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ROLE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AT UNIVERSITY SUCCESS

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ABSTRACT

The information society stage shaped by the quick changes in information technologies affects the economical, social, cultural and educational areas. It can be said that there are lots of ways technology used in academic life and impact students' success. The concept of using the educational resources has changed significantly. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have greatly expanded into the field of education in last two decades. The global adoption of new technologies and internet into education provides an opportunity for modernizing of study, the introduction of modern teaching methods, distance learning as a form of e- learning in the twenty- first century. The appearance of the internet has changed the formal and informal education significantly. It can be said that properly used information from the internet, represent added value to the education. However, information technologies and internet specifically do not always impact student success as much as people expect from them. We can't say 24/7 access to technologies e.g. email, twitter or facebook, done anything to impact student success. This do not make students doing more internships, going to career services more, appreciating general education more, in other words using information technologies do not always complement academic achievement or really effect students success.

Keywords: Information technology, productivity in studying, internet, academic achievement.

INTRODUCTION

New era we live in brings us many new technologies and ways of thinking and learning. During the past decade it's got cheaper and easier for many people to reach new technological devices. Unlike before a lot of people who are not so rich can buy a personal computer, lap top, smart phone or an android device. Even internet access has become widely available and people can access internet many areas such as coffee shops, food court places, shopping centers, restaurants etc. However, many young person especially university students are so enthusiastic about information and communication technologies (ICT) and mostly using internet anywhere.

The access to higher education is becoming a necessary element in expanding economic prosperity and improving the quality of life. The problem of the growing global demand then we need to address for education, as S. John Daniel foresaw in 1996. Compounding this challenge of demand from college- age students is the fact that the world is changing at an ever- faster pace. Few of young people today will have a fixed, single career; instead, they are likely to follow a trajectory that encompasses multiple

careers. As they move from career to career, much of what they will need to know will not be what they learned in school decades earlier. We are entering a world in which we all will have to acquire new knowledge and skills on an almost continuous basis...

Obviously internet plays a significant role in the lives of young people today. The rapid changing of life necessitates a support for continuous learning and ongoing creation of new skills and bright ideas. The life long education is gradually becoming a necessity in today's world. Via internet, education process changed significantly in last two decades. The future impact of the Internet on higher education: Experts expect more-efficient collaborative environments and new grading schemes; they worry about massive online courses, the shift away from on-campus life

For this reason, previous research points to advantages as well as disadvantages of the use of information and communication technologies such as internet in a formal educational context. The aim of the current study was to investigate the influence of the use of the Internet on planning and instruction. As Wesley George, principal engineer for the Advanced Technology Group at Time Warner Cable noted that by the year 2020, universities should re-examine how technological improvements can enhance students' critical thinking and information acquisition skills.

1. Aim and Research Questions of the Study

It can easily be said that internet plays a major role in the lives of youngsters and even children today. All over the world young people often engage in online activities both inside and outside of the classroom. In the school, young people can use information technologies, when searching for information, improving information acquisition skills and when completing exams and preparing their projects.

Technological change, which not only permits new activities but makes those new activities superior in many important ways over the previous method of operation, creates long lasting innovations in society. It is obvious that Information and Communication Technologies and the internet have greatly expanded into the field of education in last two decades. The global adoption of new technologies into education provides an opportunity for modernizing of study, the introduction of modern teaching methods, distance learning as a form of e-learning and probably better prepare students for the future. [1] (Viritić, 2012: 244)

The research questions of this study are whether students benefit from using internet academically in their courses when preparing their assignments and projects and whether using internet in classrooms promote their success and increase student motivation? If so, what are the advantages of access on internet and if there are any drawbacks and any side effects of using internet in higher education process; what are the drawbacks? The current study is searching for the benefits and side-effects of information technologies used in formal and informal learning contexts. The overall purpose of this study is to compare students' academic success produced in internet-based contexts with their success produced in formal education context. As a part of this study, another aim of the current study is to test and evaluate young people's tendency towards benefiting from ICT to support their achievements.

