IS E-LEARNING A FUNCTIONAL MODEL OF TEACHING IN KOSOVO'S PRIMARY EDUCATION SYSTEM?

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Abstract

In the past learning was mainly oriented on the teacher. Nowadays, in the current state of information technology usage, the method of learning needs to be altered as well. Meaning, the student has to be actively enrolled and his/her word heard more. In this aspect, the present school system has shown various flaws, one of them being – how to guide students to apply self-learning. It's about time to apply other methods of learning and self-learning as well as make a distinction between teaching and learning. Computer designers of different programs intended to offer learning in distance (or so called "mental condition") use technology by connecting different segments for a mutual purpose, which is to increase learning skills. Computer networks connected by internet provide virtual seminars, virtual schools, as well as virtual Universities (e.g. California Virtual University www.california.edu). All this "electronic teaching" communicates by internet or electronic mail whereas the pedagogy of "adults" has found its interest in another method of learning which is very interesting for teachers' instructions. The study on electronic learning application has been performed in three elementary schools of Gjilan Municipality.There were various techniques used for gathering material, techniques of analyzing them, and a "Case Study' as e specific form of collecting quantitative and qualitative data of an intensive research process. I've also used interviewing, surveys and questionnaires to see closely how teachers perceive development of information technology, especially its application in providing learning in distance. Recommendations derived from this research are: e-Learning should take into consideration students' requirements, their objectives and their individual approaches in solving various problems, should follow closely teacher skill development where teacher should be the leader.

1.1.   The Research Approach

Introduction:

Education in schools it's intended to provide skills and competencies for members of society who want to become successful in the world that we live in. In this aspect, the present school system has shown flaws, one of them being how to teach students to apply self learning. We can say that e-Learning is a feeling where it seems that there "isn't enough time" and that you have to learn everything, but its initial function is pragmatic which in most cases is related to a job (financial purpose). Once and for all, we need to apply other methods of learning and self learning and distinguish teaching from learning.

All this "electronic teaching" communicates through internet or electronic mail whereas the pedagogy of "adults" has found its interest in another way of learning which is very interesting for teachers' instructions. The learning process is preferred to begin and end in a virtual reality being its purpose is to increase knowledge and skills in a virtual world. Our country aims to rapidly approach the developed world in which e-Learning is interesting because there aren't any borders or limits. In particular, internet usage to get to any data from any part of the world with fast speed, which creates another dimension of knowledge and other ways to get to that knowledge.

1.2. **Executive Summary**

E-Learning in education presents one of the most preferable topics for debates in scientific, educational, and political and media circles in Kosovo. It's very difficult to define exactly to what extent has e-Learning reached. As Terry Anderson says "Neither learning nor e-Learning can function by itself[1]" in fact when considering political and socio-economic circumstances which Kosovo is undergoing, this process is quite complicated and interdependent with big challenges starting from legal aspects, human and material recourses, with groups who see e-Learning as their supporter but also groups who are against this process and quite critical.
Regardless of the fact that Southeast European countries are in a process of fundamental reforms of the education systems, there are still great differences in abilities of implementing e-Learning in education, as well as in increase of results in education.

In spite of differences in the context, it has been achieved to identify common problems for all countries:
> 1.Low level of e-Learning in primary education.
This is seen as a cause and consequence of existing imparities within the education system. Without doubt such a phenomenon is directly related to enrollment in school life.
> 2. The trend of implementing e-Learning in primary education.
Although it was worked in drafting new policies for surpassing existing differences within the education system, there is still a stumble in making it alive. In many countries there aren't funds that would meet e-Learning requirements.
It is important to emphasize that definitions for e-Learning are related to quality of education that ensures interaction between the teacher and the student. But if teaching is ought to be relied on technology, it should be well structured on a technological, pedagogical and didactical aspect. Strategies used should be motivating for the student, help information processing, assist individual differences of students, promote the thinking process, support communication between students and teachers and ensure feedback.
Therefore, advantages of e-Learning are great in number. e-Learning enables unlimited access to class lessons regarding space and time aspect and their adaptation for users' needs as to style or speed. E-Learning provides access to standardized learning material of high level quality and an ability to harmonize lessons according to will. Teaching is active by creating interaction between teachers and students. Electronic learning develops creativity, expands knowledge of certain topics and adapts to learning.

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[1]TerryAnderson; The Theory and Practice of Online Learning, Maj 2008

Monitoring of performance and results of teaching through e-Learning is limitless. It also increases support, cooperation and communication between teachers, increases efficiency and effectiveness in teaching. These teachers are foreseen to be trained in programs of further professional development[2] All these advantages directly increase the quality of teaching.

