

The Role of Internet in Education

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Abstract

The rapid changing of life requires a support for continuous learning and ongoing creation of new ideas and skills. The lifelong education is becoming a necessity in tomorrow's world. Thanks to internet the education process changed significantly in last two decades.

E-learning becomes important sources of knowledge for lifelong learners, as well as full time students. The paper present different definitions of e-learning, which are changing by development of technologies through the years. The Practice of using technology to deliver coursework in higher education has seen a veritable explosion. The use of technology has not only created new opportunities within the traditional classroom but has also served to expand learning experiences beyond the popular notion of "classroom". In many instances the change to an internet -based delivery system has been instituted with little or no consideration of the impact on student learning .This paper presents data from a two semester's study of the effects of distance learning on student achievement as well as the impact of distance of learning on student attitudes concerning their learning experiences.

Keywords: ICT (Information and Communication Technology E-learning), S&R (Study and Research), STT (Service Teacher Training), OER (Open educational resource)

Introduction

The role of technology in the delivery of the instruction at universities has been truly explosive. While relatively unheard of just ten years ago, a key word search of the internet today using "internet -based distance learning" yields literally hundreds of sites devoted to the subject.

Opportunities to receive coursework via the internet exist routinely at most universities while the opportunity to pursue an entire degree program is becoming a reality at more and more institutions worldwide .The Prognostications made just a few short years ago, that the internet would seen be as common as the telephone or television as a means of communication have rapidly become a reality. Indeed, use of the internet for delivery of distance education is active at all levels of the educational hierarchy and looks to maintain a general upswing. The use of information technologies has shown a very rapid growth during the last decade in almost every country in the world .Increasing computer ownership and access to the internet have changed the lives of millions people who get online on a daily basis at home ,at school ,at work and other locations such as internet cafes. They go online to send/receive e-mails, chats, research for school or work, download music or images, and to do many activities.

The recent statistics for the United States indicate that, the end of 2002 connected 166 million

people connected to the internet, representing 59 percent to the population. Coupled with this high connection rate of increasing use of fast connection systems such as cable modems, Americans also spend a lot more time on the net than the citizens of other countries.

Nowadays the role of Information and Communication Technology (ICT), especially internet in the education sector plays an important role, especially in the process of empowering the technology into the educational activities. Education sector can be the most effective sector to anticipate and eliminate the negative impact of ICT. Technology (internet) in another side can be the most effective way to increase the student's knowledge.

Uses of Internet

“It's not enough to know something;
it's more important to know why and how”.

The Internet swiftly entered the life of the humankind in the 20th century. It took us less than ten years to face the fact of its spreading all over the world, including the developing countries. It has become not only the hugest information resource in the world, but – what is even more important – the most rapid means of communication. People from different countries have got an opportunity to communicate with each other in quite a short time. In comparison with a snail-mail or even airmail, e-mail gets over distance and time, frontiers of the states with a lightning speed.

Thus, people get closer to each other. They have got a chance to know each other better, to become aware of what is common among nations and can unite them and what is different, what peculiarities of culture and religion should be taken into account to achieve mutual understanding. They gradually come to realize the fact that we all are inhabitants of one planet – the Earth – and have to live together depending on each other, helping each other. But, the Internet is only one of the means to understand this and does not guarantee the comprehension of the people only by the technological and information opportunities that it provides. Everything depends on the people themselves, their mentality, their will and intellect.

On the other hand, people in different countries, not only in the cultural and scientific centers, are able to get education in famous universities. Disabled children, invalids can learn at schools, colleges and universities by distance.

Obviously, the usage of the information resources located in the Internet is not such a simple affair. It requires not only the ability to search for it in the huge ocean of the Internet, but to process it, to use it effectively for the cognitive goals.

The second factor is connected with the culture of communication in the net, intercultural communication in particular. It is a very important and complicated problem to solve. The fact is that many people do not possess the culture of communication in terms of using the adequate forms of greetings, of writing briefly and laconically, using the literary language, avoiding abbreviations, etc. As for the intercultural, transnational communication the problem is particularly acute. The lack of knowledge of a strange culture, national traditions, the peculiarities of different confessions, etc. promote misunderstanding between the partners and can be a cause of a conflict. New technologies are only means for communication among people of different nationalities. Their mutual understanding or misunderstanding, sympathies or

antipathies depend not on the technologies but on the people's respect of the culture and traditions of each other, on their awareness of the peculiarities of these cultures. It is not a technological but a human factor. So, the problem can be solved only with the assistance of teachers, tutors, who are responsible for the process of education. It is not only the problem of acquiring the definite knowledge but also the problem of tolerance.

