

ADVANTAGES OF MODERN APPROACHES IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND DISTANCE LEARNING

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Abstract

Traditional approaches to education, especially higher education, supported by information and communication technologies (ICT) have certainly opened up new opportunities in teaching and learning. Expansive development of ICT is the backbone of modern approaches in education and significantly facilitates the acquisition and exchange of knowledge and information. In the first part, the attention is focused on the concept, importance and representation of the concept of Open Educational Resources (OER), and analysis of its connection with the concept of distance learning, as well as the basic advantages of education. Increasing the availability of high-quality, relevant learning resources, the ability to adapt materials and free or cheap access to the needed resources is certainly in favor of further development and wider application of OER in Europe and the world. In the second part, the attention is focused on the concept, development and the importance of learning in modern society. Analysing the above-mentioned aspects, we have arrived at the conclusion that modern ICT made learning a primary concept in the acquisition of open knowledge. Distance learning can be a complement to traditional education or substitute for traditional education. Time and space flexibility, interaction between student and teacher that takes place via computer, the use of interactive learning content, the opportunity to attend prestigious programs without changing a place of residence, and to develop independence in seeking sources of information are just some advantages of the concept of distance learning.

Keywords: *Information - communication technology, high education, Open Educational Resources, Distance Learning*

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Introduction

The modern system of higher education in Europe in the period from the 90s of the twentieth century until today are faced with many pressures of globalization and expansion in the development of information and communication technologies. In such circumstances, it is inevitable that there have been significant changes in the European system of higher education. The main changes relate to the introduction of precise criteria for the accreditation of the university, faculty, and academic programs and orientations, as well as the introduction of criteria and rules for quality control in higher education. Parallel to this process, perfected their skills and approaches in creating a syllabus specific cases, methods of teaching, and methods of evaluation of students' activities, bearing in mind the pre-exam and the exam.

Among the goals of a united Europe is the creation of a European knowledge society, which rests on two pillars - European Research Area - ERA and the European Higher Education Area - EHEA. Their implementation has a strategic place in European integration (Komnenović, 2005).

Things that have opened the door to changes in the mode of teaching, or the manner of presentation of course content, and led to the displacement of traditional lectures to online lectures are expansive development, implementation and wide availability communication technologies. In fact, there is no area of life and work in which IT resources are not enabled better communication, planning and implementation of all activities of vital importance for modern man.

In an era of rapid increase the volume of global knowledge, information technology has enabled the continuous modernization approach to both teaching in higher education in world level and accelerated implementation, customization and implementation of the systemlike of distance learning. Thus, under the influence of modern technical and technological achievements and aspirations of modern man that activity in the private and business sphere into line with the opportunities that largely provides the technology, the system of education, especially higher education system in recent years has been actively involved in the field of IT support to the teaching process. Modern education, namely, includes introducing multimedia systems, distance learning, virtual schools, and other information technology that supported modes of communication between teachers and students, which lead or may lead to an increase

in the activities of students, better evaluation of their knowledge and advancement in accordance with individual abilities and prior knowledge.

Distance learning as a modern approach to teaching is significantly associated with the concept called Open Educational Resources - OER established at international level, which means that “all teaching and research materials, as well as learning materials available to the public and put into circulation with the licence open source, which allows people their release multiple use, access, and distribution with or without partial restriction (Report of the Tempus project Baektel, 2014, p. 4).

Distance learning is a relatively newer model of learning supported by information and communication technologies certainly bring new opportunities in learning and teaching. The most important role in this is the development of the Internet, which allows not only remote access to teaching materials, but in addition seamless communication between teachers and students, and in cases where they are located in remote locations. However, with the advent of this approach in teaching, there were numerous conflicting opinions about the significance and purpose of the virtual mode of communication in relation to the classical lectures.

Review of the concept of OER and the connection with the concept of Distance Learning

At the beginning of the paper, it was pointed out that the expansive development of information technology greatly facilitates the acquisition and exchange of knowledge and information.

