The challenges of using technology in Albanian schools

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Abstract

During last year the technology has revolutionized the world we live. It is rapidly changing many aspects of human life. But the development of the information technology also has offered an interesting pattern to exploring new teaching ways. The use of technology in schools can enhance teaching. Thanks to technology a lot of subjects become easier to be understood by the pupils.A teacher has several possibilities how to teach a subject. The main aim of this study is to show that technology proves the teaching in schools and helps the teacher to change their teaching methods. I draw upon my teaching experience and the experiences of my colleagues to highlight that the technology is a very effective tool in teaching.There are a lot of technique to practice in the classroom. The usage of the creative and informal techniques would help the pupils to be more comfortable while there are learning. The fact shows that here in Albania the relationship between the pupils and teachers are still formal. The children sometimes do not enjoy in schools. In these case, the using of technology will be very useful and will play a very important role in teaching as a new teaching method. These method will help the pupils to participate and collaborate to each other and the teachers to support them. It will give the opportunity to open to the new experiences that will help them to understand the role of the education in preparing them as citizen of the future society. A children in far away and isolated villages should not be isolated in that village for whole life. He should access a wide range of information and material.

Keywords: *technology, education, teaching method, school.*

Two decades ago the traditional classroom environment was the teacher talks, pupils listen and a blackboard stands in front of them. Today's classrooms are vastly different. Unlike the traditional classroom that mainly used textbooks, chalkboards, paper and pencils, the integrated technology classrooms use tools such as laptops, computers, DVD-players and other technologies for teaching. Digital projectors are the most exciting classroom tool ever. In the new circumstances of the 21st century where no aspect of young people` lives is untouched by the digital era which is transforming how they live, relate and learn (Craft,2012), the teachers need to separate themselves from the past. They should accept technology as an integral part of the education. They need to familiarize themselves with the various technologies that are being utilized in the classroom.

The aim of this study is to explore the challenges of including technology in Albanian schools as a core component of the educational national priority "Albania in the age of internet" pushing Albania amongst the countries with high including of technology in teaching. It shows that technology proves the teaching in schools. But, using my teaching experience I highlight in this study that for Albanian case, it is very difficult to incorporate technology in teaching. Albania is under some specific circumstances and many other problems are presented such as the high costs & financial problems, the lack of technological skills or the limited Internet connections.

While many people still believe in a "teaching by teachers" approach, in reality using technology in the classroom makes teaching more effective. Incorporating technology in the classroom is a great way to increase a child's interest in learning. It benefits their pupils that adapt to the rapid advancements in technology better than many adults, by engaging them in ways they are familiar with and enjoy, increasing the motivation to learn. The collaboration is fostered for obvious reasons when students are assigned to work in pairs or small groups for work at a limited number of computers.

Technology-based tasks involve many subtasks leading to situations where students need help and seek the assistance of their friends. The technology also allow the pupils to develop their curiosity, problem solving, independent thinking skills. They are able to see the written words and see a visual image and hear the sounds at the same time. Thanks to technology, they are not as afraid of school anymore. They can also find valuable resources for researching projects and get homework help.

Modern technologies are very powerful because they rely on one of the most powerful genetic biases we do have — the preference for visually presented information. The human brain has a tremendous bias for visually presented information. Television, movies, videos, and most computer programs are very visually oriented and therefore attract and maintain the attention of young children (Perry,1999).

While spending money on new technology means an upfront investment. In the long term it will save money. Budgets are tighter than ever these days. Computers reduce paper usage, allow for in-house publishing and printing.

Additionally, technology used in the classroom can also help students who have special needs keep up with their peers. For example, a student who has problems hearing can use a tablet with a record to written feature that allows him or her to record the lecture as the teacher speaks and then see the written form of the lecture. This helps him or her keep up with the activities in

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class. Technology is useful in a wide range of applications that helps students who have special needs of any type (Winter, 2005).

Incorporating that technology in the classroom and daily lesson plans can be a challenge for many teachers, as they must choose the most efficient means of delivering a lesson. However, their job easier. The use of technology in schools can help the teacher to organise their work.

