

## LITERARY METHOD AS A STYLE OF NONFORMAL LEARNING

VITOMIR RADOSAVLJEVIĆ

ICT College of Vocational Studies, Belgrade, vitomir.radosavljevic@ict.edu.rs

DANKA PEVAC

ICT College of Vocational Studies, Belgrade, danka.pevac@ict.edu.rs

**Abstract:** A survey of nonformal methods of learning is given in this paper. Here are explained terms such as formal, nonformal and informal learning, and terms T-learning, M-learning. The stress in this paper is put on presenting the literary method of learning. The main principles of this method and the possible ways of its implementation within the e-teaching materials are described. The obtained results of using this method in teaching process in ICT College of Vocational Studies are presented and analyzed. Particular conclusions confirm that the significant improvements in teaching process are achieved by using the literary method.

**Keywords:** E-learning, Nonformal learning, Literary method of learning

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The process of education and personal development is considered today as one of the core elements in the society and presents the base for society progress and development. Having this in mind it does not surprise us that there are efforts in finding and developing new ways of transferring knowledge. The quality of knowledge is as important as the method of knowledge distribution itself. Demand for a quick and effective knowledge transfer is becoming the imperative need. The development of Internet and computer networks have significantly made it easier to realize the set goals. Learning by use of Internet and services based on Internet technologies offer new possibilities for a quick and more efficient knowledge transfer.

A technical progress above all has given the base for distance learning, but it has also opened the path for development of new ways of knowledge transfer. Thus, has brought so called nonformal and informal methods of learning to the fore. Mentioned methods differ greatly from the conventional forms of knowledge transfer. A great creative potential is hidden within these methods. So, within these nonformal ways of learning styles new projects using virtual environment (such as Vill@ge project), T-learning - using television, M-learning - using mobile phones and a literary method of learning. have appeared.

In this paper a stress is put on the literary method. After the introduction, in the second chapter, a description of formal, nonformal and informal methods of learning is given. In the third chapter are presented some forms of nonformal learning. In the fourth chapter a description of the literary method is given, as well as first results and conclusions about the effects of its implementation. A conclusion is given at the end summing up impressions,

which could benefit to a further development of the mentioned area.

### 2. FORMS OF LEARNING

#### 2.1 Formal education and learning

Formal education presents a system of education which is organized and run or supervised by the state or state institutions no matter who the establisher were, a state or private parties. Knowledge and skills are in a minor degree adapted to an individual and are obtained according the plan and program previously defined. Knowledge is adopted gradually regarding the age. Formal education is changing more slowly in accordance with the society needs and that is actually its main disadvantage. Institutions for formal education are preparatory institutions (kindergartens), primary schools, secondary schools, higher schools and universities. These institutions monitor, plan and develop everything under the authority of the appropriate Ministries. The way knowledge is transferred to students in this type of educational institutions is often referred as formal. Formal learning is usually associated with the work in a classroom, where a teacher communicates with students. Students follow the teacher's lecture, get knowledge and deduct the conclusions on the basis of a lesson, which was presented by the teacher. The teacher's lecture has its strict structure and its lecture plan is clearly defined and not accessible to any changes. The final goal is numerical evaluation of obtained knowledge. At the end of a course the student gets a certificate.

#### 2.2 Nonformal education and learning

Opposite to formal education, there are educational institutions which are not within the state educational system, state institutions and/or competent Ministry. Such educational institutions are considered as nonformal educational institutions in the narrow sense. In the wider

sense, all educational institutions, where the teaching process is realized through teaching forms, that are not directly connected with the classical (formal) types of teaching, can be considered as non-formal. Forms of learning used in this type of education are not strictly defined. Very often they imply teaching outside the classroom. Nonformal learning can be imposed on by an institution, which isn't formally an educational institution. Its goal is most often mastering certain skills. Typical for nonformal education is the existence of voluntary attendance of students at courses and seminars. Course attendance is not age or pre-education dependent. Certification for the acquired knowledge and skills is mostly not obligatory in this type of learning.

Although this type of learning is different from the formal approach in many aspects, there are some tangent points of nonformal and formal types of learning. Nonformal methods of learning can compensate the educational process in aspects which haven't been achieved by formal learning. As well as formal types of education the nonformal education represents the structural process of learning. This process within formal types of education is organized with clearly defined goals, clearly defined time organization of lectures, and as such is an activity with the determined aim and goal. One of the key aspects of learning methods within nonformal types of learning is a higher motivation of students for their work, and very often it gives an emotional answer to an increased complacency of the studied area [7]. In order to apply nonformal types of learning into the process of education it is necessary to provide the appropriate creative approach to teaching material, means for presenting that material and means which help a student to become a part of this educational process. The chosen approach must be adapted to the goal group and must be flexible enough to be adoptable to an individual needs. One should also take into account appropriate cultural parameters of the environment, where this nonformal pattern of teaching materials will be realized, and one should provide the suitable surrounding for learning, where a student will feel relaxed and safe.