The term *Open Educational Resources* (OER) first was used at the UNESCO conference in 2000 as a means to allow release access to educational resources on a global level (Report of the Tempus project Baektel, 2014, p. 5). According to the views of many authors, OER movement originated from developments in open (free) learning, distance learning and the broad context of a culture of open learning, open source, free sharing and many others who have appeared at the end of the 20th century (Wiley 2006; Wiley, 2007; Mossley, 2013). In its primary form, the concept of OER describes each educational resources (including the curriculum, teaching materials, a variety of applications that include multimedia content as well as any material that is manufactured to be used for teaching and learning) which is freely available for the use of students and teachers, but not limited to companies in the form of payments for the use of, or payment of fees for licences.

How important is the use of OER by the fact that the European OER's record increase of users, the majority of this number is calculated from several hundred thousand registered users and up to several million. In the USA the number is much higher. In Serbia, the OER inserted into the Strategy of Higher Education by 2020, which is based on the openness of Education (Milošević D, Milošević M and Radovic M, 2015).

Based on the research of application of OER in higher education in the universities of the European Union comes to the conclusion that there are a number of initiatives in the field of higher education in the European Union (both by organizations and by individuals) relating to the promotion of public education available globally community learning and teaching. Some of these initiatives are: Open Education Europa, which was used by the European Commission, as part of a European consortium of publicly available educational programs; Miriada X, which was launched in Spain; iMOOC, which was launched in Portugal; FutureLearn as a branch of the Open University and forum, which were launched in the United Kingdom; Alison, and IREL-Open, which were launched in Ireland; FUN (fr. *France Université Numérique*), which was launched in France; Eliademy, which was launched in Finland; OpenHPI, Opencourseworld and Iversity, which were launched in Germany; OpenupEd - the first initiative of a MOOC (Massive open online courses), which includes Europe and has the support of the European Commission; iTunes U and Universia, which were launched at the EU universities; Be the Engineer, which was launched at the Architecture and Civil Engineering, University of Banja Luka; Knowledge for All, which was launched by the University Library "Svetozar Markovic" in Belgrade; The platform called Distance Learning System (DLS), which was launched by LINKgroup company in Belgrade, which has developed its own system of distance learning, with many of courses (Report of the Tempus project Baektel, 2014, pp. 12-20).

From the above-mentioned initiatives in the field of higher education in the European Union relating to the promotion of OER, it is clearly evident that the Distance Learning System as integral part of the concept of Open Educational Resources, respectively platforms that enable the realization of the concept of Distance Learning is actually an integral part of instruments and tools of promotion and realization of the concept of OER. On this point, it is important to mention one of the most famous and successful initiatives to promote and implement the concept of Distance Learning System, and thus the concept of OER. It is a OpenLearn initiative.

However, in the context of the relations between OER and Distance Learning System, Butcher (2011, 2015) points out that “OER and Distance Learning System are not synonymous, but many people make the mistake of just identifying the two terms. Open licenced content can be producing in any type of media in the form of text on paper, video or audio clip, or in multimedia form. Many courses within the concept of learning can be conceived in the form of OER, but that does not mean that every online learning automatically OER concept. On the contrary, many of the material within the OER, are solded not only through online, but are printed in hard copy and are available to users. Bearing in mind what kind of all the challenges facing developing countries, it seems increasingly that they prefer to use printed materials in relation to the placement of materials designed for e-learning “(pp. 5-6).

When we mentioned a OpenLearn initiative, we can say the following. The OpenLearn is well-known institutional source of HE OER. The Open University is one of the most successful universities for Distance Learning System in the world. Strive to be the world leader in the design, content and delivery of open learning and distance learning through academic research, pedagogic innovation and partnership. Materials with the Open University courses are available free on the website OpenLearn. Users can find hundreds of release lessons within twelve different areas, each with a forum for discussion. OpenLearn offers a range of methods and strategies in order to form a society of teachers and students around his content. It is composed of two parts: LearningSpace that offers learning materials and LabSpace where content can be downloading, reorganize, adjust and re-use (Report of the Tempus project Baektel, 2014, p. 17).

After a brief review of the concept of OER and the connection with the concept of Distance Learning System, it is necessary to make a brief overview of the importance of application of OER in education, as well as on the situation in Serbia in the field of opportunities for the implementation of the concept of Open Educational Resources.

In support of the implementation of OER in education, especially in the field of higher education highlights the following.

