

Striking a Balance between Using Electronic Educational Tools and Running Live Sessions

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The Coordination Action ENCORA, within the Sixth Framework Programme of the European Union, concluded that training programmes should on the one hand, embrace all Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) approaches to expose students to diverse options, and on the other hand, better respond to the specific needs of different types of coastal practitioners and policy makers. Clearly, employers now expected newly recruited personnel to be able to tackle the complexity of present society from day one of work. The enquiry further showed that in general, current education and training efforts are mainly directed towards preparing new coastal professionals, but not reinforcing the capacities of those professionals already involved in decision and policy making as though they did not need to be educated throughout their professional life.

The findings showed that such professionals require training tailored to their specific needs. These needs should be identified by a thorough assessment of the roles they play within organizations in the public and private sectors (also including political spheres, NGOs and the general public). As a result, overall, there was a need to introduce a more flexible education in our present world. There was also a need for greater emphasis on the designing of courses, teamwork, interdisciplinarity, communication, problem solving and self-directed learning. Today, in the classroom, seminars, workshops and projects now replace many of the more theoretical lectures supported by tutorials. Students also navigate the Internet, which is a most uncoordinated, unsupervised, unstructured mass of information of which most might be irrelevant and/or incorrect. There is a danger that the media become the accepted means of information transfer and that transmission of knowledge suffers. So, there is a need for organised and well structured courses to be made available via the world wide web in combination with live sessions on campus.

The paper looks at requirements for making such on-line courses attractive to professional managers, politicians and to NGOs as well as the general public. It considers various aspects of teaching on-line, in particular transfer, communication, and management of knowledge, problem solving from experience provided by examples. The authors further explore the possibility to organise seminars, project presentations, field visits and practicals in the lab at certain stages of the studies. They consider live sessions as essential in comparison to the passive use of PowerPoint presentation, TV programs, videos, and other multimedia.

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