

Some Aspects of Transforming Education in the Information Society (case of economical study)

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Abstract

The present study examines the modifying of some educational canons aspects in the age of information society. First of all we referred at the role and place of the professor in the study process. We are examining the modifying value of main components of conventional forms of teaching: textbook, lectures, essays. The involvements of informational pressure into the educational performance get some secondary negative effects, such as plagiarism.

Keywords: canons of education, informational pressure, plagiarism

Introduction

The rapid and fundamental changes imposed on society and on the economy by the new information paradigm, obviously have repercussions on education as well. Unlimited access to information for scholastic purposes deteriorates the dominant position of the teacher, transforming him in a participant to the learning process. This new role requests new demands, such as an increased capacity to moderate in obtaining and acknowledgment of information by students. The array of internet skills, by their easiness of access, creates a false feeling of ease in terms of study information. As it is mentioned (Scott, 2001) “Thus, conversation is not the exchange of knowledge, but the process of becoming informed about each other’s ‘informing’ (what Pask described

as the “coordination of coordinations of coordinations”).”¹ The basic task of the teacher is the ability to externalize understanding and, as a consequence, the development of application abilities and the continuation of new knowledge gains. Also, with the increased possibility of multiplication of materials, there is an increased possibility of plagiarism. This phenomenon, all vicious traits aside, has a negative effect on the learning process by creating the possibility of study reproduction without comprehending its essence.

Material and Methods

In our research an attempt was made to comprehend the issues imposed on the educational system by the new information society. By using our own experience as a teacher, we are able to rethink the efficiency of traditional learning tools: the book, the class and student’s work outside of the class.

Literature review

The issue which has been constantly put in front of the educational system is more pregnant in the new age: to account for requirements, always in development and conditions imposed by the change of the technological level of the external environment. The educational theorist John Dewey claimed: “Not only is social life identical with communication, but all communication (and hence all genuine social life) is educative.” To be a recipient of a communication is to have an enlarged and changed experience. One shares in what another has thought and felt and in so far, meagerly or amply, has his own attitude modified. Nor is the one who communicates left unaffected. ... Except in dealing with common places and catch phrases one has to assimilate, imaginatively, something of another's experience in order to tell him intelligently of one's own experience. ... It may fairly be said therefore, that any social arrangement that remains vitally social or vitally shared, is educative to those who participate in it. (Dewey, 1916). If we are to compare with the ideas exposed by contemporary researchers, we understand that the adequacy of education to contemporary requirements do not lose their importance.

¹ Scott, B. (2001). Gordon pask's conversation theory: A domain independent constructivist model of human knowing. *Foundations of Science*, 6(4), 343 – 360, p.3.

“Every era of technology has, to some extent, formed education in its own image. That is not to argue for the technological determinism of education, but rather that there is a mutually productive convergence between main technological influences on a culture and the contemporary educational theories and practices. Thus, in the era of mass print literacy, the textbook was the medium of instruction, and a prime goal of the education system was effective transmission of the canons of scholarship. During the computer era of the past fifty years, education has been re-conceptualised around the construction of knowledge through information processing, modelling and interaction. Now, as we enter a new world of global digital communication, it is no surprise that there is a growing interest in the relations between mobile technology and learning. What we lack, however, is an innovative and enhancing educational framework for the mobile age.”² (Mike Sharples, 2005)

Laurillard, D. (1993) and Phillips, R. (2005) tackle the issue of change, which intervene in the way the teacher teaches and the main transmission instruments for knowledge gain. M.D. Merrill (2002) proposes five principles of learning, which become acrually important. These are the following:

1. Learning is promoted when learners are engaged in solving real-world problems;
2. Learning is promoted when existing knowledge is activated as a foundation for new knowledge;
3. Learning is promoted when new knowledge is demonstrated to the learner;
4. Learning is promoted when new knowledge is applied by the learner;
5. Learning is promoted when new knowledge is integrated into the learner’s world.

