

THE IMPACT OF E-LEARNING APPLICATION AT ALBANIAN UNIVERSITIES

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Abstract

E-learning is an electronic system based on Internet usage and related technologies for the development, distribution and enhancement of learning resources and performance. Internet and e-learning is giving to the education a new way of studying and other facilities to the students. The future will prove it in the next decade because education will not be the same as nowadays. Considering worldwide evolution of e-learning, it has become mandatory also for Albanian Education System. E-learning has become widely spread in the last 10 years, especially at Albanian Universities as one of the most important mechanisms for improving the quality and availability of educational programs. E-learning allows students to learn from anywhere and apparently at any time. The challenge of effective e-learning is how to access the resources and manage the subjects by creating great online courses and increase student's interest. The main purpose of this study is to evaluate the usage of e-learning in Albanian education system. Also, it will be showed different models of e-learning platforms and Learning Management Systems at Albanian Universities and there will be measured their level of usage. Secondly, it will be identified the benefits and advantages of using e-learning in our educational system. The possible benefits of e-learning and conclusions related to this study might be: As knowledge will be increased, it will bring contribution to overall economy. E-learning gives the advantages of private flexible learning, and self-serviced, with its easy access of educational resources. E-learning reduces material costs though virtual online learning platforms. By using day after day these platforms, people become more skilful in internet and computer techniques. It is evident that computer power has increased. Continuous efforts are made to decrease costs and introduce new virtual platforms. New e-learning models have to be developed in order to increase the quality of existing standards. As result, we can specify that E-learning offers opportunities to raise the standards in our educational system. E-learning is cost-effective and can produce great results.

Keywords: *e-learning, education, platform, virtual.*

Introduction:

E-learning is Internet-enabled learning and related technologies for the development, distribution and enhancement of learning resources. It is a new innovative way that has developed all over the world to share knowledge and help the education. E-Learning is electronic way of Learning, which means imparting knowledge, teaching or studying with support of electronic technology such as a computer, mobile device or other ways with the

help of technology. Many printed material is replaced by electronic versions like documents, attachments, presentations, audio, video, quizzes, tests, forums, animation etc. Continues development in technology and their use as learning tools can make a huge impact on achieving a more effective delivery of education and training. Extensive studies prove that the combination of multimedia applications, delivering a well plan learning content improves the learner's participation and learning retention.

E-Learning methods and approaches can also help instructors and trainers to create more consistent and standardized forms of delivering training content. By automating the everyday work including the distribution or checking of quizzes and exams, the teachers save a great time to do other tasks. E-learning is a more cost effective way to deliver training content comparing to classroom-base training for large organizations. Training costs have traditionally been very expensive instead of productive real work time. E-learning is a solution which will greatly reduce these expenses by maximizing the intervention during work hours. This is many government and private institutions in the education sector worldwide are adopting e-learning. If it is right implemented, electronic learning with produce great results through significant cost which will improve performance to everybody. This way of learning is applied also in Albania and in different universities.

The majority of students seek out information online in different ways which didn't exist 10 years ago. Top universities have published more content available online according to student's requirements. Our first experience has proven that students respond to videos lectures and other online content positively. The web-based lectures are very effective on delivering study materials. It allows students to have access on it anytime and anywhere. E-learning is faster, better and cheaper than traditional classroom-based training.

The benefits of online content are:

- High appealing to students and more flexible – people can learn a course anytime, at their own convenience
- Easy access and self-serviced – students can watch videos and presentations multiple times, until they are comfortable and have absorbed the material.
- Cost-effective;
- It brings better quality of teaching and studying. The number of students that attend a course can be large but it does not effect on the quality of giving the lectures or seminars.
- Same course can be delivered anywhere and anytime.

E-learning is defined as the use of any of the new technologies or applications in the service of learning or learner support. It is important because e-learning can make a significant difference: to how learners learn, how quickly they master a skill, how easy it is to study; and, equally important, how much they enjoy learning.

Aim of study/research:

The main purpose of this study is to evaluate the usage of e-learning in Albanian education system. Also, it will be showed different models of e-learning platforms and Learning Management Systems at Albanian Universities and there will be measured their level of usage. Secondly, it will be identified the benefits and advantages of using e-learning in our educational system.

Recently, E-learning is applied also in Albania. There are different ways that people, students, professors use it. Referring to this, there has been a study in different universities which have applied e-learning. There is a domain and e-learning website for each University and Faculty which represents all needed information.

Methods:

Some methods of e-learning in Albanian Universities are:

1. The use of Google Sites
2. The use of MOODLE Platform, or other platforms
3. Online library, journals, e-books, and study materials etc.

According to verify e-learning application in Albania, there has been research study at Agricultural University of Tirana. There are observed that *Google Sites* and *MOODLE* are the most common used platforms of e-learning.

Google Site in AUT

The screenshot displays the UBT website interface. At the top, the UBT logo and name 'Universiteti Bujqësor i Tiranës' are visible. A prominent blue banner features the text 'Komuniko, ndaj, informohu, planifiko, promovohu, argetohu me Google Apps & ubt.edu.al'. Below this, a navigation bar includes icons for 'Sfidi - Mail Box', 'Kalendari | Eventeve', 'Google Site', and 'Dokumenta të Përbashkët'. Underneath, four columns provide detailed descriptions for each service: Mail (access to email), Calendar (access to events), Google Sites (creating and sharing web projects), and Documents (creating and sharing documents like Word and Excel).

