

THE USE OF E-LEARNING IN EDUCATION

*“(...) To achieve wisdom and o understand the world
It is not enough to gather facts, (...),
But one should (...) inquire deeper sense of things
In their mutual relation and in reference to
The whole reality (...)”*

Blessed John Paul II

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the space surrounding a man is changing in a twinkling of an eye. Mass media are one of the factors which contribute to those constant transformations. They shape experiences of a man. In the beginning of 21st Century mass media became a powerful medium. They strongly influence not only contemporary culture and science, but also contribute to ensuring immediate information to the public. It should be underlined that they are not always objective. They may very often cause tears and indignation of recipients. This follows from the fact of not give reliable information.

The 21st Century raises many doubts and existential questions. According to K. Denek¹, social and cultural transformation observed nowadays requires new understanding of education and making necessary changes and reforms.

It mainly refers to a situation understood in a context:

- challenges of contemporary world and situation in Poland,
- qualitative and subjective aspects of a man,
- thoroughness in approaching conditions of functions of education,
- constant self-education of children and youth.

We very often ask ourselves questions concerning development and education of the youngest. It constitutes a series of reflexions in Polish literature. We consider previous systems, work methods, introducing different types of innovations, decisions of changes in education at kindergartens and schools. Social transformations caused changes not only in the education and development needs but it is also noticed that it is necessary to have a child oriented education with the care about appropriate development. Deepening beliefs of the importance of education in a childhood becomes a challenge

¹ K. Denek, *Niezbędne zmiany w polskiej edukacji*, [in:] *O przemianach w edukacji T 1*, red. T. Lewowcki, A. Zając, Rzeszów 1998, p. 23.

for contemporary education². Conditions included in the Report of J. Delors confirm those words. According to the author, education should be based on four pillars:

- Learn in order to know,
- Learn in order to act,
- Learn in order to live,
- Learn in order to exist

Aim of this work is to present the point of view concerning education through e-learning. The reason for that is the fact that it is a method of a mass use at Polish schools.

2. FEW WORDS ABOUT E-LEARNING IN EDUCATION...

Education in Poland is still changing and improving. At the same time it prepares to mega trends existing in other EU countries. It is more often said about e-learning, which is a very popular form of today's education in other member states. It is a modern IT technology used as teleteaching. At this point the following questions should be asked:

- When was the e-learning created?,
- What this notion means?,
- What is its role in education?.

E-learning – as a form of teleteaching – has a very long tradition. It is not connected with the rely by which teaching takes place, but more with the idea of distance education itself. Already in 1728 “The Boston Gazette” published the first offer about the possibility to take a correspondence course from stenography. With the years, offer of courser was broadening, and together with the development of new technologies, the way materials were transferred was changing. Since 1858 this method of education have been used by universities, and finishing a course became equivalent with graduating a faculty in a traditional way.

However, only in 20th Century the development of remote education begins to gain momentum. In the 20's radio becomes a new rely and in the 60's television. Finally in 1965 at the University in Illinois first computer system, called PLATO system comes into being. From this moment we may talk about e-learning. During next years, further universities in USA and Great Britain extend their educational offer with on-line courses.

Further development of e-learning is closely connected with the development of computer systems, and thanks to the popularisation of the Internet, the number of students using this education method all over the worlds is constantly growing³.

Contemporary distance education is not so popular and at the same time

2 Zob. S. Włoch, *Pedagogia widzialna i niewidzialna w edukacji przedszkolnej. Aspekty rozwojowe*, [in:] *Rozwój i edukacja dziecka: szanse i zagrożenia*, red. S. Guz, Lublin 2005, p. 53.

3 *Historia e-learningu na świecie*, <http://www.wprost.pl/ar/168051/Historia-e-learningu-na-wiecie/>, z dn. 23.07.2011 r.

underestimated. E-learning is most popular in the highly developed countries. Apart from others, in France, Japan, Germany, USA and Great Britain.

At this point we should ask a question: What are the reasons for the fact that e-learning is not so popularised as the Internet? The answer is simple. Although we are in European Union still:

- many Polish schools do not possess computers and Internet connection;
- level of technical equipment is not satisfactory;
- there is a lack of interests in courses and trainings in extramural course.

The notion e-learning, in other words: blended learning, distance education, distance learning – is variously defined in literature. Nowadays there are many terms interpreting this notion. Generally it is said that it means a process of education, remote learning by the use of Internet. What does the prefix e means in e-learning? Authors stress that it is a notion according to a sample, through which it operates an e-mail. Prefix “e” may be interpreted as: effective, electronic, economical, easy, executive, engaging and emerging.

This notion is very often substituted by different expressions: e-education, education through internet, hybrid education, complimentary education, on-line education and virtual environment education. W. Stoffowa⁴ notices that this notion refers to learning – self-education, studying – with the use of electronic didactic support, books and handbooks, which allows to gain materials and information with the use of IT and communicational technologies. According to an educator, Cz. Kupisiewicz⁵ e-learning is a technologically developed form of distance learning⁶. It is also known as “remote education”. E-learning enables learning, including studying, without a personal and direct contact with a teacher. Allows to learn in a chosen time, place and pace having only computer/laptop with the access to Internet.