The most important reason for the use of OER is the fact that it is a learning (educational) resource with an open licence, which has high potential to contribute in improving the quality and effectiveness of learning. Transformative educational potential of OER revolves around three related perspectives:

1. Increase the availability of high quality, relevant learning resources can contribute to increased productivity of students and teachers. Since OER removes all restrictions on copying resources, can reduce the cost of access to educational materials. In many systems, the payment of royalties on textbooks and other educational materials represent a significant part of total costs, and procedures for obtaining permission to use copyrighted material may require a lot of time and money.
2. Principle permits adaptation of the material has enabled one of many mechanisms for creating the role of students as active participants in the education process. Students achieved the best result in learning not only passively reading and absorbing, but when practical work and create. Allowed access to the content that encourages activity and creativity of students through multiple use and adaptation of that content can have a significant contribution to the creation of more efficient learning environment.
3. OER can build capacity by providing institutions and educators release or favourable access to the necessary resources to improve their skills in creating teaching materials and implementing the necessary instructional design that would allow the integration of such materials in high quality learning programs (Butcher, 2011, 2015, p . 13).

The impact of information technology on education

Education aided by information technologies implies at least three basic components: Computer Assisted Learning - CAL; Computer Assisted Research and Distance Learning System - DLS.

Computer Aided Learning is most commonly used and is very suitable for the realization of interaction between students and computers to improve the existing technology learning, teaching made more obvious, more dynamic and more interesting with the involvement of more students' senses in acquiring new knowledge. Computer-aided learning involves multimedia educational software, computer simulation, virtual reality, artificial intelligence, etc. Using information technology is planned individual to acquire knowledge, constant feedback and monitoring of students 'progress as a teacher helps to realistically evaluate students' knowledge and instructs them to other didactic media to successfully master new skills (Mandić, 2003, according to Matijašević-Obradović and Joksić, 2014, pp. 146-147).

With this type of education supported by information and communication technologies does not only take place between students and professors, but is oriented between the student - teacher. A wider range of application is justified; given that computer, aided learning can be represented at all levels of education (primary, secondary and higher education).

Computer-supported research is, at present, significant benefits to higher education institutions for theoretical research in various fields of literature and empirical research using appropriate statistical software (STAT VIEW, SPSS, etc.). Theoretical research literature is almost unthinkable without the use of computer technology, because today, almost all major books, articles, studies and collections of professional and scientific meetings are translated into electronic editions and placed on the web portals publishing houses, universities, libraries, schools, etc. (Mandić, 2003, according to Matijašević-Obradović and Joksić, 2014, pp. 146-147).

Distance Learning System is increasingly used in education. Many universities in the world, in order to equalize the level of knowledge that is given to students, instead of the praxis of professors travelling to other faculties, they stated exchanging ideas by using telecommunication technologies. The professors give lectures at the university, and it is transmitted over the Internet to other locations. This creates long-term intentions of managers in education that instead of people travel ideas, which significantly reduces material costs faculty. Distance Learning System represents an instructional mode that does not require the presence of students and lecturers in the same room (Matijašević-Obradović and Joksić, 2014, p. 147).

Concept, development and significance of DLS in modern society

Significant attention in the world is given to development of Distance Learning System. Numerous of world-renowned institutions of higher education in their curricula have this form of education. According to data from The United States Distance Learning Association - USDLA, in 2003, on some form of distance learning there were about 3,000,000 students. Some of the most important institutions that apply it in their work in the United States: National Technological University, Western Governors University, University of Phoenix, California Distant Learning Program, Columbia Network for Engineering Education; in Europe: The International Council for Open and Distance Education - Oslo, United

Kingdom Open University, the Virtual University Enterprises, University for Industry, etc. (Pokorni, 2009, p. 138).

In Europe, significant initiatives to develop Distance Learning System realized through the “European Distance Education Network” (EDEN) and the “European Association of Distance Teaching Universities Education”. EDEN members from Serbia are: E-learning Network, Link group (who is the founder of the Belgrade Academy of Computer Science) and the Faculty of Economics from Subotica. Open University in the United Kingdom adopted the standards for distance education at whose model is organized educational institutions in Spain, Germany, the Netherlands and Portugal. The European Commission in its documents (e-learning Action Plan 2004-2006) strongly supports the development of distance learning or e-learning in all EU member states. Many programming documents, such as the e Europe+, eEurope 2005, Information Society etc. and the Resolution of the European Council provide distance education an important priority in the further development of education in the EU (Pokorni, 2009, p. 139).

