

Innovative Teaching Practice: Traditional and Alternative Methods (Challenges and Implications)

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ABSTRACT

The relevance of the present issue is caused by the strong need in alternative methods of learning foreign language and the need in language training and retraining for the modern professionals. The aim of the article is to identify the basic techniques and skills in using various modern techniques in the context of modern educational tasks. The leading method of study is the simulation that allows considering this issue as a process of targeted, informed and mastering the use of alternative methods of language training. The article presents the alternative methods of formation the linguistic skills, significantly raising efficiency of the learning / teaching process. The model is aimed in adapting to the new conditions of teachers of professional activity in the field of education and focuses on the development and introduction into practice teaching and using the new methods.

KEYWORDS

Learning technology, foreign language education, traditional, second language education, language integration

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 15 May 2016
Revised 16 June 2016
Accepted 21 June 2016

Introduction

Dialogue of Cultures, rapprochement and mutual enrichment of science and art, science and religion, the integration of scientific, technical, humanitarian and artistic and aesthetic education, the synthesis of discursive and emotionally shaped, systemic approach is synergistic and non-linear thinking are the essential conditions allowing to realize the potential of education, and it should be in the dominant sound. Integration process may occur in the already existing

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system; in this case it leads to higher levels of organization and its integrity, as well as to the new system of elements previously disconnected. Thus, during the integration process qualitatively new education system is formed. Recently, much attention and discussion has been evident in terms of the manner and process of providing foreign language education and teaching. Recent developments enhanced role of technology and implementing complex practices, have activated a series of radical changes in the process of teaching.

Science Integration suggests a new type of interaction that requires the presence of an appropriate set of prerequisites both of theoretical and practical nature. Integration of scientific knowledge in the content of education reflects the partial or complete Interscience interaction. This mechanism of integration is the foundation for designing new educational content. Different levels of sciences integration must comply with various integrated courses at different levels. Proper goal setting determines the strategy of integrating the study of subjects of a scientific field (natural, human, and technical) and goals of integrated courses.

E. Atkinson (Atkinson et al., 1996) argued that there are various innovative teaching practices that should be adopted to improve the educational aspect. Specifically, consideration should be given into both the theoretical and empirical skills and the general redesign and modernize the traditional curricula as well as implement teaching practices that will facilitate the development of the necessary skills and competencies (verbal or written) to allow students to tackle language problems in the real world. A key requirement for the future is the need to prepare students to participate in the information society, where knowledge is the most crucial factor in the social and the economic development of a country (Seale & Mence, 2001). The adoption of new Information Technologies and Communication has led to significant changes in both the structure and the functionality of foreign language education. The introduction of new technologies led to the development and dissemination of Electronic learning (e-learning) and distance learning courses thereby offering a new dimension to the provision and content of education. This is evident across Universities and Open Universities in particular where new technologies now play a dominant role.

Indeed, the use of new technologies of Information and Communication transforms traditional teaching and assists the adaptation of new curricula and new courses in existing applications. The following review of the relevant literature aims at identifying and discussing the various arguments found, the views of students on the teaching methods, the challenges and the implications for future employment that arise in light of the mentioned developments.

Methodological Framework

According to versatility in EFL, the programs provide differentiated content according to the profile, the development of professionally directed skills within a certain area of knowledge, and the introduction of integrated courses. Integrated character of EFL contents facilitate the implementation of interdisciplinary coordination, integration of knowledge about the actual problems of interaction between society and nature, which allows to create not only the ability to synthesize and summarize the knowledge, but also to the process of communication.

Bringing knowledge and skills from the sphere of other disciplines leads to all-round development and changes the content of EFL. Interference methods of EFL improve the absorption of all the educational material. Development of ESL courses ensures educational materials, selection of appropriate learning technologies, organization of educational process, evaluation of educational achievements of students of the results are in the competence of the teacher. From experience it is clear that teachers are not sufficiently aware of the specifics of profile training ESL, experience difficulties related to the selection and methodical organization of learning content based on the profile. In this connection there is need for the formation of teachers' competence for the implementation of integrative education.

