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THE EXPERIENCE OF TEACHING “BIOLOGY OF CINEGETIC SPECIES” IN LIFELONG LEARNING COURSE IN E-LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

This work describes the experience of teaching of the unit “Biology of Cinegetic Species”, in a Lifelong Learning course, in an e-learning environment, over two years. This unit is inserted in the course of Hunting and Rural Space Management Course. The target audiences of this course are hunters and professionals that worked in related organisms. The contents were written specifically for this course attending the level of students and the type the environmental of a virtual classroom. The platform used were the Moodle Learning Management System. The evaluation was made by an on-line test. The methodology used reveals good but very demanding to the teacher. The students reveal that the unit were important but want more contents.

INTRODUCTION

The Programme of Lifelong Learning was established by Decision 1720/2006/EC of European Parliament. In 2008, European University Association (EUA) with more than 800 universities across Europe lunched the European University Charters on Lifelong Learning (EUA, 2008).

Actually the European Community recognises that Lifelong Learning must become a reality across Europe. The interesting and importance of Lifelong Learning as a key to growth and arrange better jobs, as well as to allow everyone the chance to participate fully in society is increase. Universidade Aberta created and open several courses of Lifelong Learning.

One type courses, offer by Universidade Aberta, is Integrated or Complementary Studies Program. One of these courses is: Hunting and Rural Space Management Course. This course has a total of 208 hours of work. The work was divided by weeks and student has a guide with everything explained.

The only prerequisite to the inscription in this course is having a computer with internet access. This leads that the students had different levels of backgrounds. This course is composed by several units. One of those units is Biology of Cinegetic Specie. This paper described the experience of teaching this unit.

In the first edition of this course (academic year 2009-2010) fifty seven were enrolled and in second edition (academic year 2010-2011) were 22 students.

The target audience for this course are people who intend to work as managers for hunting programs, or to modernize and widen the scope of their knowledge in scientific domains on the subject of hunting studies and environmental protection, as referred in manual of the course. One of the aims of this course is help to understand the need to adequately manage of their hunting resources, improving the habitat and preserving the biodiversity.

With the exception of a unit that runs in the field (the last unit), the other units is given on-line by qualified teachers.

METHODOLOGY AND DEVELOPMENT

Design of unit

The unit was design focus the principal species hunter in Portugal. Its impossible described the biology of all species so were selected the principals.

For each species was described:

- Taxonomic classification
- Morphologic characteristics that allows a correct identification of males, females and juveniles
- Habitat
- Geographic distribution
- Life cycle, such as reproduction season and gestation period
- Behaviour, including during reproduction season
- Mark in the fields, such as footprints, type of waste, and so on.

Elaboration of contents

Considering that this unit is insert in a Lifelong Learning course and the level pretend was not high. There was a considerable difficult to arrange materials already written. We want to teach the students to identify, describe and associate the life cycle of a certain animal.

So after a research in libraries and in internet about what books are in market was decided that the contents must be done by us, considering the objectives of the unit.

Was decided to elaborate several documents with a lot of photograph's to document what are explain the text.

E-learning methodology

The pedagogical model adopted by Universidade Aberta (Pereira et. al., 2008) is based on e-learning and on the intensive use of new tools for on-line communication. The platform used is the Moodle Learning Management System. This pedagogical model has a specific model for 1st degree course - Bachelor and another for 2nd degree courses – Master.

For teaching Lifelong Learning courses we use an adaptation of methodology used for 2nd degree courses.

In begging the students visualize the following items (Fig. 1):

- News – where were post the news concerning to the unit
- Formation plane – where students can be seen the sequence by days
- Social forum – to discuss aspects related to the unit but not scientific

The screenshot shows a Moodle interface for a course. At the top, it says 'UAB ECEC' and 'Mudar estatuto para...' and 'Modo de Edição'. The main content area is titled 'Lista de tópicos' and features a central image of a hunting scene with the text 'Bem vindo à Unidade de Formação 2' and 'ESPÉCIES CINEGÉTICAS E EXERCÍCIO DA CAÇA'. Below the image are links for 'Notícias', 'Plano de Formação', and 'Fórum Social'. On the left, there are navigation menus for 'Pessoas' (Utilizadores) and 'Actividades' (Fóruns, Livros, Recursos, Testes). On the right, there is a 'Últimas notícias' section with recent updates.

Figure 1: Open topic.

The contents were divided in birds and mammals. First was open the birds and after the mammals. In each were created a forum to discuss the respective subject.

To not turn the study documents too long, in each one are divided (Fig. 2):

Birds were divided by:

- Aquatic birds
- Columbiformes
- Starling
- Galliformes
- Woodcock
- Thrushes

Mammals were divided in:

- Deers
- Boar
- Lagomorphs
- Mouflon

RECURSOS PEDAGÓGICOS SOBRE AVES



Fórum - Aves

- Aves aquáticas
- Columbiformes
- Estorninho
- Galiformes
- Galinhola
- Tordos

RECURSOS PEDAGÓGICOS SOBRE MAMÍFEROS



Fórum - mamíferos

- Cervídeos
- Javali
- Lagomorfos
- Muflão

Figure 2: Aspect of the unit page.

Evaluation

To evaluate the students was used an on-line test. To do it was used a tool of Moodle that allow done group of questions and then when student open the test the computer randomly select a certain number of questions from each group of questions that permit each student have a different test.

The time to done the test is limited. After open the student has 30 minutes to complete and submit. The system only allows opening one time. In each question the student must select the option and then confirm in a bottom "Send".

The student have two days (48 hours) to selected the ideal time to done it.

The correction is automatic and in end the student could visualize the grade obtained.

1 Das seguintes características, qual **não** se aplicam à *Alectoris rufa*?
valores: --/1

Selecione uma resposta.

- a. É poligâmica
- b. Bico vermelho
- c. Crias com coloração diferente dos adultos
- d. O macho possui esporões
- e. É nidífuga

2 Qual dos seguintes animais apresenta pelagem de verão diferente da pelagem de inverno?
valores: --/1

Selecione uma resposta.

- a. B. Muflão
- b. Coelho
- c. Corço
- d. Lebre

3 Qual dos **cervídeos** tem o cio em Setembro?
valores: --/1

Selecione uma resposta.

- a. Gamo
- b. Veado
- c. Corço

4 Considerando a *Scolopax rusticola*, refira qual das seguintes característica **não** se lhe aplica.
valores: --/1

Figure 3: Visualization of part of an on-line test.

3. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The differences from prior knowledge of the students were a problem. For a few students the language used is difficult and to others the contents are too simple. But in general the level of contents was correct for the expectations of the students that attending the unit.

Teaching this unit in e-learning in a Lifelong Learning course reveals several advantages and problems.

The benefits of e-learning for student are:

- Allows unlimited access and visualizations,
- Access is available whenever students want
- Materials can be accessed from different locations.

The disadvantage was the inexperience of almost the students in this modality of teaching conducts to:

- The students pose questions in forums, on weekends and holidays, and expect a quick reply;
- Some questions were about biology but not about the contents of the unit
- After finished the unit some still pose questions and complain if teacher did not answer.

These problems conduct that the teacher must dispense a lot of time with the unit and sometimes the students were disappointed because did not have a quick reply.

The evaluation by the modality of on-line test revealed a good way.

But in first edition of the course there were some complains about the formulation of the questions. We notice that some students did not realize that the animals if is not in adult age can be smaller than the normal size. This is notice in first year and in second edition this was mentioned during the teaching period. In second edition of the course there were no complains.

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