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The „E-classroom” Project (Web Site) of the Town Library „Karlo Bijelicki” in Sombor Intended for (pre)Schoolers

Introduction

Following the example of many of the global web sites (<http://brain.pop>, <http://math.com>) and those that are recommended by experts or have already proven their quality (<http://stayathomemoms.about.com/od/educational-activities/tp/20-Educational-Websites-For-Kids.htm>, <http://thekidzpage.com/>, <http://www.how-stuffworks.com/>, <http://pbskids.org/>, <http://www.coolmath.com/>, <http://www.sesamestreet.org/>, <http://www.starfall.com/>, <http://kidsknowit.com/>, <http://www.nick-jr.com/>, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/forkids/index.shtml>, <http://discoverykids.com/>, <http://disneyjunior.com/>, <http://www.funbrain.com/>, <http://www.timeforkids.com/>, <http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/>, <http://www.almanac4kids.com/>, <http://www.learninggamesforkids.com/>, <http://www.highlightskids.com/>, <http://www.makemegenius.com/>), and are sites which generate a huge number of appropriate topics of interest to children or lesson plans for whole educational levels, the Town Library „Karlo Bijelicki” from Sombor [URL 1] works on the Project „E-classroom” (Web Site) in order to expand its existing services. Taken the rapid expansion and development of education and information technology [Hilčenko 2009, 2010, 2014], the needs of new generation „Z” [Kuleto 2012], MENSA requirements relating to functional learning starting from kindergarten [Rajović 2009] we may safely assume that there is no more room for postponing. As in Serbia, there is no official state institution that is engaged in providing such services of pupils’ online engagement with the possibility of online learning, acknowledgement and assessment of knowledge under the present national curriculum requirements for primary schools (Key Stage 1 to 4) and in accordance with pedagogical-psychological standards, requirements of MENSA, Generations „Z” needs, and the latest international trends when it comes to e-learning.

The project: the town library and the „E-classroom” project

This process has included the drafting of the study: The Town Library, „E-classroom” (Web Site) for which realization it is necessary to put the following resources into action:

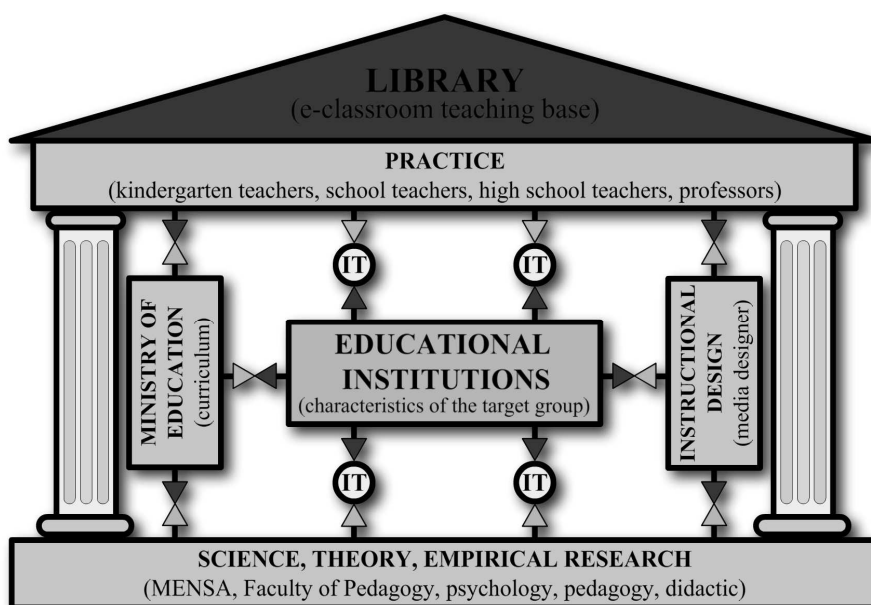


Fig. 1. Schemes of planned resources for the implementation of the Project „E-classroom” and the Town Library „Karlo Bijelicki” – Sombor

Figure 1 shows the structure of all the relevant factors in the study „E-classroom” of the Town Library „Karlo Bijelicki” in Sombor:

1. Municipal Library with its spatial-material and human resources;
2. Educational **practice** – professional staff in five primary schools and five pre-school municipal institutions (preschool educators, teachers, pedagogues, psychologists);
3. Spatial resources of preschool and primary school institutions;
4. Faculty of Education (professional and scientific capacities, schooling preschool educators-designers, media experts, preschool teachers, educators and librarians);
5. Information technology (IT);
6. Local government;
7. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of Republic of Serbia.

1. The Town Library with its spatial-material and human resources

Within the building of The Children’s library there are appropriate spatial and material and human resources (designer, computer) for the installation and management of the „E-classroom” (website). In the foreseeable future we have planned a thorough reconstruction and expansion of the entire building (from 350 to 540m²) which will make all conditions be more favorable (Fot. 1) [URL 2].