It can be said that today students worldwide are encouraged and expected to implement Information and Communication Technology (ICT) through whole of their education life. However, students might find it difficult to know how to use the ICT in order to

study effectively and get real benefits from them.

1.1. Method and Framework of the Research Procedure

As stated above, the aim of the current study is to apply a questionnaire to the students at school of economics in Istanbul. The total number of students who were applied questionnaire is hundred and fifty (150). The questionnaire forms were completed during leisure hours and before class. Students were asked to participate in this study via answering 10 questions in one page.

Hundred and fifty students attending faculty of economics in Istanbul are asked about whether they use internet and other information technologies with the aim of study, or other purposes related with their fields and how often they utilize ICT in making research and preparing their assignments, thesis or projects. They are also asked whether they utilize from other sources apart from information technologies for studying. Also they have been asked if they rely on information sources on internet or not. And at the same time they have been asked for what other reasons they use information technologies. How many hours approximately these students get internet access within a day, is another question in the questionnaire. Besides their school grades and exam scores are asked in addition to their other curriculum activities. Plus which features of information technologies are the students mostly enjoy and benefit from are considered in questionnaire.

As mentioned above data was collected through a questionnaire presented by the questionnaire includes 3 nominal, dichotomy questions (Yes or No) and 7 multiple choice questions including socio-demographic questions to assess student's attitudes towards the use of internet with the aim of studying, searching, and preparing their homework and term projects elicitation phase. Although the sample size of this study is in accordance with the size of other interview studies, no claims of generalizability are made. The sample size is considered to be too small for the conclusions to be generalized to other groups (150 person), thus the results are representative of students studying at economics faculty in Istanbul. However it should be said that the informants might have interpreted basic concepts differently. Hence there is a possibility that these methodological shortcomings have had an effect on the results. The frequencies were computed and evaluated, and the analysis of the data and findings are as follows;

1.2. The Analysis of the Data and Findings

All the participant students agree that they use ICT very often. They use these technologies, especially internet both for their academic aims and other purposes apart from educational such as leisure and shopping. The internet is an additional learning and searching resource because internet is a very good source which you can find the latest developments very rapidly.

Students' opinions of using ICT and mostly internet change depending on their gender, age, income, way of life and semester. The empirical results show that communication quality, information quality and availability of internet access and its quality significantly and positively affect students satisfaction and their happiness. The findings that social learning and good communication are needed to improve learning outcomes allowing users the possibility of mutual communication and exchange of opinions. [1] (Viritić, 2012: 246)

Demographic Characteristics of the Participants; students gender distribution is 58% female, 42% is male. Students age distribution; between 18- 23 years of age is 77 %, 23- 28 years of age is 23 %, 28 years of age and over is 0%. Students' class years; Freshman is 25%, sophomore is 33%, juniors is 30%, seniors is 12%. Internet access points change according to whether they stay in dormitory or rental apartments or their home. They access internet from home 55%, from dormitory 25%, from school or internet café is 20%. Percentages of using university or faculty library sources through internet and benefiting from e-library catalogues 80% and 70% respectively.

The questionnaire demonstrates the frequency of the students' trends in the use of internet resources during their term's projects studies. From these data, the internet resources used in order of priority, in term project studies are: Highest (1st Priority) High (2nd Priority) Moderate (3rd Priority) Low (4th Priority). It is furthermore asked which search engines you are mostly using e.g. Google and Yahoo. And what kind of online databases you look for on internet and e-magazines or online-libraries such as e-encyclopedias, e-books or e-journals you use and get some data is asked.

On the other hand, when we look at the students' view about reliability of internet sources, it is so high percent (90% out of 150 students) that students rely on internet sources and unfortunately they consider ICT sources first and then they look for other formal educational materials. In other words, when they make a research they initially use information technologies, after that they prefer to read text books and required materials. Even they mostly study through internet before exams and support their assignments via ICT. Finally we can say that the contents of the sources obtained by students is 85% information technologies.