Before definition and brief elaboration about the importance of Distance Learning System, it is necessary to say something about what is actually DLS.

Distance Learning System is not new. It came about with the advent of correspondence schools, which were based on materials and books that were sent by mail, and today is carried out through modern technology (sending e-mail, delivery of CDs, online communication, etc.), as of course and take the exams. Therefore, Distance Learning System exist more than 100 years, but with the advent of the Internet as a new form of communication, get a new dimension. Since then, Distance Learning System is considered as a new phenomenon. In fact, it is applicable at all levels of education, from primary through secondary and higher to various forms of education and training during their working life in the workplace and outside it (Lifelong Learning). Definitions of Distance Learning System are not unique, and over time have changed, often depending on the development of technologies that have been implemented, but additionally to reach out to the science of teaching at a distance (distance teaching), and its result - distance learning (DLS), especially in higher education, where distance education raised (Pokorni, 2009, p. 139).

Distance learning is the system and the process of connecting users to distributed educational resources. This is a completely new form of

education, in which the information technology emerge as an intermediary in contacts between teachers and users who are not in the same place at a certain period of time. Based on the application of computer networks and other modern electronic devices, customer education services enables the monitoring of lectures, access to educational facilities and programs, communication with the teacher, gaining a diploma (certificate), which follows from all the above (Milutinović i Ćurčić, 2012, p . 2).

DLS according to Tepšić, Borovnica and Bakić (2015), “means that the main carrier of communication between teachers and students is separation (at a different time and a different place - the separation of instructors - tutors and students). It must include two-way communication between teachers and students that aims to facilitate and support the process of education. As an intermediary for the necessary two-way communication, technology is used “(p. 2).

Modern information and communication technologies (Internet, hypermedia systems, computer networks, digitization etc.) made Distance Learning System as primary concept in the acquisition of open knowledge. DLS can be a complement to traditional education or substitute for traditional education (Tepšić et al., 2015, p. 2).

The system of Distance Learning System is a multimedia broadcast (network) that includes software support in the form of educational products, instructions for users, system evaluation and the electronic network that connects users with services. According to the form of communication, there are two forms of distance learning:

- Synchronous forms of distance education is based on the assumption that all users and trainers “online” at the same time. Types of on-line teaching are interactive television, computer conferencing, multi-user domains (Multi-User Domains - MUD). The main advantage of synchronous technology is the establishment of direct communication between trainers and users;

- Asynchronous form of education is represented largely, because it gives the user the ability to choose when and how much time to spend in the virtual classroom (distance education, audio and video cassettes, DVD, electronic mail, television educational program, www-oriented courses). Asynchronous schools are suitable for longer forms of education (complete secondary and high school) (Tepšić et al., 2015, p. 3).

The system of distance learning includes the following components:

1. The mission - the mission system of distance learning is the one who defines his role within the context of national policies. Moreover, mission can be directed to specific purposes, target groups, regions, sectors or levels of education and training, and may lead to different values and philosophies of learning and education.
2. Lectures and curriculum - a curriculum of lectures and define the profile of the system or institution. They should be relating to the mission and defined needs or markets.
3. Strategies and techniques of teaching - teaching strategies and techniques depend partly on the type of program and the needs you want to meet, but also from the educational philosophy and values of a particular system, and from the educational characteristics and potential of the technology used. Learning materials and resources are essential components of the system of distance learning. Comprehensive, well-designed materials may stimulate self-learning and thus affect the quality of the system as a whole.
4. Communication - Communication between teachers and students is a necessary component in distance education, as well as in all other forms of education. Communication technologies transmit messages in the text, fixed and moving images, and sound. Messages that generate knowledge can be transferred to many of students, either synchronously or asynchronously, “imposed” by broadcasting or accessing on demand via the audio / video player or Internet. How to change these devices, thus will change and the quality and nature of these messages.
5. Local support - local support is a common component of many institutions from one regime. The letter, phone call or e-mail, of course, supplied locally and are more likely to be a tool to support students in institutions with a double regime. However, that what is mean here is the support that allows some form of direct (face-to-face) interaction between student and teacher or mentor.
6. The subsystem management students and staff - subsystem management students and staff are often different from the subsystem of teaching materials. From an administrative perspective, subsystem management students and staff includes reception, allocation to courses and student services, learning management and procedures of teaching, assignments and assessment, monitoring dropout and completion, and examinations.
7. Effective management and administration - effective management and administration does not require a professional staff, but also

well-designed, efficient administrative systems and ways of working, planning and monitoring systems, accounting systems, etc.. Many of these are significantly different from the corresponding systems needed to management of other forms of education.