2. Present Situation

2.1. Electronic Learning Infrastructure

Concerning the infrastructure aspect in schools of Kosovo, the situation is not very satisfying. There are big differences in regards to space for use, because buildings used for the education process in Kosovo also have the same issue. Therefore we have schools without suitable premises or space. Moreover, one of the greatest challenges is the fact that schools are overloaded. In such circumstances some schools that have dedicated cabinets for certain classes are using those spaces as classrooms.

Equipment of schools and other educational institutions with computers has begun in 1999. The supply has been done randomly. Thus, it resulted in a situation where equipments were of various kinds, second-handed or new. Their funding was initially from different international donors and later on were funded and coordinated by the Ministry of Education. Lately, the coordination was better and it's worth mentioning a World Bank Project with hundreds of computers donated, USAID by equipping schools, Swisscontact donating mainly for vocational schools, GTZ, etc. There have been also cases of donating laptops (Intel Classmate Pc) to students by Portuguese KFOR. There has been continuous investment with equipment by the Ministry of Education such as 21 computer cabinets in 2008. In the government investment plan of medium expenses frame (KASH) 2009-2011 and 2010-2012, the government is committed to considerable financing with an amount of 12.800.000 Euros for 2009-2012. The result of investment so far, is that one third of the schools have computers. All the supplying done so far was for the purpose of using computers for classes of information technology. There have been few initiatives for e-Learning in Kosovo so far, one of them being Learning from Distance by FIEK-UP and two platforms developed Training.com[3] and Education.net.

Training.com – was developed by an AUK Institute and IPKO initiative and offers mainly ECDL lessons (European Computer Driving License), which are localized in Albanian language. Access is free by a simple registration process. A considerable number of users have used this platform. In 2008, AUK Institute transferred this platform to Ministry of Education's management. Due to lack of maintenance expertise this platform was out of use for a period of time.

Education.net[4] – was initiated by a partnership of GTZ (German Technical Cooperation), and Swisscontact and implemented by SmartBits.

Its purpose was to create technical and didactical opportunities for the commencement of Electronic learning implementation in Kosovo. Its aim was to enable access to ECDL, EBCL programs as well as English Language programs for all students of education and professional education.

2.2. Current Situation – Human Recourses Development

"It is very important to enroll teachers in the process of electronic learning" this is what Michael Allen (2010) thinks in his book called "Don't Get Trapped by Your e-Learning

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[2]http://www.masht-gov.net/advCms/
[3]http://www.trajnimi.com/masht/
[4]http://www.mesimi.net/

Tools"[5], because this way they can really show they are ones who learn new things and are capable in keeping with the learning rhythm. Kosovo possesses plenty of human recourses which are a relevant asset for development of electronic learning. Having in mind that information technology has a relatively long history of use; we can say that Kosovo in this sphere possesses human recourses, which on the intellectual level will be able to follow the rapid development trends of IT. One of the major challenges in this aspect is unwillingness and lack of motivation, lack of qualified staff willing to work in the education system, because of other opportunities much more attractive offered to them in the job market.

In this context human recourses engaged in the education system could be divided into two categories:

I.   Human Recourses of Young Generations (post-digital[6])

II. Human Recourses of Old Generations (pre-digital)

I.   Skills and competencies of young generations' human recourses are of a higher level than those of their colleagues of older generation. Considering that the Information Technology goes through a rapid and continuous evolution, young generation finds it very easy to keep in trend with it. At the same time, teaching abilities and facing

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[5]"Don't Get Trapped by Your e-Learning Tools" Michael Allan 2012

[6]http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Postdigital

with novelty are more developed in young generations. Implementation of the strategy will rely firstly on these human recourses but will also aim, with time, to train human recourses of old generations so they too can be included in this process. It is especially preferred to have an intensive cooperation between two generations, one possessing experience while other necessary IT skills, which will create diversity that, will serve as a strong basis for e-learning development and also for the whole education system. "teachers should learn all lessons in the "Un-real"[7] world and be able to transmit such lessons further to the ones in need of them"

II. Skills and competencies of human recourses from old generations[8] - in many cases old generations don't posses necessary skills for effective use of information technology. The challenge of rapid change is difficult to be faced by many. This phenomenon is especially seen on human recourses engaged in the lower education system. On the other hand there are young enthusiastic students who get familiar with the IT work fast and we often get to see a situation where students' skills are much more developed than those of their teachers.