Google Sites is an online application that helps us in creating a web project or a website in a very easy way, like editing a simple document. We can easily and quickly gather a variety of different types of information using Google Sites, in one place.

We can create our dynamic webpage including text documents, presentations, attachments, calendars, videos, audios and share our pages for accessing by some specific people, or even make it a public website viewed by everyone. We can also control who can access our site or

make it a website that can be edited by multiple authors, by making them owners and let them contribute to the site.

By using Google Sites, we can:

1. Make and customize our own site.
2. Create pages, sub-pages and organize our website.
3. Have a navigation menu in our sidebar.
4. Choose between the different types of the pages in base of the content. It offers a variety like WebPages, lists, file cabinets, start pages etc.
5. Share the website and choose the way how and by whom it can be accessed.
6. Let us use Google search engine.

Now students find and have web access to the lecture notes and selected digital resources in many courses of different universities to support their study. They have personalized web environments in which they can join discussion forums with their class or group, and this new way of access gives them much flexibility.

MOODLE in AUT

MOODLE is an Open Source Learning Management System (LMS), also known as a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

It is a tool for creating online dynamic web sites for their students. It needs to be installed on a web server to work, either on your own computer or one at a web hosting company.

The online materials are accessible through user names by professors and students, based on user rights. Different types like: pdf, ppt, links, video, tests and quiz (multiple choice, true or false, short answer etc)



TEEAL in AUT

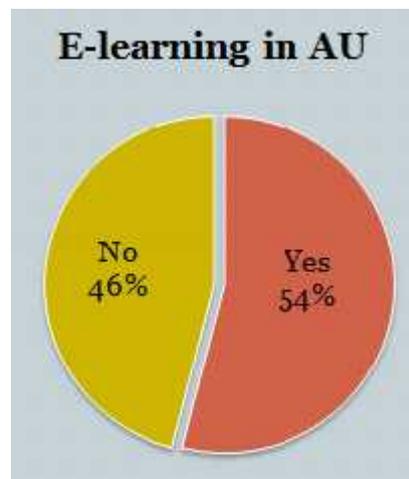
This is also an online Library implemented in Agriculture University of Tirana. This online library is TEEAL that stands for The Essential Electronic Agricultural Library. Though TEEAL researchers, professors and students, can find and access thousands of full-text PDF articles. It arrives on an external hard drive that you can run on one computer workstation or make available to multiple computers via local area network (LAN) or intranet.

Basic eLearning Tools in Albania

- **Email:** Every teacher in AUT have an e-mail account, part of ubt.edu.al domain, to communicate with the students. Students can submit assignment also can have attachments delivered in group email, to cooperate with each other. This is a way to create a paperless environment. Email is a simple, efficient and cost effective way of communication.
- **Online Forum:** Asynchronous discussion forum Teacher can create discussion groups. Teacher could post a question and request students to comment. Students can post their comments which encourage community participation, collaborative learning can be fostered.
- **World Wide Web:** There is a wide range of materials available. WWW It is a resource centre and sharing of resources and information. Supported by text, images, audio and multimedia.
- **Video Conferencing:** Can give students the possibility of a live lecture. Instant Communication with students. Support by audio, chat and whiteboard can be recorded and later be used for on demand lectures.
- **Learning Management System (LMS).**

Survey study:

A short questionnaire was distributed to the higher education sector in Albania. The results show that 54% of the universities are using e-learning platform where professors and students can exchange study materials. These platforms are in the initial phase of development.



Conclusions:

Based on the above study, it is observed that content packaging and content managing has the highest priority in e-learning research where yet lots of development is required. Student's prospect and interest is increased rapidly as the technology is growing. Now researcher must design the learning methodology according to student's interests and preferences. So from

this study it has been seen that e-learning environment can be improved by integrating new technologies and ICT tools. There is also a need for international comparative research in this environment.

A promising technology to realize e-learning requirements is the Semantic web that can provide flexible and personalized access to learning materials. Since e-learning involves a number of forms, number of complex steps, different ways of learning, there should be a system which include and offers materials at every level and at every stage of learning which will facilitate the students on using it. A new centered platform will not confuse the students and all the faculties will be involved in just one platform which will bring better communication and flexible e-learning process. Technology achievements will continue to reshape learning over the Internet with increasing use of advanced tools and techniques.

By applying new technology on e-learning environment, our universities can make the system more attractive and interactive for learner that may help to build a learner centered platform.

The impact of e-learning with new centered platform will bring:

- Cost reduction
- More improvements on ICT used in universities
- Flexible and more addicted students on studying
- The level of teaching is improving according to the European standards and methods.
- The use of paper books is reduced and the number of electronic books and materials is increased which help the access of material to be anywhere and anytime.

Referred to this research study topic, it is concluded that the e-learning has a high impact nowadays in Albanian Universities and has improved the level of education. This is the goal not only of the University but also of the Government which aims to improve them in order to be at European standard top level.

Recommendations:

Regarding to the above Albanian ways of e-learning, the students find that all these ways are spread in different directions. They would like a centered platform that include all the ways of e-learning and also all the Albanian universities. For example, it is necessary a campus website available for all Albanian students that can login and find any course and any material they want.

It is difficult to implement such a platform while it is needed high level of:

- Software and hardware;
- Development cost;
- Technical support;
- Trained professors;
- Well organized materials etc.

All they need a high level of financial support by the government and universities. It is necessary that government will support universities by offering technological investments and also by assuring different experts and trainings.

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