8. The needs of buildings and equipment - buildings and equipment needs are also different from conventional educational institutions. Distance Learning System do not have a present students, and therefore there is no need for classrooms and auditoriums in a central location. Such facilities may be needed locally, and often provided in collaboration with local institutions. At the central location need manufacturing facility and storage capacity, although it is possible and decentralized production. For institutions with a double regime, these objects of distance education must be placed along the space defined by the primary mission of the institution.
9. Assessment - assessment should be a component in order to provide information that is important to adapt the role and operation of the system components, and to ensure their optimal contribution and development. The success of any institution with one or two regimes, depends on the efficiency of the system of monitoring and evaluation. Without that it would be impossible for administrators to be aware of problems in the system until the system falls apart. Rely on the type of informal, unstructured feedback that may be sufficient in a conventional classroom, it is not possible in DLS (Zenović, Randić i Bagaric, 2012, pp. 129-130).

Computer technology is subject to constant innovation. Construction of teaching computer networks is expensive and requires time and investment. On which the software will use the educational institution will decide whether to use their own or rented kind of platform. The system, which is gradually gaining popularity in the world, is known as Moodle. Properties for which the faculties decided to use Moodle system for managing the learning process are: high availability - the ability to handle thousands of users simultaneously; stability - the ability to withstand an increase in the number of users with no drop in performance; easy usability - the ability of the user (student or teacher) very quickly learn to use the system; Interoperability - the ability to integrate with existing software in the institution; stability - a stable version of the software Moodle provides continuous services to the student population and teaching; Security - characteristics of the system that does not represent a security risk higher than other components of the information system of the institution. Moodle is a free, open-source platform for Distance Learning System. It is

also known under the names: a system for arranging courses, a system for arranging learning or virtual learning environment. Platform for Distance Learning System - Moodle is Open Source Learning Management System (LMS). Moodle can be used for online learning in a variety of conditions. Moodle can be used in virtual schools, higher education, courses, training and commercial employees. Moodle is designed to be used primarily as a tool for asynchronous learning, where learning takes place at different times. However, it also contains modules for synchronous form of learning. Moodle is used as the primary means of courses, as well as an additional tool to support traditional learning. Simply put, Moodle is a tool for teachers who required used to improve learning (Kostić-Kovačević and Gavrilović, 2011, p. 781).

Distance Learning System, above all, is the democratic form of education, because it creates all the preconditions of equality of access to information and knowledge, while significantly reducing the cost and risk of a “force” inappropriate involvement of the teaching staff, because qualified teachers still are few compared to the number of potential students. Therefore, the development of Distance Learning System in the world, is given significant attention. This way of learning allow learn at its own pace and individual consultation via e-mail, chat services and electronic conferences. Using these technologies students can continue to participate in any geographic location. The many advantages of such forms of education, such as the independence of the time and place of teaching, greater possibilities of individualized teaching, and better access to educational content, enabled the great popularity of Distance Learning System but what often becomes an alternative to the various education programs that are presented in the form of classical education (Tepšić et al., 2015, p. 2).

However, in addition to the advantages of the concept of Distance Learning System, which are manifold and of great importance for modern society, Janeska and Taleska (2011) point out that “despite all the advantages, e-learning has some disadvantages. First, students must have a certain level of computer literacy. In addition, students can feel the lack of face-to-face interaction with the teacher. Assessment of student work can be problematic; because teachers cannot know, who is really solved the tasks, which are answered questions. In any case, the e-learning cannot replace the traditional classroom environment, but it primarily enriches the content and use of new technology “(p. 2).