Preparation of the teachers to work in ESL requires defining the objectives and content of the training, selection of professionally significant abilities, which are subject to the formation, as well as ways of personal development and the development of training facilities and monitoring the level of formation of its professional-methodical competence of the system. The individual subject teaching in ESL is unthinkable without a thorough purposeful development between knowledge and skills acquired from other disciplines. It follows that the stable interconnection of the association are the psychological basis of this teaching.

Literature Review

The teaching of foreign languages has been done, mostly, by traditional or slightly sophisticated teacher-centred methods rather than modern student-oriented applications and techniques while the transmission of knowledge and information has been realized with the usual form of lectures or discussions requiring physical presence of both student and the teacher. Furthermore the teaching methods used may differ in terms of the degree of influence on active learning (Cottel & Millis, 1993; Bonner, 1999) as shown below.

At the outset of this paper, we want the reader to note that we brought our own understandings of alternative methods, culture teaching, and culture learning to this task. Our views have been strongly influenced by the writings of J.E. Alatis (1989), M.Wesche & D. Ready (1985), P.D. MacIntyre & R.C. Gardner, (1991), M. Byram (1989), and A. Pennycook (1990), all of whom have proposed models for integrating alternative and traditional language teaching culture. These works share a common conceptual core and set of intricately related assumptions regarding the teaching and learning of culture. Due to the fact that our model of alternative learning served as the benchmark for evaluating the literature, we feel it is essential to present it to the reader.

Nevertheless, active learning involves students and helps them to have an in-depth understanding of the course through induction of practice; in other words, the inductive teaching has better results than productive teaching (Adler, 1999). Moreover, it has been argued that inductive methods increase the consolidation and conservation of a subject as well as the assessment and evaluation of performance with better subsequent future career paths for students studying a given subject from a book (Kelley et al., 1999).

C.C. Bonwell and J. Eison (1991) have proposed several techniques to support and promote active learning:

- The use of visual media during the lectures (video, multimedia, slides).

- The encouragement of students to take notes during lectures.
- The use of computers during teaching.
- The encouragement of students to solve problems during the case study.
- The use of simulations, role playing and various graphics.
- The use of collaborative learning.

Regarding the key question about what should be the selection criterion for the “correct” active learning method adopted for teaching foreign languages, S. Bonner (1999) states that the teacher who designates (short and long) learning goals has to evaluate the theoretical knowledge and abilities (skills) of the students to be able to choose the method(s) that promote(s) the process of learning. L.B. Zane and L. Muilenburg (2000) introduce the concept of the "in-depth learning" according to which, a specific approach that promotes a deeper understanding of the subject, rather than superficial learning, is required.

However, learning is largely determined by the motivation of the students too; to improve the process of teaching and learning as well as the understanding of the subject, specific strategies and educational techniques should be developed that take into account also, what motivates students and how these motivators can be strengthened.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study was to analyze the traditional and innovative/alternative methods for teaching and learning the foreign language; as well as to reveal and prove a set of effective pedagogical conditions for learning languages.

Research questions

The overarching research question of this study was as follows:

What are the set of effective innovative methods for learning and teaching the foreign languages?

Traditional Teaching Methods: Community Based Method

The American psychologist Charles Curran (1972) developed the “Community-method / Advisor method”, which is based on a humanistic approach to learning and the psychological theory of Adviser. The essence of theory lies in the fact that people need help from psychologist counselor, and consultation and participation are desired in any form of social human activity, in education as well. The following features are the basic characteristics of "Community" method:

- Students should play the leading role in the organization and the course design according to the humanistic approach; students determine the content of teaching and choosing their own pace and mode of operation.
- The teacher should be the “Adviser,” who prompts students to the phrase they need to communicate in a foreign language. In this role “Adviser” he/she should not claim to be the leader or the head of the educational process; should not force students to take part in the process of communication/interaction. The teacher must be the native speaker or possessing the excellent command in the foreign language, as in the process of communication the students are entitled to request any relevant information.

