THE CHALLENGE OF TEACHING COMPLEX TOPICS IN A FOREIGN LANGUAGE REMOTELY

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Abstract. Cooperation between BSUIR and Invisi starts in 2013. One of our aims then and now is to bring knowledge of the topics of Business Intelligence and Data Warehouse to Belarus.

For us, the abilities of distance learning give us new possibilities to reach out to students and potential employees here in Belarus. Our sphere is growing in importance with the exponential growth of data from business applications, social networks and various devices. Together with the renewed and expanded interest for our field comes the increase of use of means of communicating remotely in an educational setting.

Already in the beginning of the cooperation the question is how to connect me as a teacher with students of possible courses. We have conversations about remote teaching, where I will be in The Netherlands and give weekly lessons to students at the university. As this is impractical for me at the time, the first result is a five day course that I give at BSUIR where I am physically in Minsk. As a result of this first course various students from the course conduct workshops and presentations under my supervision during the conference Big Data Minsk. On at least one occasion, such a presentation is streamed live to another location.

The intention is to extend the curriculum with courses and workshops where I will interact with students in Minsk while being in The Netherlands. Another possibility is to give a course in Minsk and extend the audience with a live stream for selected remote students.

Like companies that combine online sales with physical stores, there is potential in combining distance learning with face to face contact moments.

With so many sources of online courses today, I think the added value of distance learning with a university like BSUIR lies in the live interaction with the teacher of the course. My experience is that with courses in English, for Belarus students direct communication makes a difference to ensure the material is understood. Also a lot of practical tasks which can be discussed by students with a teacher help understand course material when there is a foreign language involved.

In the case of technical subjects like data warehousing one of the matters is to provide an infrastructure that is accessible by both students and teacher. The students have to be able to perform technical tasks and the teacher has to be able to evaluate the task results. A topic that comes into play then also is security. The environment has to be accessible externally to the university for instance, while not compromising the rest of the university network in the case of intruders.

In May we will organise the first Data Vault Modeler course in Belarus, a new cooperation between BSUIR, our new Belarus company Act On Insight and coaching company Genesee Academy. The success of this course can lead to more interest from companies to use data warehouses as a center or part of their analysis infrastructure. This in turn will lead to demand for more workers skilled in the fields of Business Intelligence, Analytics and Big Data.