### 2.3 Informal learning

Informal learning is a type of learning which comes out of every day's life. It is connected with job activities, activities in private life and with those activities that an individual does in its free time. Skills adopted in the family, life surrounding, Medias, such as television, radio and internet can be considered to be informal forms of learning. This form of learning has no structure. The learning process is often spontaneous, without clearly defined goals and it doesn't provide a certificate at the end of the learning process. Accidental learning is also considered to be a form of informal learning. It is a form of learning which is not planned at all. It is often unconscious, is a result of other activities. Those terms "nonformal learning" and "informal learning" are often treated as synonyms. Although they are "on the other side" of formal learning, those terms nonformal and informal learning could be and should be distinguished.

The given forms of education and learning bring with them some adequate methods of learning which are used to hand over knowledge and skills to students. These applied methods of learning are not exclusively connected with just one form of learning. Certain methods can be found in formal, nonformal and informal types of learning.

### 3. NONFORMAL LEARNING METHODS IN E-LEARNING

Since the great number of courses and teaching materials are available to the wide population through e-learning over the Internet, an accent is put on the possibility to implement nonformal elements of learning into the e-learning process of distant learning. The most often way to implement nonformal elements in e-learning process is by applying different multimedia contents (video clips, animations, pictures, sound), which enrich the existing formal surrounding.

There are projects such as *Vill@ge* project [2], where the totally virtual surrounding is created and where interface video games are permeated by elements of nonformal and informal education. *Vill@ge* project is planned as an electronic platform for studying foreign languages, meant for children in primary and secondary schools and for higher education students. It has been realized within *Second Life* virtual surrounding [3]. Within this virtual surrounding all participants, both students and teachers, are able to communicate and visit places from the virtual surrounding, participate in group and individual activities, and use different languages in their communication. The communication itself is determined by the surrounding events in the virtual surrounding, cultural and social characteristics. This way, participants enter into mutual communication trying to give support to the real life communication. This approach has shown a good response to one part of younger population which shows an interest for videogames and virtual surrounding [4].

The other approach to nonformal methods of learning is an introduction of digital television into a learning process. This kind of educational process is marked as T-learning [5]. This expression T-learning has come out of a TV-learning. It consists of an interactive use of a huge number of teaching video materials obtained at home through digital television. T-learning organization is meant to be a bridge between e-learning and watching educational series on television. The idea of using television in the educational process had existed before the era of digital television, but it was only after the appearance of digital television that the interactivity of an individual with other participants in the process of learning has been enabled. Video materials which have been enriched by different animations, additional texts and the possibility to work in a group had made a basis to realize the idea of nonformal learning with a help of digital television, T-learning. The type of nonformal learning which becomes more and more important is m-learning [6]. M-learning presents some sort of a distant e-learning, which uses mobile apparatuses in the process of education. Mobile phones, mp 3, mp 4, PDA apparatuses

and other hand-held apparatuses are set into the educational process in order to make students mobile. The goal of using those mobile apparatuses gives students opportunity to have an access to educational multimedia materials at any time and any place. M-learning is a type of nonformal learning and it is meant to be a complementary form to other types of learning in the educational process and cannot be the primary carrier of the educational process. The use of M-learning was seen in giving tests through mobile phones and sending certain materials and information over mobile phones, making the search of databases, which contain teaching materials concerning the field of interest, easier as well as to supply an easier and quicker exchange of information among participants in the educational process. Positive aspects of M-learning were mostly seen in developing the awareness of using new technologies in our educational process. Technical and technological aspects are very important for using M-learning. To be able to put this method into a practice it is necessary to have good technical support of operators and providers, who will enable all participants to use suitable apparatuses and appliances to support applications in M-learning.

#### 4. LITERARY ELEMENTS IN FUNCTION OF INFORMAL TYPES OF LEARNING

If the stress is put on teaching materials, the style used for writing a lesson can be used as a criteria to define a type of nonformal learning method.

