ONLINE LEARNING AT ALBANIAN UNIVERSITES

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Abstract

Evaluation of the technology allows on-line communication. Today in Albania, development of on-line teaching is a reality. This process helps in teaching universities and contributes positively in the application of theory of "long life learning". Albanian Universities are trying forward online learning, but are still at first step, while elite universities in the world have reached that almost part of the student they graduate, to perform online studies. The online lectures application and trainings not only for students, but also for employees of private companies, provides a permanent partnership of University-Community-Business. Currently there is a lack of culture of the application of lessons online, but they are the future of universities, for the reality of the theory of "long life learning" and for creating a preservative competitive advantage for companies. Rapid developments in technology and computers are providing impact on the implementation of new methods of teaching, too. The use of technologies-based training and e-learning is one of the major trends of our decade. Many decision makers and teachers think that the use of online learning will save a lot of money, as a result of revenue growth and cost reduction.

Keywords: online learning, training, universities, businesses, performance.

I. Introduction

"Online learning is not the next big thing; it is the now big thing."

Donna J. Abernathy

Online learning is just a novelty for Albanian universities. In this study is observed the application of online learning at Albanian Universities.

Objectives of this study are:

1. To encourage and promote online learning in Albanian universities.

2. To highlight the actual situation and to encourage the use of technologies, creating add value for human capital.

3. To encourage strategies building and the application of concrete budgets for online learning.

This study is developed at academic year 2011-2012, including all Albanian universities.

Hypothesis raised are:

• In the industry of education in Albania, there are tendencies to apply individual and institutional Online Learning especially in state universities, but also has a freeze in recent years, leaving Online Learning only at a form of information in their web pages, without throwing more concrete steps.

- Construction's initiatives of Online Learning require concrete strategies, the involvement of more stakeholders and the dedication of specific budgets for such investments.

The method used is to monitor online presentations in web of Albanian universities. Hypothesis set is studied by exploring the web of Albanian universities weight of online learning. The term "online learning" in some cases switches with: e-Learning, e-Education, Internet Learning, Virtual Learning, Distance Learning etc. Common to all these terms, is the distance from the technology (usually computer) forms used by the professor (or instructor), to deliver and support the literature to the user (student), which is also using technology to interact with the teacher or other users, aiming acquisition of knowledge. Carliner, defines "online learning" as the presentation of educational literature via computer. Khan defines online learning as an innovation for knowledge distribution to the remote audience, using Web as a tool. However "online learning", involves more than using Web to develop online teaching. According to Ally "online learning" is defined as "using the Internet to access course materials, to interact with students, to support the learning process and getting knowledge, setting personal meaning and increasing personal experience and knowledge through learning process", which is estimated the most full process. Distance education, provides the bases for the development of online education. Important element of "online learning" are: online enrollment, online distribution of course materials, Online Tests, Interaction at the same teaching and learning location (virtual), Individual Training, Online services offered for student-teacher discussion (answers and questions) groups via chat, e-mail. Despite the different denominations, there is a common distance between the teacher and students' emplacement. The organizations attempt to find ways to increase the performance of their workers and to build strategies that will help solve problems. Rapid developments in technology and computers are providing impact on the implementation of new methods of teaching, too. The use of technologies-based training and e-learning is one of the major trends (Bassi, Benson, & Cheney, 1996) of our decade. Many decision makers and teachers think that the use of online learning will save a lot of money, as a result of revenue growth and cost reduction. In the higher system education of the 21st century, are important cost-Efficiency analysis. There are used different methods of analysis to measure cost-Efficiency: CBR (cost-Efficiency), ROI and breakeven point analysis. CBR = program Benefits \ Costs program. ROI (%) = Net Benefits program \ program Costs x 100.

Breakeven analysis means the number of students that offset the fixed cost of the online learning program.

Kozma (2001) argues that a special attribute to their use of computers supplies the answer to meeting the demand for real-life models. It is not the computer that makes the students learn, but the design of real-life models and simulations and interaction of students with models and simulations. Porter (2001) argues that the internet has helped us in distance education. Simultaneously he has proclaimed the competitive attractiveness, too, resulting in online education with the help of its present model of Porter's Framework. Some promoters of distance education are: British International Studies Association, IDP Education Australia, U.S. International Studies Associate, Central and East European International Studies Association etc. Online learning is a way of integrating the university on the path of globalization. Online learning gives universities the opportunity to collaborate and provide their expertise in the business community. Online learning is a path to a virtual world and it introduces a trend of the recent decade. According to Bell (2012) a virtual world is a "synchronous, persistent network of people, represented as avatars, facilitated by Networked computers."

