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## ICT – Boon or Bane for Life Long Learning

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# ICT – Boon or Bane for Life Long Learning

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**Abstract** – "Technology can make lifelong learning a reality" is written in one of the listed references. The modern information technology support is becoming the foundation of the efficient and cost-effective lifelong learning.

The e-learning technology is becoming progressively sophisticated, which has several positive effects, though on the other hand the complex technology makes some learners feel uncomfortable.

Innovations in e-learning information systems should take special care of this effect when dealing with "lifelong learners", since the level of the information literacy in this group varies a lot. A good example of the technology innovation is personalization which makes e-learning systems friendlier and diminishes the well known technology barrier.

**Keywords** – Lifelong Learning, Information Technology, E-learning, Personalization, Education On-Line, Open Distance Learning, WEB Based-Learning, Collaborative Learning, M-Learning.

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## **Objectives of Study**

1. An Overview of ICT.
2. To Analyze the Role of ICT in Life Long Learning.
3. To Understand the Impact of Personalization.
4. To Evaluate the Limitations of ICT.
5. To Make an Analysis and give a Concluded Observation.

## **Research Methodology**

The present paper is divided into five sections based on SECONDARY DATA received from various sources. The present paper describes various sections according to the above mentioned objectives.

### **SECTION 1**

#### **Overview of ICT**

##### **Introduction**

The world is now at the threshold of the next revolution, this time it is in information and communication technologies (ICTs).

The recent developments in new ways to capture, store, process, and transport and display information are having profound impact on the way the societies are organized. These capabilities are reliable, inexpensive and present vast potential for networking and sharing of

information in digital form across national and international boundaries.

Established networks like Internet attract a broadening base of participants and they interconnect nationally and globally through information highways (Hamelink1997).

It is postulated that the long-term impact of the ICTs on the social and economic scene of the world communities will be far stronger and deeper than ever before.

From ICT revolution emerges a new kind of economy - the information economy - in which information is the critical source and the basis for technological advancement, competition and governance. Old ways of governance are being challenged and sometimes reformulated.

### **SECTION 2**

#### **To Analyze the Role of ICT in Life Long Learning**

##### **Information Communication and Technology**

The use of ICT in the field of education has opened up a variety of opportunities to enhance learning processes in terms of accessibility, flexibility, knowledge sharing, and scalability.

The implementation of ICT as integrated networked supports for learning has started a new age, the **e-learning age**.

- e-learning makes it possible to improve the competencies and knowledge at a - **time, place** and **pace** that is suitable and convenient for the individual learner.
- e-learning offers access to high-quality content.
- e-learning provides the accumulated worldwide expertise to **create** and **integrate** innovative content into the curriculum. It opens the horizons and removes the limits of one educational institution.
- e-learning provides the flexibility to modify, change and to update the content and to make it accessible on demand.
- e-learning through networking provides worldwide opportunities for social, peer and student-tutor **interaction**.
- e-learning **reduces** the **training costs** for institutions and individuals.
- e-learning **reduces time away** from work for participants.

**Learning Management System (LMS)** software is essential to the implementation of e-learning and provides a tool for optimum intercommunication and data compilation.

#### **Life Long Learning (LLL)**

Lifelong learning in its definition covers the whole education area: **Initial Education, Basic Continuing Education and University Continuing Education**.

In our context the most relevant definition for "lifelong learning" (LLL) is the one from European Commission [1] which says that it is "*all learning activity undertaken throughout life, with the aim of improving knowledge, skills and competences within a personal, civic, social and/or employment-related perspective*". This includes all forms of learning: **Formal** (courses and examinations), **Non-Formal** (without examinations) and **Informal** (without either courses or examinations).

This includes: **Full-time** and **Part-time** programmes - for older adults leading to *qualifications*; courses taken for *vocational* reasons or to *explore* more on any of subject; courses leading to *diplomas* and *degrees*; courses taken by graduates.

*The e-learning is not seen as a shift from the traditional to open learning, but rather as a "Support" to conventional learning processes with the use of modern information technology and distance educational methods.*

Modern implementation of e-learning in educational institutions can be considered- as *the result of the convergence process of distance and conventional education*.

According to the cited UNESCO report [6] open and distance learning is one of the most rapidly growing fields of education, and its potential impact on all education delivery systems has been greatly accentuated through the development of ICT – based technologies, and in particular the World Wide Web.

The benefits to the lifelong learner include support for:

- widening Access to education
- a Learner-Centered approach to teaching
- Collaborative learning
- Interactive learning
- Problem-Based learning.

The new learning process brings up the following shifts:

- from instruction to construction and discovery,
- from teacher-centered to learner-centered education,
- from absorbing material to learning how to navigate and how to learn,
- from school to lifelong learning,
- from one-size-fits-all to customized learning and
- from learning as a routine to learning as fun.

