

Educating world citizens for the 21st Century

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Recibido: 3/3/2013

Aceptado: 25/4/2013

Abstract

This article is based on the author's own ideas, but also, some others are taken and paraphrased from different sites of Internet. The main concern of this article has been to give an idea how the situation is regarding education in the XXI century, the role of the teachers and of the students, the challenges educators have to face in a time where everything is suddenly changing very fast. Besides, it also described the position that technology performs in our classrooms, and particularly, what takes place in Costa Rica.

Resumen

Educando ciudadanos universales para el siglo XXI

Las ideas del autor, combinadas con las de otros expertos, producen este artículo referido a la educación en el siglo XXI, el papel de los docentes y los estudiantes, los desafíos que los educadores enfrentan en un tiempo donde todo cambia muy rápido. También se presenta la posición del autor con respecto al desempeño que la tecnología puede tener en el aula y particularmente, en Costa Rica.

INTRODUCTION

In the high-speed changing world of the early 21st century public education is also varying. As part of the modifications the role of schools and education will also be different both in the educational system and in the society. Besides with them the role of teachers will also change. The aim of this article is to scan how the new social and technological challenges and demands towards education and teachers have made to change schools into institutions with modern endeavors and social agreements. We are going to give a

picture of the characteristic features of model teachers able to face the new demands these abrupt changes are demanding.

Together with the transforms, new opportunities came out towards our schools. Nowadays schools need to teach their learners how to increase information and how to choose and utilize them. This takes place so quickly that students learn how to use the Internet together with their teachers. Parents are involved in decision-making so they take part in the life of the school.

Educating world citizens for the 21st century. *Revista Comunicación*, 2013. Año 34, vol. 22, núm. 1. Instituto Tecnológico de Costa Rica, pp. 47-52. ISSN impresa 0379-3974, e-ISSN 1659-3820.

PALABRAS CLAVE:

Educación en el siglo XXI, educación, papel de la escuela, papel del docente, sociedad, tecnología en escuelas, características del docente.

KEY WORDS:

education in the XXI century-education-
role of school - role of teacher - society -
technology in schools- features of teacher



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EDUCATION IN THE XXI CENTURY

Education in the XXI century has acquired different characteristics that set it apart from the kind of traditional education that was predominant during the XX century. Certainly, it does not take you long to deduce the reason behind the change education suddenly faced. The digital revolution is converting the way learning and instruction is presented in our classrooms. Currently, there are many challenges in the globalized and interdependent world, these new dares are also demanding a new vision of the world citizenship that is not restricted to national boundaries, but encloses other important factors, such as moral and ethical concerns.

One important fact that happened in last decades of the XX century, and particularly in last one, was the lack of instruction foreign language teachers had regarding technology. Costa Rican teachers were not the exception, due to this need the Ministry of Education and the Omar Dengo Foundation started, in the middle of the 90's, an intensive technological training, basically on the use of computers. According to Donato and Terry (1995), they hold down that the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (1993), several programs have developed that the use distance learning technologies to provide instruction in foreign languages at the elementary school level". This specific experience was also applied in Costa Rica, when it was founded, in 1995, *La Política Educativa hacia el siglo XXI: Propuestas y Realizaciones*. This new educational policy launched by the Ministry of Education during the government of Jose María Figueres Olsen (1994-1998), had as a main goal, the integration of the process of teaching and learning English at all the educational levels of the country. From that time on, many curricular changes were made. The core idea was to emphasize the learning of English and computer skills. Because, at that time, many foreign enterprises had came into the country, demanding a skilled workforce in those two areas. From the decade of the 90's on, as Donato and Terry (1995) hold down, "the use of technology in the Curriculum, since the last decades of the XX century, has increased tremendously..." but, it is important to state that in Costa Rica, as in many other countries in the world, was not prepared to face the new technological changes that were being asked from most of the industrialized countries in the world. In Costa Rica, governments in recent years have been aware of the changes that modern society is demanding; particularly with English learning, technological and technical areas. But still, there is a need in these specific fields, both teachers and students need more training to achieve a total immersion in this curriculum context asked requested by the employer companies.

Education in the XXI century is focused on a different concept of teaching and learning; it has to be addressed to a developing transferable knowledge and skills. There-

fore, in this changeable world, schools have been asked to integrate development of skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, and collaboration into the teaching and learning of academic subjects. According to *Board on Testing and Assessment, July 2012* it is held down that

deeper learning is the process through which a person becomes capable of taking what was learned in one situation in one situation and applying it to new situations-in others words, learning for "transfer". Through deeper learning, students develop expertise in a particular discipline or subject.