They should be ready to supply the students with the necessary information, to explain them the peculiarities of a strange culture. Some preliminary preparation in this respect is necessary as well, if we want the Internet in education to be effective. The development of critical thinking requires possession of definite knowledge, experience, and power of observation. The Internet creates opportunities for bringing people closer to each other, for mutual understanding but the realization of those opportunities depends on people themselves, their mental and spiritual abilities, their desire to understand and share the views of others.

The next factor which impacts the efficiency of Internet use in education is that teachers in most cases are unprepared for the practice of integrating the information resources of the Internet, its facilities in teaching and learning process, let alone distance education. In many and many countries the institutes of education do not train future teachers for the specific activity of handling Internet resources. The situation is changing in some countries due to the organization of special associations for in-service teacher training (STT). But still many teachers and educators consider this a self-dependent activity in terms of using Internet technologies, finding some materials for the projects, reports, essays, using e-mail if necessary, etc. But in fact if we speak about education, we must keep in mind that this is a mutual, interactive activity, which should be controlled and directed. Even if the students are supposed to study some course or material located in the Internet all by them, they should be provided with the necessary instructions how to do it, what additional information is to be used in the Internet or other resources. So, this problem deals with the training of teachers either in the universities or at in-service training courses.

The analytical materials given below, touch upon some other problems, including navigation, which are also very important and mentioned by many specialists. So, we shall not repeat them here. The conclusion is that the Internet being a unique means for solving a lot of educational problems, enhancing the effectiveness of education in general, making the education democratic and available for millions and millions of people, nevertheless demands definite efforts to prepare students not only to use Internet technologies, but to work with information, which in its turn implies the development of critical thinking, using the ideas and principles of constructivism in their learning practice. It also assumes training of teachers to integrate Internet resources and facilities into the educational process. So, we cannot share the optimism of the specialists who only consider the positive aspects of the Internet ignoring the problems, which arise when the Internet a regular means integrated into the curricula or use autonomously.

Importance of Internet to Education

The Internet has introduced improvements in technology, communication and online entertainment, but it is also incredibly useful for education purposes as well. Teachers use the Internet to supplement their lessons, and a number of prestigious universities have opened up

free online lectures and courses to everyone. It has even allowed retired teachers to read to and educate children in poorer countries. Widespread use of the Internet has opened up a substantial amount of knowledge to a much broader range of people than ever before.

Enhanced Lessons

Teachers can make use of the Internet by giving students extra resources and material from the Internet, such as interactive lessons and educational games. Many college courses use a "hybrid" model where many lessons are done online, requiring fewer in-class meetings. This saves students from having to commute to campus with their heavy textbooks every day. Tests, homework, collaboration with students and research can all be done from any computer with Internet access. Even for non-hybrid classes, the Internet is used as an addition to normal studies.

Study and Research (S&R)

The Internet contains a wealth of knowledge that is available instantly upon any search. Because of this, the Internet has superseded libraries as a source for information gathering and research. Many teachers will now ask students to visit specific websites to study from home, and online encyclopedias provide masses of knowledge on almost every topic imaginable. The variety of sources allows students to pursue subjects in much greater detail rather than being limited to whatever the teacher sends home.

Communication

It used to be that students that forgot work, missed a lecture or couldn't remember an assignment were out of luck until talking face to face with a teacher or a classmate. However, the Internet allows instantaneous connection to your classmates and teachers. Improving communication between students and teachers allows teachers to assist students without having to stay after class. It also allows for students to have greater efficiency when working on projects with their peers when everyone cannot attend or asking for clarification when something is unclear.

Accessibility

A number of universities, such as Harvard, Yale and Stanford, have opened up free courses on a variety of subjects that are accessible to anyone for free. These typically come in the form of lectures on video, but some also have notes attached. This means there is easy access to plenty of free lectures without emptying your bank account to pay tuition. The Internet also makes education accessible to impoverished communities. The "Granny Cloud," for example, made use of Skype as a number of volunteers, mostly retired teachers, read stories aloud over Skype to children in India to teach them how to read.

