LECTURE OR THE WEB-BASED COURSES FOR THE TERTIARY LEVEL

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ABSTRACT

The present paper looks at the historical background of education in the universities. We take the developments in the use of instructional technology (instructional design, instructional media design, and process of the instructional design) into consideration and explore the tertiary level students' (studying at the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies at the Eastern Mediterranean University) reactions to learning from the traditional lectures and from the courses put on the web.

INTRODUCTION

This study reviews the historical background of education in the universities and the traditional method of transmitting information: lecturing. Then, the developments in instructional technology are briefly reviewed. Instructional design, which lies at the heart of designing quality materials for instructional technology is explained. The research carried out at the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies (FCMS) at the Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU) on the students' evaluations for lectures or courses put on the web is presented.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF EDUCATION IN THE UNIVERSITIES

The oldest universities[1] aimed at teaching religion and were established with the goal of educating the élite guardians of the state. In the 19th century as a result of the developments in science and technology the mission of the universities were transformed to providing means of development for the public in agriculture and industry. A science-based curriculum was favored and education was geared towards the local benefactors. This, it was hoped, would contribute to the development of the country. Therefore the idea led to an increase in the number of universities[2]. After the Second World War, the number of universities increased further.

One of the missions of the universities is to convey information to the new generations. In the universities, information is transmitted to the students through the lectures. A lecture is:

"Presentation of a topic in oral form by a lecturer to students, who may take notes. It may be accompanied by visual aids and followed up by a seminar. The original meaning of lecture was a reading of a text" before the invention of printing this was a useful practice" Lawton & Gordon 1993:111).

It was assumed that all the learners will learn the information presented at the same place, at the same speed, in the same linear manner. However, these assumptions were challenged by the developments in cognitive psychology, which proved that each person is different and has a different map of learning. Furthermore, "one of the key problems in education reform is that traditional teaching fails because students have no use or interest in much of the material presented, yet in order to expand their understanding of a given subject, they must become involved in the entire teaching process." http://edweb.gsn.org/web.effects.html

Developments in technology also contributed to the transmission of knowledge. Above all, World Wide Web (WWW or W3), which is a part of the internet of which brings together all the different kinds of online resources available (e.g. file archives, remotely accessible databases, newsgroup discussions) via word processor like developed documents. Since its popularization in 1993, it is considered as" the first real step to the creation of an information superhighway" (http://edweb.gsn.org/web.effects.html). In education, the web started to be used in a variety of ways. One of these has been putting the courses on the web. Web-based courses enable individuals to learn at their own speed and at the place they like.

DEVELOPMENTS IN THE USE OF INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY

Initially, radios, tapes, television sets, in other words set of technology produced for personal use entered education. This was followed by the emergence of instruments, which were designed for teaching, like over-head projectors. Then, computer based learning started to find its way in education. Today, computers are used widely in education through e-mail, WWW, newsgroups, computer conferencing, audio and video systems.

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[1] *These were Oxford and Cambridge in the UK; Harvard in the USA; University of Istanbul in Turkey.*
[2] *Between 1851-1902, in the UK Owens College (University of Manchester) was opened. Colleges opened in Birmingham, Bristol, Exeter, Leeds, Liverpool, Nottingham, Reading, Sheffield, and Southampton followed this.*

"The most basic element of using the Web as a pedagogical instrument is found in its ability to present information clearly, attractively and practically."
http://edweb.gsn.org/web.effects.html

Information technology (IT) has challenged the fixed time and space, and linear learning notions of education. IT has been widely used in distance education as well. Initially, distance education was based on one-way communication between the institution and the learners through print (correspondence courses). This was followed by face-to-face, two-way communication supported by electronic mass communication. Today, in distance education, based on the developments in communication technologies, there is two-way, and face-to-face communication between the individuals.