- The training program doesn't design specifically as the learning process is developed in such a way that the students spontaneously choose the topic of interest and language tools.

- The main technique of learning is the translation from the mother language into a foreign language.

- The learning process is constructed as follow: students work-group as they sit around the table facing each other and discuss the topic in their native language. Then begins the dialogue in a foreign language. Teacher is sitting on the sidelines and watching the discussion, and offering foreign language equivalents from time to time. Students repeat the phrase several times, and then record it on a tape recorder to listen to, if necessary.

Proponents of the "community" method specify of truly humanistic character, focus on the individual student and the lack of stress in the process of studying. Using this method requires especially highly trained teachers, as schools and university teachers of foreign language are not psychologists, and can not use the appropriate psychological techniques. Lack of programs and plans, specific objectives, and learning objectives of the course are also not conducive to the wide dissemination of this method, especially in the mass of high school.

Traditional Teaching Methods: Suggestopedia

Suggestopedia is a teaching method developed by the Bulgarian psychotherapist Georgi Lozanov (1978). It is used mostly to learn foreign languages. The theory applied positive suggestion in teaching when it was developed in the 1970s. Suggestopedia gets its name from the term "suggestologiya" - the science of the suggestion and "suggestopeadiya" - suggestology section devoted to the theory and practice of suggestion in teaching. A distinctive feature of this method is the disclosure of memory reserves, raising the intellectual activity, the use of suggestion, relaxation. This method is based on the activation of a person's reserve capacity that is not used in pedagogy and methods of teaching a foreign language, but can significantly increase the amount of memory and contribute to memorize more material per unit of time. The basic means for activating human reserve capabilities by G. Lozanov (1978), are as follows:

- Authority. Teacher's personality plays a leading role in the learning process. Certain qualities that a teacher must possess (self-confidence, the ability to conduct a lesson in accordance with the method, appearance, enthusiasm, etc.), enhance his/her authority and help to win the students' favor, which is necessary for successful learning.

- Infantilization. It is defined as "the creation of the environment as the rationally organized team, with the result that students are in a favorable for learning conditions of mutual trust are exempted from the stress and harshness." The use of role-playing games, music, and a comfortable environment allow students to gain a sense of self-confidence, provide opportunities for learning/studying.

- Double-Planedness. This means that the teacher or the student uses gestures, facial expressions, intonation, and a certain manner of behavior patterns in order to influence the interlocutor, to win over others. This duality,

or the second "I" contributes to credibility, as well as in helping the emancipation, relaxation.

- Intonation, rhythm, and concert pseudo-passiveness. According Suggestopedia, the hearing should be organized in a specific way. Certain requirements for the intonation and rhythm. Text material "marks" a teacher in a certain rhythm, accompanied by specially selected music. Music, as well as intonation, rhythm must have clear frequency, and promote relaxation and meditation, which lead students in a state of so-called "concert pseudo-passiveness" when they better perceive and remember the material.

Traditional Teaching Methods: Intensive Methods

Suggestopedia method G. Lozanova initiated the development of a number of soviet technique of intensive methods, the main methods are: the individual and the cooperative method of reserve capacity activation G.A. Kitaigorodskaya (2009), the immersion method by A.S. Plesnevich (2005), hypnopedia, ritmopediya, relaxopediya and others. As the learning objectives of intensive methods of teaching the authors put forward verbal communication in the shortest possible time within the maximum concentration hours.

Intensive methods emerged in response to the social array. The first intensive courses arose during the Second World War (Army method) and were focused on the training of military specialists. Supporters for intensive methods rethought and developed many provisions of Lozanov's method. Therefore, G.A Kitaygorodskaya (2009) pays special attention to the student's identity, his creative and intellectual potential, and his role in the group.