### **SECTION 3**

#### *To Understand the Impact of Personalization*

##### **Personalization of the e-learning services**

The technology providers will be forced to offer both highly sophisticated and at the same time" simple to use" e-learning functionalities. One of the major solutions to combine these two directions is the personalization of the e-learning technology platform.

Development of the personalization aspects and techniques has been very fast in recent years, yet the basic goal of personalization systems remains the same: to provide users with what they want or need without requiring them to ask for it explicitly.

Personalization is the provision to the individual of tailored products, services, information or information relating to products or service. It is a broad area, also covering recommender systems, customization, and adaptive Web sites.

## Personalization Technology

Personalization technology involves *Software* that learns- patterns, habits, and preferences. Personalization is a toolbox of technologies and application features used in the design of an end-user experience.

Features classified as "Personalization" are wide-ranging, from simple display of the end-user's name on a Web page, to complex catalog navigation and product customization based on deep models of users' needs and behaviors.

### SECTION 4

#### *To Evaluate the Limitations of ICT*

Paradoxically, ICT is both the problem and the solution to lifelong learning. It is an immense problem in the kinds of **dis-benefits** it brings. *Information overload, Lack of privacy, Security concerns, and Addictive behaviors* are just some of the many dangers this technology brings. In addition there are *significant costs* attached to providing equitable access, training and support.

In majority of e-learning programs offered today, the **burden** for learning is placed wholly on the shoulders of the learner. When "e-students" go to a course web site, they enter a menu of activities: announcements, documents, assignments, external links, communications, and tools. Students are expected to navigate through this material on their own, without much support. They are generally offered email links (to faculty and other students, to more material, etc.), but not much more. The structure of the Web site, defined by the existence of links between the various pages, restricts the navigation performed by the user to predefined paths and therefore defines the ability of a user to access relevant pages with relative ease.

Three aspects of a Web site affect its utility in providing the intended service to its users. These are - *the content provided, the layout of the individual pages, and the structure of the entire Web site itself* [3]. The relevance of each of the objects comprising a Web page to the users' needs will clearly affect their level of satisfaction. However, the definition of relevance is subjective. It is here that there is a potential mismatch between the perception of what the user needs, on the part of the Web site designer, and the true needs of users. This may have a major impact on the effectiveness of a Web site.

Recent studies, for example [4] report that compatibility, ease of use, and trial-ability has a significant impact on the intended use of the personalization features on a web site. On the other hand visibility, image and result demonstrability were found

not to have a significant impact on intent to use the personalization features on a web site. The study also found that the personalization features should be easy to use and should exhibit some advantage to the users to ensure adoption and use.

### SECTION 5

#### *Conclusion & Future Strategy*

It is crucial that LLL e-learning platforms are built on **friendly, easy to use** and robust technology. The didactics will have to be designed in such a way that the learning process is *motivating* for the learner, that it supports the information age generation (constructivist learning) and that it *improves transfer* of acquired knowledge in a learning process into a practice.

The fact is that *Personalization* makes the e-learning systems friendlier and can (when implemented properly) significantly diminish the technology barrier effect of the learner's access to the e-learning processes and e-educational institutions. The personalization of the technology platform offers the learning organizations a method for enhancing the learners' intimacy through their ICT services, which is, without any doubt, an additional motivation factor for the learner to whom the computer represents a major learning media. Through the personalization, the learning organizations can help learners to become more familiar – and hence more comfortable with new technology features which is an important achievement in the lifelong learning provision.

*"Collaborative learning"* is trying to solve this situation by creating a virtual social space for the teaching and learning needs of the particular group of people inhabiting that space. This space has to be managed. Such a common space is very important for the motivation and effective learning of students that lack the social component of traditional student's environment. Such a system also allows for something that is often overlooked in the e-classroom: recognizing and acknowledging the most valuable contributors. All these qualities are beneficial to the adult learner who is using the ICT as the means of interaction with the educational institution, teachers and fellow students.

As far as the high quality access is concerned there is a new technology coming up, namely the *M (Mobile)-Learning* which will make the learning possible practically anywhere and anytime.

It is more or less evident that the lifelong learning in general and the university continuing education will experience the consistent expansion in the future. There is practically no doubt that the foundation of LLL provision is going to be the information technology and

e-learning together with the emerging M (mobile)-learning technologies. However, the fact is that ICT is producing a major change in both the content and the processes of learning, such that we do not have the option of ignoring it. ICTs offer vast potential for their use in educational management. Despite this, the education sector is deprived of the benefits of ICTs. There have been some developments in the recent past but the major challenge is yet to be met.

It calls for a clear policy perspective and a strategy for the development of ITC related applications to be followed by a variety of programmes for capacity building at various levels. The ICTs will succeed only if the administration is positive and inclined to follow norm based planning and management techniques. While every effort should be made to promote the use of ICTs, care should also be taken that the benefits of these efforts do not remain confined to a few.

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- \* The **personalization** technology was developed at the University of Maribor and University of Primorska, and made an application in the e-learning portal (which is also product of the University of Maribor).

