



The Role of E-Learning in Modern Media Education

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Abstract

Modern education based on knowledge management cannot be imagined without digital technologies. Though, of course, it does not change traditional classroom. It diversifies and perfects teaching processes.

Computer-based learning is just being implemented at TSU (Jv. Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University) as a blended method. There are some pilot courses. The goal of this Article is to represent the role of e-learning in modern Georgian media education and show the results of student's and teacher's opinion survey conducted by the author. The purpose of this research was to study their opinion - how effective is e-learning method.

The survey showed that the students of TSU have high motivation in computer based learning.

1. Introduction:

Based on knowledge management, modern media education cannot be imagined without digital technologies and it can be stated that the role of E-learning is of immeasurable - importance. Though, of course, it does not change traditional learning, it only diversifies and perfects teaching processes. Technologies are mediators between students and lecturers. "ICTs can enhance the quality of education in several ways: by increasing learner motivation and engagement by facilitating the acquisition of basic skills, and by enhancing teacher training. ICTs are also transformational tools which, when used appropriately, can promote the shift to a learner-centered environment"[1:7].

Computer-based learning is just being implemented at TSU (Jv. Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University) not in the form of pure distance learning but in the framework of a method which does not change traditional learning processes. What we in fact use is blended learning. "This refers to learning models that combine traditional classroom practice with e-learning solutions"[1:4].

There are a lot of courses (about 100) which are prepared by PhD students who are helping their professors to create e-learning courses. In addition to these courses, there are some courses (5 journalism courses, 2 political theory and 2 geography courses) which are being used at the learning processes. I am the author of 4 pilot journalism courses.

I have already been using an e-learning portal (e-learning.tsu.ge) based on a MOODLE platform for 2 semesters (2009-2010).

The goal of this paper is to present my practical experience in this field and show the results of the students' opinion survey conducted by me.

2. My Practical Experience:

Before implementing the MOODLE platform at TSU, I had to deliver the readers and other study materials in the Georgian language to my students in an electronic form sent in e-mails. As we know,



journalism is a field which “today is not the same as it was yesterday”. Accordingly, manuals and textbooks are becoming out of date time and again, particularly in post-Soviet countries.

So we have to renew our courses with new learning materials periodically. There are not any modern textbooks in Georgian and some journalism lecturers have to process English sources and deliver them in an electronic form.

I used the form of electronic-mailing to receive weekly home tasks from students for 3 years (2005-2008) but two years ago they proposed to make a blog where I could upload my learning materials. “As far as I think, a modern lecturer must have his own web page” – as one of the graduates phrased it.

So I made the blog (www.journalism.ucoz.com) last year (2009) for this purpose. I posted readers of my courses, case studies and practical exercises on this blog where I was also publishing the students’ mid-term presentations and the results of their mid-term and final exams. But this webpage was not available for everybody. Only registered students using a special code had access to the learning materials.

On a Web-2.0 technology-based page they could leave their comments and interaction processes were also carried out in this way. But MOODLE has various possibilities. Besides writing task modules, the use of forum modules is also interesting. Both are very important, because they give an opportunity to discuss an article or a topic: “Online discussions give many students the opportunity to express themselves in ways they couldn’t in a regular class”. [2:3].

According to my experience, I can say that forums are extremely effective for team work. For this purpose I used a social net (www.journalismstudy.ning.com), which I opened to promote teamwork among undergraduate students. Since all members of the projects cannot meet very often (most of them are working) we decided that online contacts would work.

So was born the idea to make a social net which would be closed for others and open for the participants of this project. Of course, it does not exclude face-to-face meeting. We meet at least once a week. The members of this project were creating an online branch magazine – “Reporter”. The project has 2 parts. The first stage means doing research and the second involves preparing this creative product. The students used this social net quite often in both stages. The teacher had a role of a facilitator.

What other types of channels were used in addition to forums? “Chat” which was very popular for “live” relations. They used blogs, too. But mostly they uploaded articles and photos for this magazine. These tasks were available for all participants and feedback was given not only by the teacher. All the members could leave comments referring to any article.

All these means are on a MOODLE platform which makes the organization and management of learning processes more flexible, more effective and more comfortable. I do not use the social net or the personal web page to say anything about receiving home tasks by e-mail. At present, I can organize the learning processes, receive tasks and evaluate them, gather all necessary materials for my courses with the help of an LMS platform. It turned out to be very convenient. Before the implementation of the LMS platform at TSU, I used a lot of various methods.