Fot. 1. Presenting the Children's Library before the planned reconstruction and some of the recent activities

2. Educational practice – staff of the five elementary schools and five preschools of the town of Sombor

All these institutions have a huge professional potential (educators, teachers, pedagogues, psychologists \approx 300 experts) from whose ranks will be consultants, designers, support staff, practitioners or volunteers according to personal preferences, recruited as external collaborators on this project. This will be preceded by appropriate education (in) of the teaching staff, for which training will be provided by lecturers from the Faculty of Education and beyond.

3. Preschool and elementary schools

When it comes to this institution, ahead of us are the plans to fully equip the preschools with computer rooms (through donations, or applications for EU funds) purchase the reliable hardware (tablets). All primary schools in the city have adequate computer rooms (and expert teachers) and this does not fulfill even the minimum of the possible capacity.

4. Faculty of Education (professional and scientific capacities, schooling educational profile: media designer in education...)

Faculty of Education boasts the longest tradition in the field of teacher education in Serbia and the new educational profile of librarians, educators and media designers in education will be most constructive collaborators and one of the cornerstones of this project. This institution will provide all necessary

scientific and technical assistance in the field of information technology (IT), psycho-pedagogical group of subjects, the development of applications according to specific target groups, global standards in e-learning, „requirements of Mensa Serbia for early stimulation of the development of synapses directly responsible for the intellectual abilities (functional-logical, associative learning and divergent-convergent thinking) as well as for children who attend preschool institutions, instructional design, needs and possibilities of Generations «Z»” [Hilčenko 2012, 2015, 2015b].

The educational profile of media designers in education is updated to current job descriptions on the market and is not visible on the list of occupations in Serbia. This problem could be partly solved by engaging a large number of young creative people to comply with their mentors, methodologists, external partners, developing e-applications for the educational process (pre)scholar to 8th graders in all subjects. This system would have the elements of feedback through educators and teachers, direct practitioners, implementers, users and auditors, which would be the same ones as studied and financed. Of the realized income (download service and use of e-learning material) we would try to settle the fees according to the established rules.

Application development will have the character of a conceptual model of instructional design and all modern learning approaches like modern-run classrooms, over-programmed heuristics (straightness and branch of learning), functional-logical, convergent-divergent approaches and situational learning with and without tutors at multiple levels, which would foster the development of thought and creative capacity in an interactive and motivational way. Applications will include various forms of animated, educational games, quizzes, animated films for all platforms, systems and hardware resolutions. The first application users will be able to take over the school in 2017/18 and numbers will increase both quantitatively and qualitatively.

5. IT

When it comes to IT, Faculty of Education will provide all the necessary consultancy and technical assistance in terms of acquisition of the necessary hardware and software support (appropriate software platforms for the development of interactive applications, web servers, server operating systems and hardware...) but also to connect with the library the optical fiber cable as the academic network of the University of Novi Sad). All elements of the system will be networked at local level.

6. Local government

As the author of the work is also a citizen of the City of Sombor, I will do everything to obtain all possible material support from local authorities since the project contributes more to raising the educational status of the city. Of course,

the local department of the Ministry of Education in Sombor, in turn, will also provide all of its available resources with a library which for years maintained good cooperation.

7. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of Republic of Serbia

Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Serbia as the last but the most important link in the whole system, should have the role of promoters of required standards, they are supervisors and advisors, who will give their consent to all necessary laws, regulations, and most developed e-services that are designed to end users. All future e-learning material will be aligned to existing curricula before the (primary) schools in all subjects and methodology.

Conclusion

To the Serbian educational system this project represents a step forward, it seems like „mission impossible” at this stage though. The previous educational reform is still in progress, and has yielded nothing in terms of visible outcomes. Schools in Serbia are reproductive and without challenge for the students. They satisfy their interests in other ways. This is a generation who grew up on modern media – schools of that mindset are not sufficiently acknowledged or media escorted. Although these changes should come from the („Top to Bottom” approach) government, the entire system has not got any time to lose as we may lose contact with the generations who experience school as a „nightmare”. Let’s go out to meet them, even if this attempt of venturing “out” means findings them „indoors”. We believe that, as if after a torrential rain, our path will pave the way for some other „more courageous” institutions to follow up. Although launched initially as local project, the realization of this project would have a national significance.

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Abstract

The main city library „Karlo Bijelicki” from Sombor is composed of The Children’s Library existing as a special separate building, intended for pre-schoolers and primary school children from all over the municipality. The institution has recently prompted the development of educational and information technology in order to adress the needs of generation „Z” and acknowledge MENSA recommendations. This project that has emerged is called The „E-classrooms” Project (and is a Web Site) and is one of its kind in Serbia. The immediate advantages of the project (when it starts in 2017 as a part of the national primary school curriculum) are that children will be able to

learn, identify and be assessed online. In fact, reviewed literature has covered all available resources to which the library and the city researches have accessed (space, professional staff, schools and practitioners, Faculty of Education, schooling educational profiles – media designers in education, pre-school teachers, teachers and librarians to Ministry of Education). The above mentioned institutions have all worked in developing this project and as a joint cooperation this idea should be turned into reality. The paper aims at presenting this project.

Keywords: educational information technology, „E-classrooms” (Web Site), a modern kindergarten and school, Generation „Z” and MENSA, the current school plans and syllabi.