Based on this last quote, we might say that during the learning-teaching process, we as educators must provide activities, which strengthen a deeper learning, transferable knowledge, and skills or competences.

Another important fact to note is that although there is a significant demand in the use of technology in the English classes, there are still some objections, such as the ones McLaren and others (2005, p. 560), point out. According to them, nowadays:

1. Technophobia is the simplest reason why some teachers object to using computers.
2. Using information technology implies additional knowledge that some English teachers do not have, or do not want to acquire.
3. From a technical perspective, the equipment is more complex and this can lead to some problems not related to the teaching and learning of English, which involve loss of time.
4. The rapid and constant changes in information technology require teachers and students to be flexible adapt rapidly the new tools and learn new skills.
5. Besides, the pedagogical use of technology implies readjusting teaching methods to a new learning situation which often promotes autonomy and learner centered approach.

We have noticed that the ideas that McLaren and others set are still with a fear by the use of technology in the English class. On the other hand, we believe that according to the rapid changes that are running in the modern world, and because of the generational change and the new needs, it is important to implement the use of technology in our classrooms. New generations are born with the computer almost in their hands, and the use of new technologies is part of their daily lives, we cannot this feature, therefore, the use of technology in the English class is demanding.

Also, McLaren and others (2005, p. 560) believe that “The term *technology* and *new technologies*” refer to those resources that have evolved from the development of information technology and computers. Also, and according to these authors, “The educational field has greatly influenced by these changes and at the same can be observed in the area of teaching and learning English as a foreign or a second language” (p. 560). This is why, based on the ideas of these same authors, “...the vast globalization of economy, business, and culture, has led to the world-wide spread of English, and consequently technology is one of the most impelling reasons for learning English in the new century”. In other words, teaching-learning English in Costa Rica, or in any other country, has always been associated with the economical development of the country.

In Costa Rica, as it was widely studied in a doctoral dissertation carried out by Marín (2004), there have always been a very close relation between the economical development of the country with the learning of English. Historically speaking, every time Costa Rica has wanted to make a change in its economic structure, the first thing addressed is the learning of English. Because of this fact, undoubtedly, this language learning, in Costa Rica and perhaps in other countries in the world, has a symbolical meaning.

EDUCATION IN THE XX CENTURY

In the XX century, education was mostly addressed to “create” isolated individuals, memory played an important role because students had to “learn by hard”. Besides education was registered under the positivism paradigm. In the teaching of English, students were exposed to routine situations in which specific linguistic expressions were associated with recurring actions and procedures.

METHODS - APPROACHES APPLIED IN COSTA RICA IN THE XX CENTURY

Some methods or approaches were well known and used, such as grammar-translation approach, Direct Approach, Reading Approach, Audiolingual Approach; and, after the 70's, in Costa Rica, the Communicative Functional National Approach was introduced and applied. Most of these approaches, mainly applied during the first 70 years of this century, were taught in the students' mother language, with little practice in the oral communicative skills of the target language. Vocabulary was taught in the form of isolated word lists. Elaborate explanations of grammar were always provided. Grammar supplied the rules for putting words together. Sometimes, also, grammar was taught inductively-rules were generalized from the practice and experience with the target language. Memorization of set phrases and over-learning was also

applied, besides, structures were sequenced and taught one at a time, and structural patterns were taught using repetitive drills.

COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH IN THE XXI CENTURY IN COSTA RICA

In the XXI century, in Costa Rica at least, the most used approach is the communicative approach. In these first twelve years of the century, this approach main purpose is not grammar but the communication, the grammar contents are not left aside. When using the communicative approach the entire class takes place in English to maximize the students' exposure to the language. The Ministry of Education in Costa Rica favors to the use of the communicative approach, but unfortunately, many English teachers continue with the use of old methods, even with the grammar translation one.

The more of the 200 foreign companies Costa Rica has, have asked and required employees with a very acceptable knowledge of listening and speaking linguistic abilities. Because of this fact, English is being taught since the elementary school level. During the middle of the 90's, in Costa Rica, and with the arrival of the first foreign companies, there was a huge curricular change in the country, just to please the new necessities of the foreign companies.