The relation of traditional learning and Distance Learning System

The concept of traditional education is associated with a form of learning that uses the classic lecture and a written textbooks and manuals. In doing so, students are passive recipients of knowledge; a primary goal of education is its transfer from the source is professor to student. When it comes to contemporary understanding of education, the goal is no longer a simple reproduction of knowledge but strives, as far as possible, actively to involve students in the process of acquiring knowledge in which there are various sources of knowledge. Students can select a source through which can acquire material and regulate the pace of its adoption. Such a model in which the teacher is no longer the source of knowledge, but a mentor that guides students towards the desired goal is called model construction (Willis, 2005). Precisely, implementation of information technology in teaching allows the realization of this modern approach (Nikolić and Tešić, 2010).

The difference between traditional education and DLS, many authors also make from perspective of type, scope and method of preparation of educational materials.

Educational materials are the most important element of distance education. In classical education, they represent only support the teaching process in which the teacher is in the lead role. In DLS, educational materials represent the main source of new knowledge and skills. They both control the flow of the teaching process, because each student through the process of training and direct it toward the desired goal. Their role is very complex, and impact on the quality and outcome of Distance Learning System is crucial (Despotović and Savić, 2006).

The process of preparation and development of electronic materials for Distance Learning System is a cycle of four phases: analysis, design, development and evaluation (Savić, 2007). In addition, each phase has its own specific objectives, and the results of the previous phase serve as input to the next phase.

When we talk about traditional model of teaching and learning, and about model that only in recent years gained importance in our region, we cannot skip a view at a few important factors that greatly influence the acceptance of a particular approach. Namely, how society will react to innovations in the field of not only education, but also in other segments of life and work,

has a very strong influence of the system of values that are fostered in this society, then cultural moment and motivational aspect. No less important is the social aspect. A particular problem with the Distance Learning System students is isolation and lack of teamwork, exchange of experiences, mutual comparisons. This also means that the commitment to a particular approach, in this case in the education system is not only determined by the comparative aspect of the good and bad sides of an access (although this aspect is the observation of a question is inevitable), but also the capabilities and readiness of our society to understand, perceive and objectively assess the benefits of a particular model of teaching and learning, in accordance with the evaluation and implementation of the same.

Undoubtedly, Distance Learning System has many advantages.

Distance Learning System in relation to the classic, traditional approach to learning shows the following advantages:

- Time and space flexibility - students learn independent of time and space, and time, and education becomes available to those coming to college would not be possible, due to geographical distance or e.g. health problems;
- The interaction between student and teacher that takes place via computer (e-mail, discussion forums) is often more direct and intensive care communication in class. Questions to ask freely, without fear of authority professors.
- Use interactive learning content and different media (with text, images, animation, simulation, sound, video ...) for presenting content and their adaptation to students (Stanič and Gavrilovic, 2011).

In addition to these advantages in favour of Distance Learning System can also be given the opportunity to attend prestigious programs on quality institutions, run by well-known experts, without a change of residence, then, to acquire additional skills and knowledge on the use of modern information technology, then, the development of independence in seeking sources of information, etc. (Matijašević-Obradović and Joksić, 2014, p. 150).

All these advantages largely correspond to students. Leaving them enough room for better planning of time and a greater capacity for analysis and synthesis of content that is taught, are a major motivation for learning and training (Matijašević-Obradović and Joksić, 2014, p. 150).

Conclusion

Summarizing all the above, it can be concluded that the availability of high quality, relevant resources, release or affordable access to necessary resources and adequate adaptation and online marketing resources are the primary characteristics of the main advantages of modern approaches in education.

Distance learning provides many innovative features in the process of acquiring new knowledge. Time and space flexibility, interaction between student and teacher that takes place via computer, the use of interactive learning content and different media for presenting content, then the opportunity to attend prestigious programs on quality institutions, run by well-known experts without change of residence, and to develop independence in seeking sources of information are just some advantages of the concept of Distance Learning System.

It cannot be disputed that the use of modern media, didactic teaching has become more dynamic and interesting, adapted to students' abilities. In fact, learning is increasingly used in education.

What is also important in this area, refers to permanent evaluation of performance and level of development of the Distance Learning System, in line with the changes taking place in developed countries, and based on the experiences and attitudes of teachers and students in practice.

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