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Improvement of e-education systems in Albania

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Abstract

The isolation due to the pandemic caused by the Coronavirus, along with the panic and economic crisis around the globe, has prompted a very important discussion on distance education. Although hypotheses centered on the idea that the world will not be the same after the pandemic crisis will take a long time to study, for now it is clear that education, at all levels, has changed dramatically. The Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth (MoESY) of Albania created the Academi.al platform in the period of COVID-19. This digital platform was enriched with the official curriculum of pre-university education, 3-18 years old, to enable students to learn online in the conditions of the pandemic crisis in education. Its use facilitated the continuation of the teaching and learning process in conditions quite different from what was done before. On the other hand, this process together with the pandemic situation brought to attention a series of problems and challenges for the future. The great change that occurred in education in this period is requiring the continued use and improvement of the e-education system. we will avoid some necessary directions for the renewal of these systems in Albania.

Introduction

The pandemic found many countries and educational institutions unprepared. Its effect has been different depending on some factors related to economic development and investments in technology.

In the case of Albania, distance learning in pandemic situation was a complete innovation. Distance learning through different platforms was the only possibility for students to be in contact with teachers and in step with learning process. They do not have a ready platform with all the online learning services to follow the process.

Academi.al platform started to be built from this moment and continued to improve. Distance learning has influenced teachers to change the use of methods, which in classical teaching they have practiced very little or not at all, therefore it is reasonable that teachers feel challenged.

The education system has flaws even in the classical form, therefore online systems and services in education must be improved to serve the future. The e – education in Albania has shown promising results, and it has the potential to play a significant role in improving access to education in the country. This experience proved that the institutions that manage education must prepare strategies and invest in distance education to face similar crises in the future.

Material and data

Through distance education, where students and teachers are brought together by technology, student-teacher communication happens in real time, the teacher explains, shares direct information, offers tasks, waits for answers, all these are indicators that virtual learning is feasible and can life as a form of learning with particular benefit especially in emergency conditions.

With its beginnings, Academi.al was not a fully completed and certified platform. She continued to improve the services, but the number of requests increased very quickly and the time was not enough for her to guarantee the quality of the service.

The platform needed immediate funding, which for various reasons, some of which were mentioned above, was not received in time by the Ministry of Education. The continuation of the operation and improvement of the platform services was made possible by UNICEF - Albania. According to the data, the number of its users reached the following statistics [1]:

- 410,000 registered users: for the first time in Albania an e-learning platform was adopted at national level
- 16,000 free video lessons created together with State radio TV
- 3,000 video lessons adjusted for students with disabilities
- Children with no access to the internet for the first time could download lessons for offline use via the mobile app

Some results of distance education in Albania

Distance education in Albania has been gaining popularity in recent years, especially in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Online Learning Survey (Ascap-MoYES, March 2020) reported that about 86.4% of students agree and strongly agree to receive lessons through online communication and 90.2% of parents agree and strongly agree that they are part of online communication groups with teachers. The report said that online learning in home conditions has made teachers follow more online training platforms developing their professional capacities in this field [2].

Many students have reported that they are satisfied with the quality of education they receive through distance learning, and they appreciate the flexibility it offers. According to Western Balkans Regular Economic 2020 Report [3] almost a third of Albanian students do not own a computer. Providing an education budget that is adequate to ensure minimum conditions to deal with additional post-COVID-19 costs will be critical to ensure that students catch up and further inequalities are prevented.

It is important to reduce the difference between urban and rural inequities. The achievement gap between the poorest and richest students, (PISA 2018) will increase further since students from poorer backgrounds are less likely to benefit from remote learning modes [4]. In addition to improving online platforms, it is equally important to improve the current situation of equipment available to students and teachers.

Learning Management System (LMS) is a strategic solution for planning, creation, delivery, management and maintenance of all learning courses or events within an education setup. A good LMS provides a dynamic environment for creating interaction between learners and instructors [5].

The Albanian government has been supporting distance education through various initiatives, such as the establishment of the "National Platform for Open Education Resources," which provides free access to educational materials. Many educators in Albania lack the necessary training and experience to deliver education effectively through distance learning. There is a need for more training and professional development opportunities for teachers to improve their digital skills and pedagogy.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In the case of Albania, distance learning was a complete innovation, also due to the fact that such forms of teaching were not legally foreseen. It should be built a legal framework to enable the process in the present and the future. Internet connectivity.

One of the major challenges of distance education in Albania is the availability and quality of internet connectivity. Many rural areas lack proper internet infrastructure, which makes it difficult for students and teachers to access online resources and participate in virtual classes.

Teacher training: Many educators in Albania lack the necessary training and experience to deliver education effectively through distance learning. There is a need for more training and professional development opportunities for teachers to improve their digital skills and pedagogy.

Access to technology: Not all students have access to the necessary technology (e.g., computers, tablets, smartphones) to participate in online classes, which creates disparities in access to education.

Quality assurance: There is a need to ensure that the quality of education delivered through distance learning is of the same quality as traditional face-to-face education. There needs to be a framework for quality assurance that can evaluate the effectiveness of distance education and ensure that it meets the same standards as traditional education.

Student engagement: Maintaining student engagement and motivation in an online learning environment can be challenging. Educators need to develop strategies and techniques to keep students engaged, motivated, and on track.

Assessment: It can be challenging to assess students' learning effectively in a distance learning environment. There is a need to develop assessment methods that are appropriate for online learning and that can provide meaningful feedback to students.

Addressing these challenges will require a concerted effort from all stakeholders, including the government, educators, and the private sector. However, if these challenges are addressed, distance education has the potential to play a significant role in improving access to education in Albania.

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