Much of the research that reports positive benefits as a result of the use of technology in the classroom also points to specific conditions under which those benefits were realized. Technology is neutral; there is nothing inherent about the media that assures learning. A poorly designed computer program is unlikely to advance learning and may even hinder it.After reviewing hundreds of such studies, educational technologist Richard Clark (1999) concluded that "there are no learning benefits to be gained from employing any specific medium to deliver instruction," and that "media do not influence learning under any conditions," but are "mere vehicles that deliver instruction but do not influence student achievement any more than the truck that delivers our groceries causes changes in our nutrition".

Modern technology is often hailed as the answer for improving education and the learning process. However, modern technology being used in the classroom has also been highly criticized. Alongside all benefits come challenges associated with ensuring that technology is integrated into the educational environment in meaningful ways. In December of 2005 in Albania was launched the master Plan for the e-school program. This program undertaken by the government has made possible the equipment of schools with computers and the introduction of information technology education in the high schools and the 9-year system.

According to The Cross Cutting Strategy on Information Society 44% of the students in the elementary 9-year education, therefore 44% of about 600 thousand students, have in their schools information and communications technology labs, where computer use, internet and digital techniques are taught.

Many teachers argue that technology cause more harm than good. Because of the fact that many of the modern technologies are very passive, they do not provide children with the quality and quantity of crucial emotional, social, cognitive, or physical experiences they require when they are young. The developing child requires the right combination of these experiences at the right times during development in order to develop optimally.

Although technology can definitely help improve the abilities of the teacher to present their information and illustrate key concepts, technology break-downs can cause significant lost time in the classroom. Classes can be completely disrupted or even forced to cancel due to technology not working. It damages the learning process. The schools have to hire a technology assistant, adding another layer of increased costs on school budgets.

Educators confront a number of challenges when use technology in the classroom. Many of these challenges arise as a result of the required changes that accompany the introduction of new technology into the classroom. One of the greatest barriers of integrating technology into the school system deals with the digital divide. The concept of the digital divide was originally defined as a gap between those who have access to digital technologies and those who do not. This access is associated with age, gender, education, income, ethnicity, and geography (Jenkins, Punishova, Weigel, & Robinson., 2009) .

The first deals with the onset of integrating technology into the curriculum and the gap between the digital haves and have nots. In most cases, this form of the digital divide means that those who have access to a computer and the Internet are considered a digital have, while on the

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other hand, those who do not are considered a digital have not. In today's society, this is still a significant barrier to implementing technology into the curriculum because the socio-economic status of a school, and its students, will impact whether resources can be purchased and implemented in the school system. Schools that are able to provide technology within the classroom are able to expose their students to a new means of learning, while the students in lower socio-economic schools may miss out on these experiences. (Jenkins et al., 2009)

Teachers must understand the computer applications more completely to use the computer a tool for learning. There is a challenge of how to prepare prospective teachers and inservice teachers for teaching and learning with technology. Most professional development programs have not provided teachers with the knowledge or experience to begin to use computer technology in their classroom in the same manner as other tools, such as the whiteboard, posters, manipulatives and text. (Ingesman,2012) They have to gain confidence in its use. They need to be able to structure learning activities and processes to help students develop the same competencies. (West, 2005)

According to the National Education Strategy for 2009-2013, the main goal is achieving the "1 PC/10 pupils" mark in pre-university education. But there are a lot of monetary costs such as capital cost of computers, hardware and software, including installation cost, training cost and the cost of support personnel. Today 1 PC is used by 21 pupils according the official statistics.

 Technology implementation is not simply putting computers in every classroom or linking every classroom to the Internet. A lack of funding touches every level of education and makes it particularly difficult to provide technology infrastructures and tools, sufficient support staff, and professional development opportunities.

Many computers and software programs in the classrooms are outdated. Schools have limited computers, Internet access, software and support to offer each classroom. Internet connections may be limited to certain designated computers. To promote teachers' use of technology, school administrators should ensure that adequate numbers of computers with Internet connections are available to teachers and that access times are not limited. Limited funding can also mean limited professional development opportunities.

In conclusion, I support the idea that despite of the technological challenges that are present in our schools, we will face successfully these challenges in the next years, balancing the appropriate technological skills with the core principles and experiences necessary to raise children in the circumstances where is easier to apply the advice of Ovide Decroly that has extolled the idea of "a school for the life and from life"(Mialeret,1995).

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