3. E-Learning in elementary schools of Gjilan Municipality

In this research I focused on three elementary schools of municipality of Gjilan and skipped all other schools. As a close study, I will take elementary school "ThimiMitko" in Gjilan, but subsequently will describe other elementary schools in the town and their current level of e-learning.

3.1. School " Selami Hallaçi"

al Allen, 2010

iallyInappropriateMedicationUse in OlderAdults"Donna M. Fick, PhD, RN; James W.

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This school exists since 1973 and presently has 1570 students, 115 teachers and a very good building. We have spoken to vice Principal Vaxhide Gagica who informed us that the school possesses a computer classroom and most of the staff are trained to work with computers. The school doesn't possess intranet or internet and the only possibility of internet access for students is in their homes or internet coffee. Most of students have e-mail addresses and knowledge of internet use, but access to www is rarely used for learning purposes and most of the students I've talked to are not familiar with e-Learning.

In the school year 2011-2012, this school was chosen for a pilot project of applying digitalization of school administration. The complete enrollment of children for grade 1 was done digitally, so was the record of teaching lessons, student evaluation, absence of teachers and all other duties, in contrast to other years and other schools which still perform their administrative work manually.

3.2. School "Rexhep Elmazi"
This school has 1400 students, 65 teachers and a good school building. The school possesses a computer classroom which is used for IT classes. School doesn't have internet but it has an internal network of computers which is used by teachers and administrative personnel and school management. The only access to internet for students is outside school but according to information gathered, internet is very rarely used for learning purposes, instead it's used for fun/entertainment. Students and teachers are not familiar with the e-Learning system.

3.3. School "Thimi Mitko"
Elementary School "Thimi Mitko" was chosen for a detailed study. It has 2380 students and 115 teachers. The school possesses a computer classroom donated by a foreign government. This donation was granted in early 2002 and used for two years only, because later on, the

computer classroom was locked and has been used very rarely by students or teachers. The reason for this is lack of information technology basic skills by teachers and lack of maintenance funds. The only access to internet is outside of school building and students possess email accounts but the issue is that internet is used very little as regards to learning or research. Within the school building there is a "Didactic Center" that offers free internet access for teachers. From my conversation with center's manager Mr. Fadil Gashi, I've learned that very few teachers visit the center for research purposes.

I believe that if teachers were to use recourses provided on internet, e-Learning could be implemented in the classrooms of elementary school (grades VI or VII) by taking one of the classes where students' presence in the classroom is not necessary, e.g. Geography.

With the development of the school curricula and teachers training in this subject, I hope this subject will be acquired by e-learning or learning in distance and with the electronic learning platform that is to be used in Kosovo[9].

From my point of view, geography class has gone through a big change regarding the method of classic instructions and up to the time of internet use and its opportunities provided. In the past we

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[9]MASHT; Draft Strategjia e mesimit elektronik ne Kosove 2009-2015; Prishtine 2009

had to imagine how continents looked like and now we are able to virtually "fly" over continents by using Google Earth Program and 26 satellites that cover the earth. I believe that by implementing e-Learning in the geography class, students can learn to see things they couldn't see before and at the same time change the approach towards internet usage by transforming it in a learning usage of this information technology.

Alongside the development of the teaching curriculum for this subject, a measurement instrument should be developed as well, providing data on the level of achievement of students in this subject. The data would then compare to prior generations achievements, or with the same class of another school which still learns the subject using classical methods.

For implementation of these projects, a prior permission should be granted by the Ministry of Education as well as its opinion in regards to these pilot-projects. I hope that after approval Ministry of Education will find necessary funds for training these teachers outside of the country, since our place doesn't possess such professional staff for training teachers who will implement e-Learning pilot-project.

Recommendations

E-Learning - Teachers' vision and a learning mission.

1. The future of electronic learning should be "hybrid', a combination of classic learning and electronic learning.

2. E-learning should be used in the continuous education (permanent).

3. E-learning is of great importance but pedagogy should always have a crucial role.

4. E-learning should be oriented toward quality. A special emphasis should be given to pedagogical processes, learning processes and teacher-student relation.

5. E-learning should take into account students' requirements, their purposes and individual approaches in various problem resolutions.

6. E-learning should follow closely development of teachers' skills and teachers should be leaders.

7. E- learning should be done in mutual cooperation where teachers and students can interact. In order to achieve this, special tools should be developed, such as real-time communication and other audio-visual tools.

8. E-learning should follow technological development.

9. E-learning is learning in motion (mobile learning) meaning anywhere and anytime by mobile phone, internet, etc.

10. The future of e-learning should grant access to academic materials.

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