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DIGITAL TEACHING AS AN EFFECTIVE MEANS OF EDUCATION

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Constantly changing contemporary educational environment defies traditionally accepted customary training methods used to be the major ones just recent time ago. Due to the well-known objective factors, the system of education needs to be altered and modified to the certain extent, so digital platforms are being inserted into the teaching-and-learning process. It has appeared to be a veritable challenge for a great number of educators to get involved into such a “terra incognita”. However, there are some appreciable benefits of the “digital” approach. In this article the innovative digital educational means are analysed.

Keywords: digital teaching, physical learning space, online learning space, Learning Management System, module, flexibility, learning platform, live streaming classes, real-time feedback, scheduling.

ЦИФРОВОЕ ПРЕПОДАВАНИЕ КАК ЭФФЕКТИВНОЕ СРЕДСТВО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ

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Постоянно меняющаяся современная образовательная среда бросает вызов традиционно принятым устоявшимся методам обучения, которые еще совсем недавно считались приоритетными. В силу известных объективных факторов система образования нуждается в определенной модернизации и видоизменении, таким образом, в учебно-воспитательный процесс внедряются цифровые платформы. Участие в этой «terra incognita» стало настоящим испытанием для многих преподавателей. Тем не менее, есть некоторые заметные преимущества «цифрового» подхода. В данной статье анализируются инновационные цифровые образовательные средства.

Ключевые слова: цифровое преподавание, физическое образовательное пространство, виртуальное образовательное пространство, система

образовательного менеджмента, модуль, гибкость, образовательная платформа, занятия в режиме реального времени, обратная связь в режиме реального времени, планирование.

Nowadays, while speaking about “digitalization” in the field of education, more than ever before, the world is looking for “how do academics do it”.

It is not a secret that the majority of educators whether they’ve taught online a lot or a little, do not enjoy it as much as teaching in person. They do not experience that ‘fizz’ after an invigorating face-to-face atmosphere, lacking true emotions and comprehending the physical learning space. Indeed, in accordance with 2017 *Educause* survey [7] only 9% of academics prefer to teach “in a completely online environment”. That means that an overwhelming 91% of them do not.

Clearly, many academics don’t observe the value of online courses or of attempting to become a better online teacher. They have spent years in campus classrooms, but they do not have the profound and extensive experience in the online learning space. Most of them are not aware of how to teach online or how to make the whole process productive enough.

However, online classes aren’t passing away. On the contrary, enrolments continue to grow year by year, particularly nowadays in terms of the pandemic. Moreover, online education provides access for students who, with work and family duties, would not be able to attend classes in person. Those people are just as much students as the ones who turn up on the campus, and they also deserve the best teaching approach.

There are a few commonly used notions of “digital teaching”.

First of all, it is reasonable to mention *Learning Management System* (known as an *LMS*). Online classes are typically held via institution’s chosen learning-management system, i.e. a platform that contains communication, content delivery, and assessment tools to stimulate the teaching-and-learning process. The distinctive features of an LMS can be variable from campus to campus, but commonly one identifies the following components and functions:

– An assessment book to record student progress.

– Web pages or sites that let you upload texts, videos, or links to other sources.

– Assessment tools for students to submit their assignments, or take a quiz or an exam.

– Debate forums and chats that enable students to get immersed in conversations on class content with the professor and with one another [1; 3; 8].

The following significant term is *Module*, used to organize class materials into topics. They're arranged sequentially and compile all course materials and learning activities for that specific item or unit.

Next goes *Asynchronous*. The majority of online courses tend to be asynchronous. It means that students aren't all together in class simultaneously, and class activities don't take place in real time. Instead, students can accomplish the tasks whenever their schedules allow. Being flexible is one of the core advantages implied by online education, and a primal reason for many students to elect to attend digital class [1; 2; 4].

The jargon and the setup have much in common in many online courses, but there can be found out some differences. For instance, some online classes convey a synchronous element or two. Some have a relatively small number of students (30 or fewer) while others have large enrolments, which can seem to be challenging to teach fruitfully. Some online courses are authorial and unique to the individual instructor while others are coordinated across sections or rely to the great extent on publisher content and activities [4].

One can also elicit differences in the circumstances of online students. Some are well-equipped and tech-wise, possessing a high quality computer and fast, reliable internet access. Others implement their coursework in a computer lab on campus. Still others use their laptops in public places with good Wi-Fi (malls, restaurants, libraries). But most of them prefer their smartphones to all other gadgets notwithstanding the fact they appear to be rather inconvenient for general learning process since the interface is not quite appropriate for doing such activities.

Taking into consideration all the above-mentioned factors, it is evident that the flexibility of online education appears to be a more accessible option than traditional courses for more than 6.3 million students. There are lots of opportunities for an educator to supply students with all the necessary educational data via digital classes.

Various online learning platforms offer a wide range of functions and options to make educational process effective. Focusing on *Google Classroom* seems to be the general tendency, but all of platforms are quite similar in using.