Summing up the above considerations, it should be said that e-learning is a model of teaching:

- using IT technologies to create the delivery of knowledge (information, materials) in order to improve the efficiency of work and actions of organization;
- constituting the form of education for everyone no matter of age, sex and race.

I. Gołbiewska states that e-learning is undoubtedly bringing benefits which include apart from many others:

4 W. Stoffowa, Animacja w podręcznikach elektronicznych i w innych elektronicznych prezentacjach materiałów dydaktycznych, „Edukacja Ustawiczna Dorosłych” 2007, nr 3, p. 55.

5 Cz. Kupisiewicz, M. Kupisiewicz, Słownik pedagogiczny, Warszawa 2009, p. 45.

6 Nauczanie na odległość – to metoda prowadzenia procesu dydaktycznego, gdy uczniowie i nauczyciel są oddaleni od siebie. Do przekazu informacji stosowane są media. Wówczas jest to dwustronna komunikacja pomiędzy nimi. Nad całym procesem nauczania czuwa instytucja edukacyjna (D. Keegan, On defining distance education, [in:] Distance Education International Perspectives, eds. D. Sewart, D. Keegen, B. Holmberg, London 1998).

1. costs of teaching (...) not only the training itself (...), but also savings connected with their organization (...): local renting, food, travel (...),
2. every person has an access to the same scope of knowledge during the given set of time or uses it individually, by what he or she may independently use time and pace of learning,
3. more efficient assessment of the results of teaching (...),
4. easy accessible, constantly actualized base of knowledge on e-learning platforms,
5. possibility to provide only necessary and current content,
6. access to database, trainings and other support and information, which gives a better possibility to self-education to those who wish to develop their skills,
7. freedom in choosing course topic.

Main disadvantages of e-learning are:

1. concentration mainly on transferring, capturing and testing knowledge (...),
2. the most difficult point in realisation is the level of mobilization of its participants to learn, as well as independent managing of the education process (...),
3. (...) lack of direct contact with a trainer. Lack of eye contact, body gestures (...) direct assessment of realised tasks (...)
4. (...) student can not inform on a current basis his teacher about his problems – has to wait for a contact (...)
5. high financial costs of professional platforms, high costs of implementation (...)⁷.

There are three ways of learning with the use of e-learning:

1. synchronic – in which the main role plays chat and telephone, allowing a teacher and students to communicate in a way similar to a traditional teaching;
2. asynchronic – which uses e-mails and discussion panel, thanks to which students do not have a direct contact with a teacher, but may work in a convenient time, using the didactic materials gathered in database;
3. individual – which uses tools identical as in the asynchronic way, with one difference in the fact that students decide on their own about the content and pace of learning⁸.

7 I. Gołębowska, E – learning – edukacja XXI wieku, <http://blogi.newsweek.pl/Tekst/spoleczenstwo/539199,E-learning---edukacja-xxi-wieku.html>, z dn. 23.07.2011 r.

8 Cz. Kupisiewicz, M. Kupisiewicz, Słownik pedagogiczny, Warszawa 2009, p. 45.

Main criteria of e-learning division:

Division criteria	E-learning courses
Depending on the access time	– synchronic – asynchronous
Depending on the medium	– Radio and TV courses, – Internet courses, – DVD and CD courses
Depending on the relation to a classical teaching method	– courses complementing traditional learning, – courses substituting traditional learning

Source: Own analysis on the basis of: Z. Giurko,
E-learning, www.eschool.sonkis.pl/Elearning.pdf

Person participating in this education process should possess knowledge and skills referring to computer and own e-mail box. Institutions which educate participants are obliged to equip in an appropriate tools and programmes, create proper platform and train teacher staff to carry out on-line classes.

In general conclusion there should be mentioned about the set of advantages of e-learning, which eliminates the disadvantages of traditional education, enriches the catalogue of methods developing brain, language and hand at the same time, enables synchronic and asynchronous transfer of information with the support of many means of expression and media, education process may be carried out in a group in a virtual class, as a personal contact with a teacher or a student or during individual work of a student, allows respecting individual differences, engages emotional and volitional sphere, simplifies communication with academic staff, enables improvement of education results, is a mean supporting functioning a school in the market economy⁹.

At the moment there are more than a hundred e-learning platforms in Poland. They are mainly run by schools:

high schools: use free IT tools, constitute a supplement of the education process, contribute to the development of contact between students and teachers;

higher education institutions – constitute a supplement of lectures, education with the use of “virtual village”.

⁹M. Tanaś, Wizerunki e-learningu – poszukiwania..., <http://www.trendy.ore.edu.pl/articles/view/170>, z dn. 23.07.2011 r.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Dynamic development of IT technologies introduces people to a new age. In this process transformation refers also to regulations existing in education. E-learning is becoming a mega trend in the beginning of the new century.

Summing up above analysis it should be pointed out, that e-learning in the beginning of the 21st century:

- is a great challenge for Polish educational system,
- enables learning also for disabled people,
- constitutes an important element for future independent learning,
- skilfully introduces a student into using new forms of learning.

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