The method of reserve capacity activation by G.A. Kitaygorodskaya (2009) brings the intensive methods of learner-centered approach and considers learning as a process of communication/dialogue, which is in the nature of the teacher and the students mutually mediated activity, when the teaching has played a leading role in comparison with training. G.A.Kitaygorodskaya (2009) reviewing the content of the term "authority" and speaks of the teacher's creative role, creating a relationship of trust between the teacher and the group, which contribute to the motivation and the emotional tone of the audience, provide the disclosure provisions of the individual student. Activation method is based on the following principles: duality; phased-concentric organization of employment; overall use of all means of influence on the students' consciousness; oral advance; the use of individual learning through the group; interaction and role-playing elements of personal learning. Some elements of this method are widely used in the practice of teaching foreign languages in Russia.

Suggestopedia method, as well as all intensive methods, is of great interest among students and teachers, as is aimed to train through dialogue in a short time, and the results are noticeable after just a few sessions. The negative side of these methods lies in the fact that it is abounding with errors, and in the process of communication it makes difficult to understand. In addition, the use of intensive techniques requires special training for teachers.

In this regard, we must distinguish the concept of "intensive methods" and "intensification of the learning process." Intensification of training involves improving the educational process efficiency within the same or less amount of time. Efficiency itself depends on the learning accuracy. Accuracy in training involves adequate mastery of all kinds of speech activity in accordance with the

communication situation; the absence of errors at the level of language and speech. Intensive methods are oriented to achieve maximum results, without taking into account the accuracy of training.

Alternative Teaching Methods: The Silent Way

The method of "silent" training (The silent way) is based on the structural approach in linguistics and humanist trend in psychology. The author of this method is K. Gatteno (1963), who stimulated his experience in creating programs to teach math and reading in their native language on the methodology of teaching foreign languages.

The method's name reflects the idea that the initiative in the classroom should come from students, whose speech occupies most of the training time, and the teacher has to speak in the classroom as little as possible. Education in silence, is opposed to the teacher's repetition and reproduction, it is an approach, which promotes mental activity and students' concentration in the quest. Application of the "quiet" training has its limitations, as it implies a high degree of students' interest and the availability of internal motivation, which is not always feasible in a secondary school. A positive feature is to stimulate students' independence and the use of the learning process a variety of visual aids.

Alternative Teaching Methods: Total Physical Response

Method of support on physical activities is designed by psychologist J.J. Asher (1969), and is based on structural linguistics, behaviorism, and humanistic orientation in education, as well as the attitude of the psychology of speech, coordination, and physical activities that accompany it. The method develops the ideas of natural method. Its essence lies in the fact that when learning a foreign language is necessary to simulate the process of mastering the mother tongue, which is mastered in parallel with the implementation of appropriate physical activities. Perception of structures is getting easier if it is accompanied by acts performed by teacher and students.

Alternative Teaching Methods: Computer Assisted Language Learning

Learning a foreign language using a computer is based on behaviorist theory and student-centered approach to teaching. Computer training is widespread in foreign language teaching methodology due to the development of an individual approach to learning achievements in the field of programmed learning and computational linguistics, machine translation research opportunities. The widespread dissemination of the computers in modern life, as well as the teachers' proficiency; allow speaking about using the computer in teaching as a direction in methodology of teaching foreign languages.

The first computer programs that appeared in 1960-70 years were grammatical and lexical exercises. In 70 years, developers have begun to pay more attention to the content of these programs. Research in the field of artificial intelligence has allowed improving the program significantly, and directing it to the students' communicative abilities formation. However, the problem of the communicative focus is still important. Currently, the following software groups are:

- training programs for individual work at home or in the computer labs, focused on the grammatical forms acquisition, lexical units, speech patterns, as

well as programs for learning to read and write that involve the use of a text editor;

- text of the program for individual, pair and group work, allowing to modify the text: to place punctuation, regroup, proposals, edit text, etc .;
- gaming software, built on the problematic situations and promote the students' motivation.