Most often is the text of a lesson written in a formal language and as such is adapted to the majority of population and is suitable to be followed by the majority of students. Implementation of some literary stories into e-lessons represents the type of nonformal learning, which can be implemented in the process of e-learning. That is how the rigid formal style of presenting teaching materials can be transformed into a more dynamic literary story. The story will contain some elements of a teaching unit that a lesson should provide. Regardless the fact that lessons were presented in a form of a literary story they should also provide systematic approach to teaching materials, so that it is presented in a logical order, and not ad hoc. The lesson structure and learning process should be clearly defined. Only lessons which were organized this way could be submitted to systematic quality check. Besides presenting the teaching materials in a form of a literary story it is also recommended that the author should answer some questions in that text, which are the most often dilemmas among students in the field they are dealing with, on the basis of his/her previous experiences. The teacher should also point out the most frequent mistakes made by students.

This kind of lesson presentation demands an extra creativity of a teacher/author, as well as some literary skills, which will be used to pass on the knowledge. Also the style of writing and topics should be in accordance with students' age depending who those materials have been provided for. The text should be written in a dynamic rhythm, so to keep a constant attention of readers. Cultural surrounding in which the plot is set and

which is used to present teaching materials should be familiar to a reader/student.

The use of informal language should change the approach to the text which is being read. It is expected that a student won't approach this text as a classical lesson from a textbook, which is to be read and learnt, but he will approach it as a popular literary text which arises an interest by its content and can that way contribute inner motivation. This approach can change student attitudes toward learning. Since learning is most effective when an individual is ready to learn, actually when it wants to learn something [8], it is expected that nonformal approach to lessons shown through the literary content will intensify inner motivation to follow it.

Here presented premises were used as a foundation which enabled the implementation of the mentioned method into the e-course „Digital picture processing 1“, which is attended by students of the first and second year at High Vocational Studies ICT in Belgrade. Hundred and two (102) students of three study programs (Telecommunication, Internet Technologies, and Postal and Banking Technologies) attended the course in the period from January till March 2012. Students followed e-lessons in first four weeks of the course where the literary learning method of curriculum was implemented, and then in the next four weeks they followed e-lessons, where formal methods of curriculum were implemented. During the whole course lectures were held by the course professor side by side with e-lessons. In the sixth week of the course students had to fill in an anonymous questionnaire and express their opinion about the literary method of writing lessons. The most relevant results of the questionnaire are shown in the continuation of the teaching process.

The majority of students being asked to fill in the questionnaire (89%) were at the age between 20 and 22. They all use computers and Internet mastering a medium and advanced skills level.

Being asked if they could easily follow an e-lessons in a form of a story, 68% of questioned students gave a positive answer, 23% answered that they could follow some parts easily, and some with difficulty, whereas only 9% answered that they had difficulties to follow this method of presenting curriculum (Image 1).

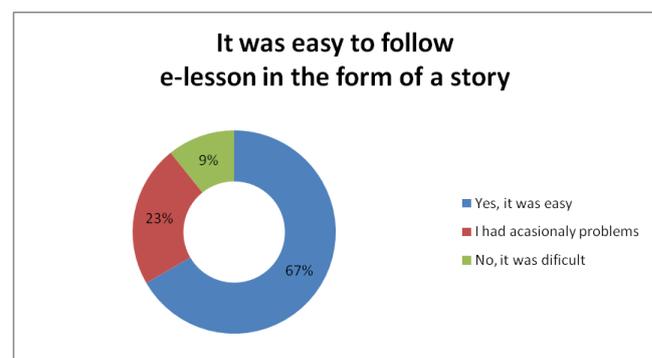
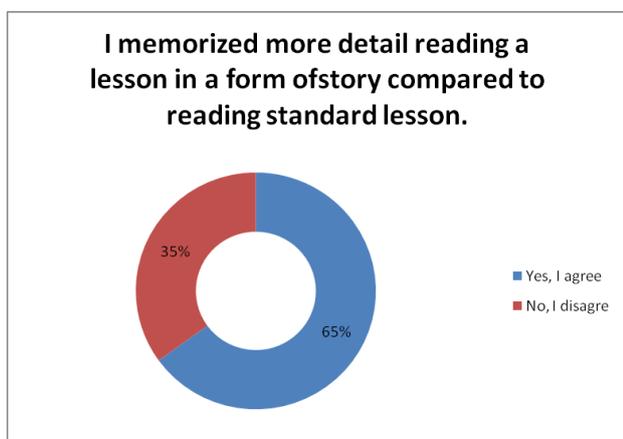


Image 1: Comprehension issues

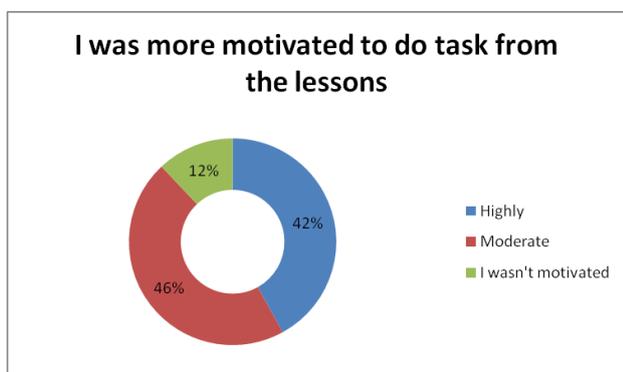
Being asked if it was more interesting and more dynamic to read a lesson in a form of a story than a lesson written in a standard (formal) way, 82% of all questioned students gave a positive answer.