Sloan (http://alexia.lis.uiuc.edu~haythorn/cmc_bs.htm) reviews the discussion on the potential impact of technology in the future of higher education and suggests that there is a dilemma. Sloan presents the impact of IT on education and categorizes the arguments into two: One group holds that computer-based education has its place, but higher education can only flourish in the places known as colleges/universities; and the other group argues while communication technologies are likely to strengthen research, they will weaken the traditional major institution of learning in the universities. The latter one is very pessimistic on the future of universities. On this issue, Sloan quotes Drucker who states that:

'Thirty years from now the big university campuses will be relics. Universities won't survive. It's as large a change as when we got the printed book… Higher education is in deep crises. Already we are beginning to deliver more lectures and classes off campus via satellite or two-way video at a fraction of the cost. The college won't survive as a residential institution. Today's buildings are hopelessly unsuited and totally unneeded.'
(p1 http://alexia.lis.uiuc.edu~haythorn/cmc_bs.htm)

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN
In traditional teaching, lecturers use textbooks written by himself or herself or any other professional in the field. With the developments in IT, the speed of sharing the new information and expectations of the students from education has increased. Thus, instructional design has become more complex. Due to this, there is a need for raising teachers' awareness to instructional design. Understanding and mastering instructional design will enable teachers to produce better materials. We have, elsewhere, defined Instructional Design as:

"a process that comprises production and consumption. It involves all the political strategic, technical, and tactical activities used in solving pre-defined problems; planning, structuring, of the product; and the process of production" (Barkan & Özad 2002). It addresses the issues of:

- Why should we produce?
- What shall we produce?
- How shall we produce?
- With what shall we produce?

INSTRUCTIONAL MEDIA DESIGN
Instructional media design includes five types of media: text, graphics, images, audio, and video. Text involves letters, numbers, punctuation, special characters etc. Graphics include lines, circles, boxes, shading and colors. Images are still pictures like photographs or paintings. Audio is the sound aspect like music and voice. Video is the successive pictures presented sufficiently rapidly to give the appearance of smooth motion.

Process of Instructional Design

We have pointed out that the process of instructional design consists of five stages: Problem Solving Stage; Design Stage; Development Stage; Application Stage; Testing and Evaluation Stage (Barkan & Özad 2002).

PROBLEM SOLVING STAGE
At this stage, the issue of whether the expectations of the students from the program are suitable for solving their problems is explored.

DESIGN STAGE
At the design stage, goals of the program are clarified. Goals are the problems that will be solved when the students have the necessary knowledge and skills. The required knowledge and skills are to be clarified in

accordance with the defined goals. The defined goals are translated into tasks that the program will enable the students to accomplish.

DEVELOPMENT STAGE

The development stage is shortly the conversion of preparations into teaching materials and the process of physical production of the aids. At the end of the production stage, the product will be produced concretely. At the development stage, targets are used to constitute and structure the content, direct the teaching strategies from the testing and evaluation scales and choose the communication opportunities that will be used. The relationship among the aims will contribute to the construction of sections and chapters for each lesson. At the end, topics will constitute the units, the units will constitute the sections, and sections will constitute the lessons and how the lessons will be grouped in order to constitute the program. At the design stage, decisions should be made towards specifying the knowledge or skill to be developed through the communication opportunity. In this respect, the choice of media is a matter of strategy. Teaching strategies comprise a series of decisions based on the aims related to structuring the content and choice of communication opportunities for transmitting the structured content. The students should be taken into consideration in choosing the suitable style, preferences and proportions among the visual (photography, graphics, tables, illustration, iconography, pictures, etc.) and text or visual (animation, documentary, dramatization, etc.) and alternatives for voice in specifying the decisions related to teaching strategies. Pages in printed teaching materials are designed according to the principles defined above.

APPLICATION STAGE

Application stage is the stage at which the service is transmitted to the student; in other words, the producer introduces its product to its consumers.

TESTING AND EVALUATION STAGE

At this stage, tests for the students and evaluation schemes for the course are developed.

METHODOLOGY

The FCMS students' reactions to learning form traditional education (lectures and textbooks) and from the notes put on the web have been explored following the recommendation of Smith (2001:62). Data have been collected from nine students studying at the Faculty of Communication and Media Studies through in-depth interviews. Students were given the opportunity to respond in English or Turkish (their mother tongue). Responses of the students who preferred Turkish have been translated into English. Some of the questions asked to the students were:

- What do you understand from the word lecture?
- What do you do during the lectures?
- How do you learn from the lectures?
- Which aspects of lectures do you like/dislike?
- What do you understand from the notes put on the web?
- How do you learn from the notes put on the web?
- Which aspects of having notes on the web do you like/dislike?

