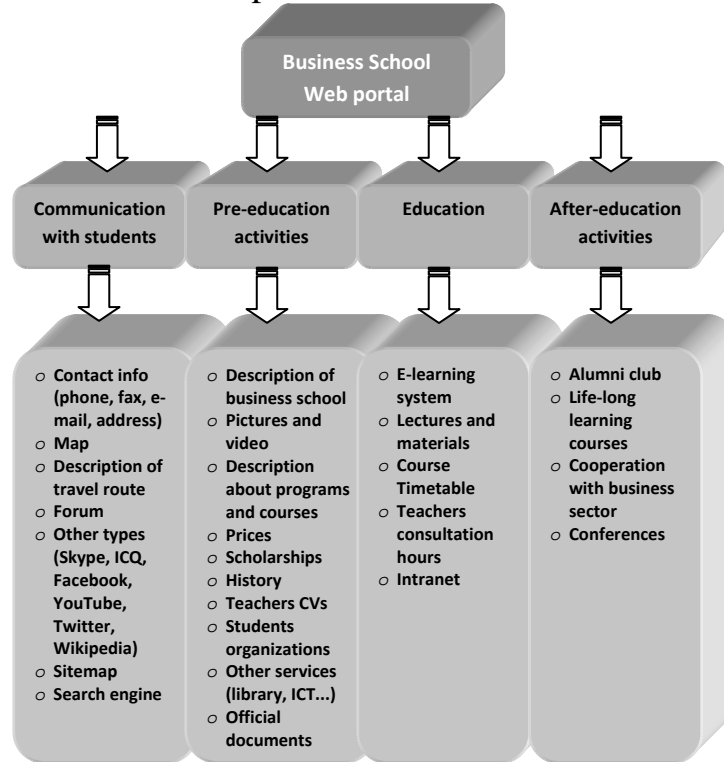


Figure 1. Communication and educational activities on business schools Web portals

5. Microeconomic review of the communication with students on Croatian business schools Web portals

Sitemap	Search engine	Phone	Fax	E-Mail	Adress	Map	Description of travel route	Forum
25,00%	75,00%	96,88%	96,88%	81,25%	100,00%	56,25%	15,63%	31,25%

Table 1. Communication types with students in Croatian business schools in 2010

Among standard contact information, most of Business schools in Croatia have their physical address (100%), phone number and fax (96,88%) as well as search engine on their Web portals (75%), but only 25% of them has a site map. 56,25% Business schools have map and 15,63% have description of travel route. Surprising result is that only 81,25% of them have an e-mail address noticed on Web portals.

As it is shown in Table 3., most popular Web 2.0 application among Croatian Business schools is Facebook (68,75% of Croatian business schools has profile on that service) and most of the profiles were made by students or student organizations that attend that Business school. 21,88% of them upload video materials about school or its activities on YouTube service. Surprisingly low result is that only 12,50% of Croatian Business schools have their information on Wikipedia – online

encyclopedia where anybody can participate and add information and only 3,13% of Croatian Business schools use service Twitter. One more surprising result is that 0,00% of Business schools use Skype, ICQ and other services.

Skype	Facebook	Twitter	Wikipedia	YouTube	ICQ and others
0,00%	68,75%	3,13%	12,50%	21,88%	0,00%

Table 3. Usage of Web 2.0 services among Croatian Business schools in 2010

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

In this paper, we explored do Business schools in Croatia have Web portals, which information they put on the portals and do they use new Web 2.0 applications. Specific model for the comparison of the Business schools Web portals and type of communication with students was developed, and according to it analysis was made. The results have shown that almost all of them have Web portals (except one) and they put general information about themselves on it. The results have also shown that Croatian Business schools use Web 2.0 applications, but one more than any other - Facebook (almost 70% of them). That should be changed in the future because the possibilities of Web 2.0 are tremendous and could substantially improve availability and communication with students. As a future work we plan to explore other types of communication, especially new Web 2.0 applications and quality of their usage.

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