What kind of activities do I use on MOODLE? Online testing is an innovative tool for me. The testing module gives us an opportunity to present various (multiple choice, true/false, yes/no etc.) questions for students and manage the process of testing according to certain parameters setting up a time limit. At the same time there is an opportunity to give them feedback. In my opinion, it is possible to use it not only at the final or mid-term exams, but also at every lecture or workshop.

As my online testing (conducted 10 times) results show, this form of testing is very effective and more objective than traditional testing methods, because it evaluates students’ knowledge more precisely; In cases, where the test results used to be nearly the same and close to the maximum now they are different. Questions and answers are mixed and that way cheating is excluded. And one more crucial thing: students receive feedback instantly. Besides these factors, the method makes it easier for a teacher to work.

The only disadvantage is that I spend a lot of time on weekly task evaluation and at the same time I have the same number of lecture hours. The reason for this is that at TSU we do not have a quality



assurance system regulating distance learning. Besides, we have a lack of equipment. We do not possess enough computers. There are about 450 students in the journalism department with access to only 15 computers.

According to my conclusion, it is possible to use the testing process not only as a final exam or mid-term form, but also use it as a form of evaluation at every lecture or workshop. It makes the learning process more student-oriented because none of the students are left without feedback and it helps to increase their activity.

In my opinion, it is possible to use this type of testing successfully in any course of journalism. Although, of the so-called creative subjects (e.g. for practical courses) weekly written tasks are typical. I think the task module of MOODLE is effective for this purpose. In my opinion, the use of the study forum is also effective, because students can leave there their comments concerning this or that article. Discussing students' written tasks in the auditorium publicly, which is also typical of traditional journalism teaching and creative works, has turned out to be very effective in the e-learning process. It promotes interaction, excludes passive participation and eliminates the reasons for not attending lectures or workshops since anyone can take part in the web forum at any time convenient.

3. Student's Attitudes towards e-Learning:

Students' opinion is not a matter of less importance. I have conducted a survey among journalism students. On the whole, one hundred journalism students who participated in this survey (18 MA and 82 BA students) took part in the pilot e-courses in the autumn semester of 2009 (3groups) and the spring semester of 2010 (2groups).

The purpose of this research was to study their opinion about the effectiveness of the e-learning method and the advantages and disadvantages of these processes. The questionnaire included 6 questions.

According to the survey, 19% of respondents used the e-portal every day; 33% every third day; 42% every week while 4% avoided the question.

Question 2 - Is the e-learning method effective?

92 % said yes; While 8% - avoided the question.

Question 3 What would you change in e-courses?

57 % of respondents said they would change nothing;

7% avoided answering;

36% said they would make it more diverse and give it more functions.

Question 4 What are the advantages of e-learning courses?

Getting the results of testing or an exam on time – 12%;

Excluding the possibility of not sending the tasks – 5%;

Having all study materials and tasks accessible at one place – 81%;

Other – 2%.

Question 5 What are the disadvantages of e-learning courses?

It causes eye strain - 37 %;

Poor Internet connection – 54 %;

Other – 9 %.

Finally, 86 % of the students questioned think that it would be good if all courses used this form; with 6% of them saying no and 8% avoiding the answer.

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4. Teacher's attitudes Towards e-Learning:

I have conducted a survey among journalism teachers. I have used the same questions. On the whole 10 teacher participated in this survey who had pilot e-courses.



According to the survey, 6 % of respondents used the e-portal every day; 3% every third day; 1 % every week while, Question 2 - Is the e-learning method effect 7 % said yes; While 3% - avoided the question.

Question 3 - What would you change in e-courses?

3 % of respondents said they would change nothing;
2 % avoided answering;
5 % said they would make it more diverse and give it more functions.

Question 4 What are the advantages of e-learning courses?

Having all study materials and tasks accessible at one place – 6 %;
Other – 2%.

Getting the results of testing or an exam on time – 1%;
Excluding the possibility of not sending the tasks – 1 %;

Question 5 What are the disadvantages of e-learning courses?

It causes eye strain - 6 %;
Other – 3 %.

Poor Internet connection – 1 %;

Finally, 7 % of the teachers questioned think that it would be good if all courses used this form; with 1% of them saying no and 2 % avoiding the answer.

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5. Conclusion:

To sum up, the survey showed that the students of TSU are highly motivated to engage in computer-based learning and that is why we promote this method of learning among lecturers. The students also emphasize that using this method makes the learning processes easier and more interesting and modern media education cannot be imagined without technologies and without e-learning methods.

References:

[1]Victoria L. Tinio, ICT in Education, New York., 2003;

[2] Cole J. Foster H., Using Moodle: Teaching with the popular open source course management system, Second edition, 2008. Published by O'REILLY.