

The Role of Distance Learning in Enabling Students to Learn both at Secondary Education Level and in Adult Education

Thomas Georgas¹, Georgios Giannoukos², Ioannis Stergiou², Sotiria Kallianta², Vasilios Hioctour², Susi Poli³

¹Institute of Education, University College London, UK

²Second Chance School, Greece

³University of Bologna, Italy

**Corresponding Author:* Thomas Georgas, Institute of Education, University College London, UK

ABSTRACT

The following work is a comprehensive proposal for the use of distance education in secondary education. This proposal discusses the needs that make implementation and operation of distance learning necessary, it identifies the operators that can apply it, as well as presents two cognitive subjects suitable for distance learning and the forms of their educational material. Finally, there is a description concerning the special characteristics of the educators.

Keywords: distance learning, secondary education, adult education

IMPLEMENTATION AND OPERATION OF DISTANCE EDUCATION AT SECONDARY LEVEL IN GREECE

The main reason distance education can be implemented and operated in Greece is the existence of school-age children and adults who either did not start or have stopped attending secondary education and lack the ability to physically attend classroom education. As Vassala (2005) points out, "countries that started distance education had the common characteristic of isolated areas from where access to conventional school was difficult and in many cases impossible." Since then, distance learning was successfully introduced internationally in school education. In the national education system and in particular in secondary education, distance learning becomes necessary because each of us individually and collectively, being the cells of the educational organization, represent the ideal that education is the right of all people and they should enjoy it throughout their lives (Lionarakis, Lykourgiotis, 1998) and we must be consistent with that ideal.

In Greece people with physical inability to attend school are:

- Minors who are unable to leave the home due to mobility problems, vision problems, long-term hospitalization at home, etc.
- Minors suffering from chronic diseases and are hospitalized,

- Minors who are absent for long periods of time from their school due to e.g. sports activities,
- Adults due to family responsibilities e.g. women in pregnancy, single parents,
- Adults due to economic reasons, e.g. people with working hours that do not allow them to attend classes at conventional educational structures (day, night school, Second Chance Schools).

Structures for Administering Distance Learning

- Foundation for Youth and Lifelong Learning: It pertains the Second Chance Schools that since 1997 offer secondary education to adults. It employs educators for almost all secondary school subjects that are familiar with the use of multimedia. The teaching methods followed differ from those of conventional schools, and the teaching staff is relatively experienced in adult education.
- Secondary Education Directorates: Each Directorate of Secondary Education employs teachers of all subjects. It controls a specific area that is accessible to teachers for meetings with students either at the end or during the school year, and it is equipped with modern technological means.

The choice of the above entities does not state the exclusive assignment of distance education

The Role of Distance Learning in Enabling Students to Learn both at Secondary Education Level and in Adult Education

to public bodies. Private non-profit educational organizations can provide distance learning in collaboration with government agencies.

Two Cognitive Objects that can be taught Remotely

The following subjects were selected to meet the modern needs of students.

- Foreign language: Any of the three foreign languages currently taught in high schools (English, German and French), without excluding some more, depending on the students' preference. The content of the foreign language includes concise grammar rules, pronunciation, dialogues and communication.
- Natural Sciences: In this particular subject, the content of distance learning includes knowledge of Physics, Chemistry and Biology.

These objects are suitable for distance learning because their content can be taught effectively and efficiently by means of the capabilities provided by modern multimedia technology. These are cognitive objects that manage large amounts of information and can be presented in detail by the techniques used in distance learning (Panagiotakopoulos, 1998).

Forms of Educational Material

Educational material for both subjects must be in line with important social and technological developments. It must also be dynamic and open to interventions by the learning group as Chartofylaka (2007) points out.

Concerning the teaching of the foreign language:

- Printed material;
- Sound cassettes, essential to teaching because they enable the trainee, according to Lionarakis (1998), to "listen to dialects, voice elements, rhythms and tones, which cannot be accessed through printed material";
- Educational video tapes which activate a range of learning mechanisms (Lyonarakis, 1998), appropriately designed to meet the needs of the teaching material;
- Educational online software designed by experts, which will be continuously evaluated and modified to meet student requirements (Latchem, 2007).

Concerning the teaching of Natural Sciences:

- Educational software that has an interactive form and often incorporates multimedia;
- Videotapes with documentaries, laboratory and experimental demonstrations.

Particular Features of the Educator

- Experience in using new technologies, essential for communicating with students and for interactive multimedia teaching (Almpanis, 2007).
- Experience in adult education.
- Being familiar with the evaluation of written papers due to the lack of an oral evaluation method.
- Being more accessible and friendly than the conventional school lecturer in order to encourage the learner, help him develop and retain motivation to continue his studies and complete them.

CONCLUSION

Distance Learning is at an interesting crossroads, and for those of us working in the field, there are some important choices to make about where our energy is directed, and what view of society and human development invites our commitment. It is time to take distance learning seriously. A more complex understanding of distance learning research based on these insights may help us both appreciate the potential of distance learning initiatives, whilst being sensitive to the very real limitations.

REFERENCES

- [1] Almpanis T., «Online Learning, Using Virtual Learning Environments in Higher Education: Tutor's Perception of their Efficacy», *Open Education*, vol. 6 (2007), pp.81-94.
- [2] Chartofilaka, A-M., "Towards a Dynamic Teaching Material from Distance Education", *Open Education*, vol. 6 (2007), pp. 43-58.
- [3] Latchem C., «A Research and Evaluation Framework for Open, Distance and Technology-based Lifelong Learning», *Open Education*, vol.6 (2007), pp.14-29.
- [4] Lionarakis A., "The Cassette in Education", in Kokkos A., Lionarakis A., Matralis Ch., Panagiotakopoulos Ch., *Open and Distance Education: Educational Material and New Technologies*, volume C, EAP, Patra 1998 .
- [5] Lionarakis A., "Video in Education", in Kokkos A., Lionarakis A., Matralis Ch., Panagiotakopoulos Ch., *Open and Distance Education: Educational Material and New Technologies*, Volume C, EAP, Patra 1998 .

The Role of Distance Learning in Enabling Students to Learn both at Secondary Education Level and in Adult Education

- [6] Lionarakis A., Lykourgiotis A., "The Idea of Open Education", in Vergides D., Lionarakis A., Lykourgiotis A., Makrakis V., Matralis Ch., Open and distance education. Institutions and Operations, volume A, CRD, Patras 1998.
- [7] Panagiotakopoulos Ch., "Computer and Educational Software", in Kokkos A., Lionarakis A., Matralis Ch., Panagiotakopoulos Ch., Open and Distance Education: Educational Material and New Technologies, Volume C, EAP, Patras 1998.
- [8] Vassala P., "Distance School Education", in Vassala P., Giosos I., Koutsouba M., Lionarakis A., Xenos M., Panagiotakopoulos C., Open and distance education. Pedagogical and Technological Applications, EAP, Patra 2005.