FINDINGS

Students define lecture as attending the class and listening to the teacher who talks about the subject. Lecture is considered as a way of gaining the information they need. It is a two-way communication between the teacher and the students. Students can ask questions and clarify the issues they don't understand well or ask for elaboration on the topics of interest. One of the students points out that lecture helps them to learn things about the subject that they don't know.

A lecturer teaches a lecture to the students. A better benefit from a lecture is the result of the lecturer. They point out that if the lecturer is good and friendly they learn better. If they do not like the teacher, they have difficulty in understanding the lecture. They also add that if they like the teacher they attend the classes; if they don't they either sleep or do not attend the classes. They don't like it when the teacher exerts authority on them. One of the research participants notes: "I hate when the teacher's ego is dominant". Another one says: "only if the teacher is not good, that lesson is boring. Such teachers make the students loose their interest from the lesson". They believe that, here, at the FCMS student-teacher relationship is relaxed and warm. They think it is more like a high-school atmosphere. If they like the teacher they enjoy the lecture and if the current topics are covered, they feel more motivated towards the lesson. They also add that they like having fun in the class. They point out that

if they had difficulty with the teacher they either get the notes from their friends who attend the classes or download from the web.

During the lecture, they try to listen to the teacher, copy the things from the board and note down the important information. They point out that they ask questions when they don't understand well. In order to learn from lectures, they try to combine the things that they listen and write. They ask questions when they are not satisfied. They revise the subject matter at home. This, they think, leads to learning.

Notes put on the web are considered to have a limited use. One of the high achievers mentions that he can use the computer well, but other students can't. "They can only chat and play games on the computer" he says. They can't use search. They cut and paste. Therefore, these students cannot search on the Internet. The majority of the research participants mention that they read the notes as if they are reading the books. Just print and read. They point out that in some cases they were given the notes just before the mid-term examination and unfortunately they did not have the opportunity to look at them before going to class. They also mention that they prefer notes being on the web if they don't like the teacher so that they don't have to face the teacher. Also, they remark that they like to have the notes on the web because they can have access to the notes whenever they like and wherever they like.

In relation to having lecture notes on the web one of the participants' notes, "I prefer interactive ones. If they were like a normal web site, with multimedia it would be better. I don't want to memorize the examples. I would like to be asked questions on which I can make comments in the exam. Here students can't write (in English); therefore, we can't go that far." He adds that, for example they would like to be given the addresses of the related websites by the lecturer. This they think would be very useful. They prefer to have interactive websites to plain text. They prefer lectures (particularly when they love the teacher) to the web and think that the web is for further reading.

They think that one textbook is not enough. The course packs compiled by the teachers are bits and pieces and lack the wholeness of the textbook. They feel that they need to read things from different textbooks and compare the information given.

They prefer warm classroom atmosphere and face-to-face interaction. They prefer a lecturer to the web only if they like the teacher. They also mention that a teacher always gives the notes in the order she teaches. They might not understand them properly but in the web they have the opportunity to arrange them in the order they like. They also point out that both the lecture and the web are useful only if they are willing to learn.

CONCLUSIONS
The study reveals that in education there is a place for lectures and putting lecture notes on the web sites. The present study indicates that face-to-face, social relationship established in the classroom is important for the learners. They can ask questions and get the clarification they like on the spot. Above all, a teacher is a whole, and constitutes a model that students can follow.

In tertiary education, computer knowledge and skills of the students are important. If they can use the computer well, they can reach the information they seek via the Internet. Indeed, the web is considered as a tutor and seems to "offer a new twist to this time-honored method of teaching" http://edweb.gsn.org/web.effects.html. Teachers should be trained in instructional design for preparing the materials for the web. Putting the lecture notes on the web as plain texts have a limited use for the students who attend the classes regularly. These notes are considered as a supplement to lectures. "The Web will only grow if people are willing to commit the time and energy to create pursuits, and the first step to this goal will always be through the providing of easy access" http://edweb.gsn.org/web.effects.html.
In conclusion, we can say that technology is flourishing but in education, there is still place for universities.

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