Need of Internet for Students

The students used the Internet to perform a number of activities. Among these, sending/receiving e-mail topped the list (Table). It was interesting to discover that the school-sponsored e-mail played a small role with only 7.5 percent of the respondents using it. This finding perhaps suggests that the

universities in Turkey should invest more in Internet infrastructure. Hotmail (48.3 %), Yahoo (44.7 %) and Mynet (34.3 %) were the three top e-mail account providers to the sample members. Using the Internet to read news and sports information was the second most important activity. To do research for school-related work was the third and chatting was the fourth important activities. While about 45 percent of the group used the Internet to research for products and services, 30.6 percent and 29.7 percent of respondents used it to download images and music, respectively. In addition, only 20 percent of the respondents did actually bought products online.

Use Internet For....	Sample (%)
E-Mail	64.4
Research for Homework	58
Chat	36.8
Read News and Sports Information	60.6
Download Music	29.7
Buy Products Online	20
Research for Products and Services	45.6
Play Games	26.3
Download Images	30.6

Table

Impact of Internet

As mentioned above, the students use the Internet for a number of activities ranging from e-mail to buying products online. Regarding impact of the Internet, the results show that 40.6 % of the students agree and strongly agree that they read less because of Internet, compared to 46.5 % who disagree or strongly disagree and 12.9 % who are neutral (Table). Obviously, this might cause some problems in cultural and literary development of these students. Less than half of the respondents also indicate that they watch less television now because of their online involvement. This might be good or bad depending that one talks to. However, it is definitely bad news for television advertisers! It is sometimes argued that Internet negatively impacts the socialization process and reduces interaction with friends or family members (Reisberg, 2000; Anderson, 2001). Others argue that Internet actually facilitates interactions and people keep in touch with friends or family members via e-mail or chat. One might even make friends online. 46.2 percent of the respondents indicated that they made new friends while in chat rooms.

Comments/Statements	Str. Agree-Agree	Neutral	Disagree-Str. disagree
I read less because of the Internet	20.3-20.3	12.9	21.9-24.6
I watch less television because of the Internet	18.6-23.9	18.6	20.6-18.3
I have acquired new friends while in chat rooms	18.6-27.6	19.6	21-13.1
Access to the Internet at home improves my GPA	16-19.4	15.1	30.7-18.8
I am on the Internet more than I should be	14.6-23.6	7.8	32.8-21.3

Table

About 25 percent of the respondents indicated that access to Internet at home improved their grade-point-average while 49.5 percent of the respondents did not feel that way. There were some gender differences here. a larger proportion of the males (38 percent of females versus 27 percent of the males) indicated that Internet access improved their GPAs.

In spite of very favorable attitudes towards Internet, students also worry that they might be spending too much time on the Web. A large share, 37 percent of the students indicated, “they are on the Internet more than they should be.”

Future of the Internet

According to a recent study, over 80 percent of faculty at North American colleges and universities believe that web-based technology is a key contributor to student success. It was also noted that 62 percent of faculty the United States and Canada, use the Internet to prepare coursework, 56 percent use the Web to supplement textbooks, while 51 percent use it to ensure up-to-date course content. A large number of professors in the United States now place lecture outlines, course requirements, homework, required reading and guidelines on the Web using software such as the Blackboard or WebCT. They also communicate with their students via e-mail quite often. Thus, having access to the Internet at home is a big advantage for the American students.

Conclusion

The appearance of the Internet has changed the education significantly. Properly used information from the Internet, represent added value to the education.

Limiting the government’s financial and human resources, consequently, has greatly increased the need to introduce new educational methods. E-learning has been in use for over a decade. During this time, both the advantages and disadvantages of using the Internet for learning have clearly demonstrated. In recent years, OER development has contributed to a higher quality and efficiency of e-learning.

The concept of using the educational resources has changed significantly. The development led fro



free content that one can individually teach himself, to social learning, where users have the possibility of mutual communication and exchange of opinions. Linking databases of resources, which will allow the user to use the information adapted to his previous knowledge, is expected in the near future. More about e-learning, its future and good practices will be presented in the book “E-learning Good Practices”, which will be published both online and in printed edition in 2012.

There are many good practices scattered on the web, but still a lot of things should be done to come to the critical mass of high quality educational content which is free for everybody and easy to use in different learning contexts and needs.