In the level of Internet users by the population of the country, Albania is a country with a comparable level (2009),with other countries in the region.

Country	Internet user	Population	%
Albania	1300000	3,192,723	40.7%
Macedonia	1,057,000	2052722	51.5%
Slovenia	1,298,000	2,039,669	63.6%
Montenegro	280,000	630,435	44.4%
Italy	29,235,000	60,192,698	48.6%
Slovakia	4,063,000	5,418,590	75.0%
Croatia	2,234,000	4,429,000	50.4%
Serbia	4,107,000	7,320,807	56.1%
Greece	4,971,000	11,282,760	44.1%

Table1: Internet user in Albania and other country of region

E-learning courses are accessible through Web browsers at every platform: Windows, Mac, UNIX, etc. Currently are identified four models of online learning: self-learning, supported self-learning, virtual class collaborative learning.

1. Self-learning

The term "self learning" would mean learning by self. The student is not part of any group, and does not interact and can't obtain help. The student must assume, but is always limited. The student is alone in front of course materials, through which will obtain knowledge.

2. Supported self-learning

Student can have access to online material and may benefit from the support of a personalized teacher. In this study we can use the term "self-learning with instructor", implicating by a teacher or by an instructor in the case of an organization. In this case we are dealing with a relation "one to one" or "teacher-student". This method is considered very appropriate for consulting. This method has two limitations: High cost and there is no group of study and therefore no communication among the group.

3. Virtual class

The student is not alone in the process of learning. He is part of a group that can benefit online materials and support from the teacher. The term, we can use is "virtual classroom". "Virtual Class" has a great many similarities with traditional classroom where the student communicates not only with the teacher but also with other group members. The group is related and has the same goal of learning, while each student has his way to obtain the knowledge. The group existence induces the request for the existence of important elements such as: objectives, educational psychology, suggestions, solutions, problems distinction, difficulties, mutual support and encouragement. Group members are part of a dedicated network of teaching purposes where benefit support and encouragement.

4. Collaborative learning

Collaborative learning is very similar to Virtual Class, but "Collaborative learning" is a result of a collaborative research, where each student acts as the creator or provider of the studying content. This model corresponds to a class where the group is involved in activities or work projects. In all four methods show up two key elements: human and material resources. The correlation between these components is negative: while there is a decrease of

the amount of materials used, increase the relationship in learning to use the online version.

At the first method "materials" seize a large portion, while the "relationship" is very small.   Moving to the method of "Collaborative Learning" materials seize a small weight and the importance of the "relationship" grows more. A new concept at academic environment, are e-teachers. E-teachers are the new generation of teachers that will work at internet environment: at both situations, regular or virtual classroom. They will create new concepts of working, at space and time. E-teachers collaborate, create and discover, new learning communities, and will explore resources while interact with information, materials, ideas between their students and colleges.

2. Methodology

"Faculties are moving forward, technologies are improving, and student demand is increasing -- but few changes are taking place in the university structure as a whole to accommodate the special needs of the distance-learning student." (Richard Bothel)

The method used in paper, is meta-analysis and survey methods for Albanian Universities. Were studied other authors, for online learning and was explored the online learning of Albanian Universities. In study are involved, public and private universities in Albania. The Online learning is becoming more and more part of the education and training even in Albania. Albanian universities publish in their webs among other information also the online tool of communication and interactive teaching methods. Any other kind of information is reserved. Some universities often set in their webs the message "E-learning-soon" or do not have it yet in their plans of education. At state universities occur two cases, where the term online learning is stated. At Polytechnic University of Tirana, we find the idea of a digital campus, which gives the opportunity (among other possibilities) of trainings or distance masters. At the case of Shkodra University, E-learning for physics department is allocated at it's web page, but there aren't courses that function. But occur cases when some of the professors, like at Tirana University and Vlora University, use individually forms of online education. This is not taken into consideration, and is collocated at study restrictions.

Ownership	University with website		University without website	Total
	With e-learning	Without e-learning		
Public University	2	11	0	13
Private University	1	40 4	8	53
Total	3	55		66

Table 1. Online Learning in Albanian University

At private universities, at 8 cases there aren't website and in other 44 others (in 4 of which the website, doesn't function), there isn't any term of e-learning. At only one private university we found the term e-education, which takes into account online education, but even there doesn't function as a teaching method. At Albanian Education Ministry website, we found the term e-education, and don't function. E-education includes e-teaching and

e-learning, together with the necessary administrative and strategic tools, necessary for the provision of teaching and learning in an internet environment. This includes a local, regional, national and international education point of view.