The new informational age has aggravated an older issue of education – plagiarism. Thus, in many researches, for example (Maurer, H, 2006) mentions that: “We are living in the age of information technologies that despite of making our life easier also creates a set of problems. Availability of digital documents (for instance, easy access to the Web) and telecommunications in general open good chances for

² Sharples, M., Taylor, J., & Vavoula, G. (2007) A Theory of Learning for the Mobile Age. In R. Andrews and C. Haythornthwaite (eds.) The Sage Handbook of Elearning Research. London: Sage, pp. 221-247, p. 227

plagiarism prosperity turning cheating into extremely easy and engaging process. He stated that nowadays plagiarism has turned into a serious problem for publishers, researchers and educators”.

Results and Discussion

The contemporary information society, which manifests itself through the practically unlimited access to information, creates advantages as well as disadvantages for the educational system. The first issue which we wish to specify is the danger of substitution of substance (conscious comprehension) of the material with the simple familiarization of others` knowledge on one field or another. Traditional learning methods: books and class papers; even class lectures; essays made as reports, projects, case studies – diminish their value. Books are considered by students to be archaic and useless, being substituted by electronic class files. In many cases, Power Point presentations serve as class course supports and the teacher uses them in class. Lectures in their traditional form fail to reach their goal as well. The student considers that the teacher`s lecture can as easily be found on the Internet and does not bother to be present, let alone to focus on the presented material. Concerning essays – we have the same situation. Even the best of students rarely complicate themselves with elaborating an essay, preferring to borrow information from papers done by others. Of course, the Internet offers this possibility.

In such conditions, the primordial task of the teacher is: to create conditions in which the student will be helped and stimulated to enter the essence and laws of the studied phenomenon. Which, *in our vision*, are the instruments for the successful solving of the efficiency issue in education? We will concentrate ourselves on perfecting the ways of traditional learning.

Books and lectures themselves.

Practicing lectures and books, oriented toward passive learning become inefficient at this time. In my opinion, one must refuse this in terms of class studies, as well as concerning traditional courses, as both are unique and tackled in the following manner:

- The course support will be distributed to the students in advance;
- The presentation made by the professor will be focused on explaining the key ideas of the course;

- Certain themes from the course will be proposed for debates in small groups, of 2-3 individuals;
- In the second stage, groups will be increased in order to seek consensus in the exploitation of the phenomenon;
- Students which have proven the best improvements, will support their theses in front of the entire auditorium.
- In all proposed stages, the teacher has the role of a mediator and guide in the learning process. Also, the evaluations of success are being established.

Essays

Writing an essay, at the given time, transforms into a simple presentation of materials found on-line. As a result, the essay must be made on a research theme. It can consist of a concrete case study, which would compel the student to apply the methods learned in class in practice; or the debate on several contradictory approaches on the same phenomenon. For example, within the political economy of the informational economy, we have an approach which sustains the existence of specific traits, which require the building of a radical new theory. Also, we have papers (such as “Rethinking the Networked Economy: The True Forces Driving the Digital Marketplace”. By Stan Liebowitz), which denies the necessity of a radical new theory. The essay must contain a plausible analysis of the student on several concrete details, whose tackling is overlapped by researchers.

Plagiarism. The term “plagiarism” comes from the Latin “plagiarius” which means child thief. In an attempt to define plagiarism we present its forms:

- Copying texts or ideas from someone without making a reference;
- Copying texts ad-literam, without putting the text in brackets;
- Referring to another source than the original;
- The presentation of the text of another author by its exposure into his own words, without mentioning the priority of the first author;
- The massive usage of the work of another author (it does not matter if with or without reference) that a paper says nothing new to the field it researches.
- The translation of the original text, without making a reference.

Plagiarism, aside from its moral and judicial implications, is a threat to the quality of all the stages of the university educational system. It makes the mind lazy and allows its user to obtain undeserved educational marks. Plagiarism, practiced by students, has several specific forms, such as: purchasing the paper online from a site or from a firm specialized in writing papers; the presentation in own words of the material from several sources, indicating other references than the originals; copying colleagues papers and presenting them as your own.

The plagiarism phenomenon can be countered by a corresponding formulation of working themes, which requires an author's own analysis, as well as explaining its disadvantages.

Conclusion

The involvement of environmental pressure into the education results in significant changes in methodological approach to learning. Traditional methods of learning must be modified in the direction of adapting to new conditions. The ideas brought forth in the paper will probably serve for the increased efficiency of the educational process.

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