2. The Use of Information Technology Resources by University Students During Their Higher Education

Using ICT in the educational environment has enabled easy access to many resources, and therefore information sharing has increased considerably. Moreover, the prevalence of this sharing has brought additional benefits in that these resources can be used in any location and any time. Technological change, which not only permits new activities but makes those new activities superior in many important ways over the previous method of operation, creates long lasting innovations in society. Web-based education is one of those innovations [2] (Franklin and Peat, 2001). Although the efficiency of this technology, it is evaluated with use of proportion of the desired results in student achievement does not exactly come out and is difficult to determine.

Since some university students sometimes use the internet for reasons other than educational such as playing games and watching videos.. etc. The effect of the internet in education is, hence, relatively limited. In this study, efficiency and effectiveness of access to resources on internet and other information and communication technologies rather than examination of internet use has been investigated. In addition, we have sought to identify the impacts of ICT resources used by university students in their project, and which effects of the internet are observed during the search phase and initial preparation stage of their project.

2.1. Effects of the Use of the Information Technologies on Students

Firstly, we should look at the role of information technologies generally, and internet

specifically in education. The rapid changing of life requires a support for continuous learning and ongoing creation of new ideas and skills. Thanks to Internet, the education process changed significantly in last two decades. Although learning resources are often considered as key intellectual property in a competitive higher education world, more and more institutions and individuals are sharing their digital learning resources over the Internet.

Recently it is generally said that the concept of using educational resources has changed significantly. For the last two decades, developments led from 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.

In the school context information technologies and most popular of them internet can be used to find for instance different kinds of information diverse linguistic activities. Shortly using the internet in the educational environment has enabled easy access to many resources, and information sharing has, therefore, significantly increased. Moreover, the prevalence of this sharing has brought additional benefits in that these resources can be used in any location and any time. [3] (Şahin, Balta & Ercan, 2010: 234) At the same time, it should be pointed out that although the efficiency of this technology, it is evaluated with use of proportion of the desired results in student achievement does not exactly come out and is difficult to determine. Sahin, Balta and Ercan states in their research that since adolescents, especially some university students sometimes, use the Internet for reasons other than educational (they explore the funny view of the Internet). The effect of the Internet in education is, hence, relatively limited.

2.1.1. Positive Effects of Using Information Technologies

All the students in the current study generally have a positive opinion of the Internet. They all have experience/knowledge of internet, which they have gained on their own (i.e. informally). Hunderd and Fourty-eight of the students can be described as frequent and confident users, whereas two students think they lack enough knowledge/experience of the use of internet.

The students in this study think that the internet is a valuable source of information and educational tool. Besides teachers in another study in Åland Islands by [4] Camilla Brandsström mention a number of advantages of the use of internet in planning and instruction. The internet can be used to find facts, recent news, dictionaries, exercises of various kinds of texts, read papers of others and to get ideas of different perspectives. Moreover, internet allows variation/impulsiveness in teaching, makes learning more enjoyable/interesting, motivates both students and teachers, and can be a time-saver. In addition, one teacher states that the internet has changed the way she study and learn. Finally, the internet is not only used by the teachers for information seeking but also by students. It was found that IT and internet is a valuable source of information and an important additional teaching tool. Information technologies can motivate the students, make teaching more fun, and allows variation in educational materials. Students think it is more fun to read online information than to read books. [4] (Brandsström, 2011: 18)

The contents of the sources obtained by students in this study, together with the information obtained from this part of the survey, it would appear that the majority of students preferred visual and textual information and was used more effectively in the projects. The students' views about the reliability of the sources obtained from the internet. Although learning resources are often considered as key intellectual property in a competitive higher education world, more and more institutions and individuals are sharing their digital learning resources over internet openly and for free, as Open Educational Resources. [1] (Virtič, 2012: 2044)

Result from the information obtained during the assessment process of the students indicates that they show more interest in internet resources than other sources. However, although they have limited access to reliable resources, the majority of the students try to access these resources in order to be more successful in their term projects.