3. Findings

"Online learning will rapidly become one of the most cost-effective ways to educate the world's expanding workforce." (Jack Messman)

Currently lack the culture of online learning application. In many cases the methods of "online learning" are considered as a virus that would destroy the traditional method of teaching and are conceptualized only as a tool to increase the effectiveness of teaching and not of learning and studying. "Online learning" is a necessary future of the education system, contributing positively to the application and implementation of the theory of "long life learning". Elite level universities have started for years efforts of online learning, and today have successfully implemented online learning and the students who follow this way of learning, pick up 20% of enrolled in them. Distance education dates to as early as 1728 and it refers to [named] Caleb Philips, one of the first teachers who was seeking students for lessons to be sent weekly. Modern distance education initially developed in the 19th century and it refers to Isaac Pitman in Great Britain. Undergraduate in USA has increased from 8% to 20% during the period 2000-2008, while the number of those registered for the same period has increased by 2-4%. Today they offer to their students, online studies programs, Bachelor and Master levels. Many prestigious companies have begun to devote importance to the "online learning" to develop the training of their employees e.g. Motorola company founded the "Motorola University" in 1989 to strengthen its reputation and to train employees of the corporation. It applies "online learning" to train its employees in over 20 countries worldwide to the "Six Sigma" technique. Implementing online learning for about 20 years, to train its employees in "Six Sigma ", the company managed and save $ 17 billion. IGNOU uses intensively online education, among other universities. The Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) established in 1985 and so far, provides the educational aspirations of over 4 million students. Students registered in IGNOU comprise about 20% of the students who attend higher education in India. Vlora University has made some positive steps during 2009-2010, at online learning application, specifically at Self-learning, but an absence of plans and the lack of a clear long term strategy, gave a negative impact in subsequent periods. Significant impacts on using online learning are:

- High effective use of human capital that the country posses.
- Reduce some students' costs or learning costs, especially for geographical large distances.
- The lectures application and online training not only for students but also for employees of private companies, providing a permanent cooperation business-university. Train the key employees of a company affect the simultaneous development of two parameters: the potential development of employees and their performance in the organization, converting them into "stars" .
- Save Time. Students will be able to manage better their study and leisure time, enabling the optimization of their agenda.
- Increase Access. Available materials of the course will be available online at any time.
- Through the use of technology, is achieved to ensure a balance of the report work / live, avoiding movement of professors and students in long distance.
- It allows students to interact for educational purposes
- It supplies the use of technology for research purposes

- It facilitates the accumulation of materials
- It provides the possibility of after school discussions
- Participants in online projects can access online software applications by using real data
- Universities can invite high professional qualified professors, without being necessary for them to travel physically.
- In the case of economic reviews, state investments for new buildings, ventilation systems, heating, greenery etc. have a decadence tendency and, thus, online learning is a great help.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

"The ability to learn faster than your competitors may be the only sustainable competitive advantage" (Peter Senge)

The trend of the last decade relies on an intensive use of online learning and the creation of a virtual world.

Developed countries and lots of universities have taken very important steps, consequently being the first to benefit.

In Albania, the situation prevails as the following:

1. Universities in Albania may be in a preparatory stage for online learning, and for that reason, aren't making their necessary web publishing.

2. Individual professors may use forms of online learning but their evidence is difficult to do if there isn't a process organized by the respective institutions and a formal strategy for that purpose.

3. The study aims to open debate on "online learning" in the Albanian academic environments, but in difficult economic situation that the place and cultural level of actors in the process of applying the "online learning", can't give immediate positive impact on university education.

4. Universities in Albania are facing the risk of the use of technology, specifically for online learning while knowledge, which can transmit through it, may be old.

5. The use of e-learning in Albanian universities will be a challenge for the future to support their long term strategy and their mission.

6. The use of e-learning needs a proactive strategy and financial support.

The study is also limited to:

• Perhaps some universities may have projects, but considering the stage of our country they are forward-looking for the application of online learning project.

• Universities may be in the stage of bringing up society with the use of online communication, including their students, and thus anticipate their future investments.

• Legal recognition and disputes at Albanian universities for the application of online learning are not part of the study.

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