Being asked whether they had memorized more details reading an e-lesson in a form of a story compared to reading a standard lesson taught in a formal way, an average of 65% positive answers was got (Image 2). It must be pointed out that the students from the study program of Postal and Banking Technologies have higher percentage of positive answers to this question (78%), whereas students from the study program of Telecommunications and Internet technologies had 53% and 63% respectively.



**Image 2:** Memorisation issues

Regarding motivation to do the tasks, which are mentioned in e-lessons, 88% of all students have shown higher motivation in a smaller or higher degree, and again has the motivation for work grown significantly among the students from Postal and Banking Technologies curriculum compared to students from other study curriculums (Image 3).

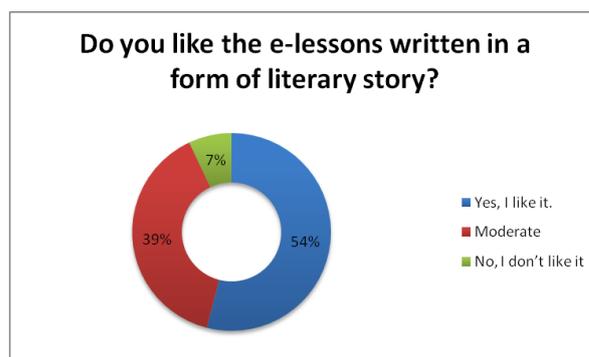


**Image 3:** Motivation issues

Since the lessons have been written in a form of a story one question in the questionnaire was concerning the plot of the story. Being asked whether the story plot

was familiar to them, 87% of students gave a positive answer.

Finally, the overall impression that has been made on students by e-lessons, was summed up in a question whether they liked e-lessons written in a story-form. In average 54% of questioned students gave an assessment that they liked lessons „very much“, 39% assessed them as „moderate“, and only 7% of questioned students gave negative assessment of e-lessons in a story-form (Image 4). Students from the study program of Postal and Banking Technologies have in higher percentage expressed their positive attitude (73%) compared to students from the study program of Telecommunications and Internet, whose positive assessment was at the rate of 48% and 41%.



**Image 4:** Overall impression of the literary method

## 5. CONCLUSION

The literary method of presenting lessons has made a positive impression on students. The described method was evaluated as an interesting way of presenting curriculum, and as a main advantage of this nonformal method, was pointed out, that it raised an interest to follow e-lessons content. Students' motivation has also slightly risen. A certain number of students rejected this method and did not give a positive assessment of the literary method. Those results have been expected and are explained by certain feeling of uneasiness, which is usual, when new ideas and new ways of learning are being introduced into the educational process. It has been observed that there is a correlation between students orientation towards certain study areas and an acceptance of the literary method of learning. Students from the study program of Postal and Banking Technologies have much better accepted this learning method and have expressed a positive attitude towards it compared with students from other study curriculums: Telecommunications and Internet Technologies. Students of Postal and Banking Technologies, who are above all oriented to study areas connected to society and economics sciences, more often and easier accept literary contents compared to students from other study programs: Telecommunications and Internet Technologies., who are dealing more with technical and technological contents.

The literary method has a good base for further development and can become one significant form of nonformal methods of learning. It can express its

effectiveness very well within e-learning materials. Nevertheless, the method is in its beginning phase of research and it is necessary to develop and examine it further on, so that the fully potentials of the method is gained.

## LITERATURE

- [1] V.Radosavljević, D.Pevac, "Implementation of informal e-learning methods", 2012.
- [2] <http://village.exodus.gr/>
- [3] <http://secondlife.com/>
- [4] Klara Szabo, "Virtual Reality for language learning: An international on-line project"
- [5] Päivi Aarreniemi-Jokipelto, "T-learning Model for Learning via Digital TV"
- [6] Jill Attewell, "Mobile technologies and learning - A technology update and m-learning project summary"
- [7] Ruth Smith, Motivational Factors in E-Learning, George Washington University, 2008.
- [8] Deborah Picar , E-Learning and Motivation, 2004
- [9] Gabriel Campeanu, "Mobile learning-The new approach of the electronic learning based systems", 2011.