2.1.2. Drawbacks of the Use of the Information Technologies in the School

The interpretation of major drawbacks of information technologies using sources from the questionnaire can be made also. Four major disadvantages of the use of internet in formal educational settings were found in the questionnaire data for instance, students' cheating, extracurricular activities in class, technical problems and most importantly biased/unreliable information. Students might cheat is a drawback with the use of the internet in the school. [4] (Brandström, 2011: 2) They all confirm how easy it is for students to just copy from online texts and paste it into their own texts.

In a project made in Aland Islands by Camilla Brandström; four major drawbacks of using internet were reported by the teachers, viz. students' cheating, unreliable information, technical problems, and students' extracurricular activities during lessons. Furthermore, students point out that it might be difficult to find accurate news/correct information on the internet, and to differentiate between reliable and unreliable sources. Unfortunately, the internet might become the major learning tool, that planning takes more time when using internet, and that (young) people spend too much time on internet.

Internet use, especially in education, has been investigated for sometime, and many different studies, exist in literature about that subject. In addition, emphasized the effects of internet as an effective teaching tool in university education, and proposed that many university teachers publish their course materials via the internet. They suggested that it is insufficient for university lecturers and administrators to use the Internet as a good teaching tool, and that students' internet use should also be investigated. [3] (Şahin, Balta & Ercan; 2010: 234)

The study provides the rates of the students to use their resources by blending or without questioning. In light of the information derived from the survey questions, it would seem that the majority of students try to use their own-ideas combined with internet resources, instead of using only resources from the Internet. Furthermore, some students copy-paste information from resources for writing projects and then edit the results. Attention to rules for using other sources and expectations of the student should be explained clearly by faculty members.

It is possible to say one finding obtained from the questionnaire showed that while university students frequently use email and forum/chat-line in their daily-life, they

don't use them in their studies. Furthermore, many students claimed that they don't like to collaborate with their friends and interact with experienced persons for information acquisition and sharing during their study.

In the section of the data gathered from the questionnaire and the results of the literature reviews made by university students during their courses and projects is evaluated, and some suggestions are made. It shows us some of the course scores (including the project scores, home-work scores, and final grades), and the evaluation percentages of projects and home-work on final grades are getting worse than the period when they do not have internet access.

3. CONCLUSION

The major aim of the current study was to investigate if and how generally the ICT, specifically internet is used as an educational tool by university students. Young people of today have been brought up in a digital era. The Internet constitutes a major and natural part of their lives. Research points to advantages of the use of the internet in an informal context as well as in a formal education context.

Lecture grades obtained from the final and midterm exams are not high enough. Some significant findings about students' home-work and project studies and their attitudes on these studies during the semester is just the average of class. Students took low project and home-work scores, this is because students give little importance to other formal education materials and traditional ways of studying and mostly depends on internet sources in their projects and assignments.

The overall aim of the current study was to investigate the influence of the use of internet on. The appearance of the internet has changed the education significantly. [5] Namely properly used information from the internet, represent added value to the education. This study showed that when university students have the opportunity to use IT and internet resources, almost all of them prefer to use these, rather than classical libraries for their studies, but when the information source satisfaction in research needs is considered, the students' trends are in the direction of using both.

During the study, both the advantages and disadvantages of using internet for higher learning have been clearly demonstrated. The concept of using the educational resources has changed significantly. In recent years, government's financial and human resources should be increased and focus on the need to introduce new educational methods in order to improve quality of higher education and students' academic achievement.

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; that's to say; students can benefit from various kinds of information sources and can compare different kinds of knowledge and analyze them depending on their own logic. Since current research mostly describes negative aspects of using the internet in the school, that is to say, unreliable/inappropriate information is gradually takes place the true and accurate knowledge and reliable information in the eyes of young people.

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