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E-learning Potential for Improving the Models of Adult Education

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Extended summary

We are witnesses of an increasing technological development. The processes of globalization have taken root in all areas of human activity, as well as in education. Learning and teaching of adults within a new (multi)media environment offers new opportunities for developing lifelong learning competencies. Adult learners know what they want and what they need to learn, they know, or should know, the framework within which they can get information and knowledge, while most of them possess the competences to know where they can get this knowledge (formal, non-formal and informal learning) and the skills for developing it in a practical environment (at work, at home, in social communities, etc.).

The basic purpose and aim of this paper is to attempt to analyze the potential of e-learning for improving the adult learning model, and to give the reader an insight into e-education as an e-learning infrastructure which consequently, and from the pedagogical aspect, becomes a model of adult education. The paper seeks to provide a comprehensive overview of transition from historical correspondence to e-learning and describes the possibility of transitioning from analogue to digital e-learning and adult learning as a potential for enhancing the adult learning model, which is also its fundamental significance.

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Given that the methodological approach of the research is based on the consideration of theoretical implications of the e-education problem which represents the infrastructure of e-learning, this paper can also be viewed as a review article. The paper offers an analysis of the theoretical findings of relevant literature on correspondence education, e-learning and teaching tools, as well as a consideration of e-learning opportunities as the concept of distance learning and teaching whose roots lie in various theories of learning and teaching (behaviorism, cognitive theory and constructivism). The emphasis is on Knowles' four principles of adult learning, the concept of the continuum in e-education, the didactic triangle in the online environment, Gagne's nine events of adult instruction, the characteristics of the adult and older learners in the new (multi)media environment, as well as possible obstacles for educators.

The paper deals with the issue of the acceptance of e-learning in terms of its equal applicability for younger and older users. Though one can conclude that there is no single correct answer to this issue, the nature of learning at every age has been taken into account. In the analysis of introducing technology into the teaching process, Marc Prensky (2005) distinguishes digital immigrants and digital natives, whereby the adult population (as students and educators) is defined as a digital novice. However, the division should be taken with reserve, taking into account the social, individual and family aspects of a person. Despite this fact, the authors Jandrić and Livazović (2013) consider Prensky's work to be the foundation of e-education.

As far as the advantages and disadvantages of e-learning are concerned, different approaches and different orientations can be found in the relevant literature. The positive aspects of e-learning include: facilitating the process of life-long learning, enrichment of the teaching process, participation in learning from any place, individualized access, better teacher-student interaction, increased ability for knowledge acquisition, finding solutions to problems, improved analytical thinking, simpler organization of lectures by world experts, and the like. The negative aspects include the problems such as: older people often do not have access to e-learning; Internet learning features; the unresolved problems related to e-learning; reduced staffing; emotions; the feeling of personal isolation, and many others.

In terms of the e-learning content, Gagne's nine learning steps (educational events) can be applied to e-education: attracting learners' attention, getting acquainted with the outcomes, recalling the lessons learned, presenting new knowledge, learning leadership (individual and group work), independent use of acquired knowledge/skills, feedback, knowledge testing, and transfer of knowledge outside the school (Jandrić, Livazović, 2013).

In conclusion, it can be said that information and communication technologies (ICTs) have a great impact in all spheres of human life and work - they support the acquisition of basic skills, which is a prerequisite for lifelong learning and the improvement of the learning and teaching models for both younger and older population. Consequently, they have great potential for a good quality e-learning and adult teaching in the future. We live in the times when the knowledge of e-technology is necessary for learning and development. People of different ages must be encouraged to realize the advantages of information and communication technologies as positive tools for lifelong learning in formal, non-formal and informal education. Educators play a major role in building positive attitudes toward e-learning and e-education, and high demands are placed upon them. We believe that the future will put even greater demands on

the educators and that they will be willing to improve their experience and knowledge, change their paradigms, and embrace self-development throughout their lives. It is to be assumed that only such experts will be able to provide quality education and promote e-education as a platform for developing the potential of e-learning and adult learning models.

Key words: distance education, distance learning and teaching, e-learning, e-education, tools for e-learning.

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