When applying the communicative approach, it, first, helps to the development of the listening and speaking skills. Second, it contributes to the involvement of students in their own learning process. An third, it is activity-based, interactive and learner-centred, and it encourages learners to use the language as much as possible for real and purposeful communication, in real-life or realistic situations.

TEACHERS' ROLE WHEN USING COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

When using the Communicative Approach the teacher has two main roles:

- To facilitate the communication process in the classroom.
- To act as independent participant within the learning-teaching group.

Besides, the teacher is also expected:

- to act as a recourse,
- to be an organizer of resources,
- to be motivator,

- to be counselor,
- to be a guide,
- to be an analyst and researcher.

STUDENTS' ROLE WHEN USING COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH

- The classroom should be learner centered.
- The learner is a negotiator.
- The learner is an interactor who gives as well as takes.
- The learner cannot be only a listener but a speaker, through him or her when the class is developed.

MATERIALS IN A COMMUNICATIVE ENVIRONMENT

The materials that have to be used when the Communicative approach is applied, it could be grouped in four basics:

- **Text-based materials:** practice, exercises, reading passages, gaps fills, recordings, etc.
- **Task-based materials:** game boards, role plays, materials for drillings, pair work tasks, cards, etc.
- **Realia:** magazines, newspapers, maps (things for the real world outside the classroom).
- **Technologies:** The most fundamental technologies could be:
 - Email.
 - Web access.
 - Digital reference materials (videos, blogs, cell phones, Internet, pictures, dialogues, conversations, news, and all mobile gadgets to improve learning in the classroom, such as tablets, smartphone's and e readers.

HOW TO APPLY STUDENTS' TECHNOLOGICAL GADGETS IN AN ENGLISH CLASS

Many are the students' technological gadgets they usually bring to the classroom. Those could be cell phones, eBooks, tablets and smartphones.

Cell Phones

Cell phones can be used for many interesting and encouraging activities in an English class.

For example, they can be used for group discussions via text messaging, and since so many cell phones have cameras, they are useful for photography-based projects as well. Students can also record themselves reading stories aloud for writers' workshops or practicing speeches.

EBooks readers

Their fundamental function is for reading books and storing entire libraries. They also provide easy access to dictionaries.

Mp3 and portable media players

Free lectures and short videos are available for downloading via iTunes U app, or on the Internet at sites such as Brainpop.com, which has animated educational videos. Apps can also be downloaded onto the devices and many are equipped with cameras students can use to shoot and to post a website.

Tablets

They can do anything eBook readers can do with tablets. Students can surf the Web, play games, watch (and even make) movies, as well as take photographs.

Smartphones

Smartphones have many computer-like functions. Then can run Apps and Software, record audio and video, send and receive emails and texts.

CONCLUSION

The following information that will be offered at this section has a main purpose: to reflect about the importance educators' mission has. In the past 5 years, according to studies done, the digital universe has grown by 1 000 %, 46 % of teachers say their homework requires technology and 94% of students say they use technology to do homework. Besides, Google handles 1 billion queries every single day. Today, there are more than 450,000 words in the English language that is 7 times what Shakespeare could have used.

Today, teachers must be motivators, mentors, entrepreneurs, innovators, illuminators and catalysts. Preparing students for the XXI century is not about technology or skills for the global economy. Therefore, XXI century education is about collaboration, creativity, cultural awareness, problem solving, innovation, civic engagement, communication, productivity, collaboration, accountability, responsibility, leadership, and cultural awareness.

In the next 10 years (2013), blackboards, CD's, desks, grades, lockers, textbooks, report cards may be obsolete. Currently, students can keyboard 60 words /minute, they use Twitter, Facebook and text messaging, instead of email. Every textbook a child will carry throughout their education will fit on a tablet weighting less than 300 g.

Finally at today's rate of change, technology will experience 20 000 years of growth. Therefore, Education must be adapted to a changing world, what we teach has to change as well. Today, pens and papers have changed and it will continue to change. Consequently, we, educators must keep pace and stay relevant to keep students engaged, because, XXI century learning must be student centred and personalized, provide experiences and opportunities to apply knowledge, be accessible 7 days/week. Besides, the students will use a multitude of technologies to access content, demonstrate mastery, publish their work, maintain a portfolio of their skills, and interact with the world. Creation means blogging, podcasting, animating, planning, recording, designing and programming. Are we already prepared to face this truth? If not, what will you do?

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