Here are some options that are suitable for teaching-and-learning online process.

1. Teaching remotely with video calls. For this purpose, both teachers and students are to set up their home environment for video calling. They should find a location with a strong Wi-Fi signal, much light and a clear background and then start a video call with the entire class, a mini-group, or individually.

2. Recording lessons for immediate playback for students to watch later.

3. Live streaming lessons. They save bandwidth in case the internet connection is weak. A professor can record lessons and post them for students to access later.

4. Creating and arranging assignments, quizzes providing real-time feedback.

5. Making a private class website for students to host lesson information, worksheets, videos and other material.

6. Structuring a lesson with numerous presentations, themes, embedded video, animations, etc.

7. Creating, sharing, editing and printing documents.

8. Using live captions making lessons accessible to all.

9. Arranging 1:1 time so students can book one-on-ones or group sessions with a professor.

10. Keeping in touch with other teachers taking virtual coffee breaks together.

11. Sharing teaching resources online [2; 3].

Jennie Magiera, Global Head of Education Impact, *Google for Education*, proposes the following issue on distance teaching-and-learning. She has been teaching and working as an administrator for more than a decade. Whenever there is

an event that entails the school closing, she finds a way to ensure that students do not tend to lose precious learning time. J. Magiera has been exploring how to make it work. Notwithstanding the fact we're facing such an event because of the current pandemic, and millions of students are unable to attend school physically, thanks to various digital learning options, such as Google Hangouts, entire classes of students can join a lesson simultaneously.

J. Magiera states that teachers receive live-streaming for up to 100,000 viewers within their domain, so that they can do a virtual school assembly or stream a lecture. Besides, it is possible to record meetings and save them. When students can't join the lesson, they'll be able to access the content afterwards. It keeps students involved while they're at home. At the same time, she maintains that virtual learning can be "isolating and disengaging for students". Being in front of a screen for hours watching videos may force a student to fast forward or even skip a lesson. To keep them engaged teachers should open up virtual discussions about what they're learning, pausing the video and using comments in *Google Docs* and Classroom to get the feedback on their work. It is one of the strategies to engage students when professors cannot see them in person [5].

One more way to achieve fruitful outcomes while teaching online is assessing student learning frequently. Formative assessments help teachers make sure students are making proper progress while learning away from campus. Check for understanding during group instruction by asking a poll question in the middle of a lesson and demonstrating the results in real time. Quizzes (for example, in Google Forms) offer auto-grading features, allow teachers to embed videos, images and answer choices. Students can also visualize their knowledge by means of project-based learning assignments and presentations [2; 5; 6].

When students' routines are broken out, many perceive how much they actually miss the structure of offline learning and learning with their teacher. It's reasonable to state that feeling of comfort and safety during a time of uncertainty is to be retained by instructors [3; 6].

There is another challenge that can be mentioned on terms of virtual learning process. It is scheduling. Using various digital platforms, educators can manage time wisely assuring students that they will be in time and on time to accomplish their activities. Again, recorded videos and presentations appear to be of great help for those who are unable to join the meeting simultaneously with the group.

In terms of time management, Jennie Magiera recommends to "think beyond the clock". She considers distance learning to be independent of the normal study day time constraints: rushing students into the classroom or hurrying to finish your lesson before the time appointed. Students can take more time on some activities and breeze through lessons that come naturally to them [5].

Finally, educators are in charge of scanning how their students are feeling.

Social Emotional Learning can continue in a distance learning setting, too. Digital platforms offer tools for maintaining classroom culture and creating mood check-ins for students to share their emotional state on a daily basis. Students can request a conference with the teacher if they need extra support. Teachers can also set up a private blog for students to ponder on the experience and their activities by journaling or recording video reflections [6].

One can also mention other online platforms as alternatives to Google. *Loop* allows students to get in touch with course content, their teachers and peers. There is an option where students access their notes, participate in discussions, create their *ePortfolio* and participate in webinars. *Loop* is a certain concentration of several learning technologies into one platform [9].

In case a professor aims at making students benefit from interacting with one another, it is quite practicable to get immersed into the virtual space of the platform called *Padlet*. It initiates students to share their work with their peers. The tool provides students with the opportunities of posting ideas and collecting resources so that everyone in the group can see them. A discussion forum might work; a *Google Docs* would work, too. However, a discussion forum requires the tedious process of opening and closing threads and a *Google Docs* opens up the possibility of students

accidentally erasing each other's work. It is *Padlet* that tackles the pedagogical challenge [4].

Thus, notwithstanding the pandemic it appears to be quite probable to convey the appropriate "high-quality" collaboration of a professor and students by means of various easy-to-use digital tools. Simultaneously, students possess a plausible possibility for sharing and interacting with each other by posting texts, videos and images, making lists, displaying comments, etc. All the actions can be fulfilled both "in public" and "in private" depending on the core goal.

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