Many methodists and researchers believe that the computer programs are wonderful, interesting, increase motivation, contribute to the competence development, but they are not intended for the communicative competence formation in all its diversity and won't be able to replace the teacher in the classroom.

Alternative Teaching Methods: Consciousness - Raising Approach

Consciously oriented approach is based on an awareness of the linguistic forms phenomena - lexical and grammatical - and is based on contrastive linguistics data and an inductive method of language acquisition. The approach was developed for teaching grammar: to master the grammatical skills was seen as a gradual realization. The approach has much in common with the conscious and comparative method, which is based on the fact that the process thinking in all languages is the same, only different in the forms of expression provided by different linguistic means.

Proponents of this approach are trying to reconcile the two trends in education: traditional and "non-traditional."

In the process of language acquisition the student must make their way from the current understanding of linguistic phenomena to the unconscious and to the total control of unconsciousness at the stage of perfection, if he continues to study a foreign language after school and is committed to a level close to the level of ownership of a native speaker. The apparent advantage of this approach is the focus on unconscious language acquisition; focus on the use of the studied phenomena in the process of communication and the use of authentic materials. However, some negative aspects should be pointed out: the role of linguistic knowledge exaggeration, comparison, and analysis. The rigid connection of exercises with the text and underestimation of decisive formation of speech skills in the expressive forms of speech activity has a negative impact on language acquisition.

Alternative Teaching Methods: Task - Based Learning

The method of communication tasks - is the solution to a number of communication problems proposed by teacher, deciding which students perform verbal and non-verbal actions, come in contact with each other, or group of students or the teacher, trying to find the right solutions to communicative tasks; not only verbal, but physical actions, gestures, facial expressions, etc are often used. Training programs that are designed in accordance with this method, are the set of communicative tasks and don't involve the selection and organization of linguistic material. The question of how necessary and in what form the students' learning activities can be managed while using the method of communicative tasks, is controversial. It is assumed that the competence formation in a foreign language doesn't require studied systematization of linguistic phenomena, but creating the conditions in which the trainees are involved in order to solve communication problems. To do this, remove all

purposeful formation of grammatical (linguistic) competence and modeling of verbal behavior. It should be noted that the method of communication tasks is in the formation stage, the process of its development as a method is not yet completed, and that allows making refinements and modifications to optimize the process of teaching foreign languages.

Alternative Teaching Methods: Neuro - Linguistic Programming

Neuro-Linguistic Programming - is, on one hand, the art and science of improving individual study on leadership skills, and on the other, the methods of teaching a foreign language, which allow expanding and strengthening the persons' reserve abilities in the process of immersion in a foreign language and verbal environment. Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP), and affects the way of thinking, on which our achievements as a whole depend. "Modeling the process of thinking, the emergence and development of feelings and beliefs, NLP considers all components of the human experience, above all NLP engaged in the process of communication - human interaction with himself and with others."

NLP has appeared more than 20 years ago in the United States, Santa Cruz. John Grinder founded it, while the assistant of Department of Linguistics, and R. Bandler - a student of the psychological and mathematical faculties, fond of psychotherapy. G. Grinder and R. Bandler tried to "imitate" the activities of the three internationally recognized therapists.

NLP's creators claim a connection between the neurological processes (neuro), language (linguistic) and behavioral patterns learned through experience (programming), and that these can be changed to achieve specific goals in life (Bandler and Grinder, 1981).

The goal for G. Grinder and R. Bandler (1981), was to reproduce the model of communication used by these eminent scientists in order to then reuse it in their work. The result of this phase of the research was a set of techniques used to improve the efficiency of communication, optimization of learning process, and personal improvement training. Gregory Bateson, the British anthropologist, worked in the fields of psychotherapy, cybernetics, and biology, made the next significant contribution to the development of NLP. NLP is developing rapidly, offering a variety of schemes to achieve success and excellence in various fields, including education.

NLP method is rather complicated, but its name stands simply.

Neuro - testifies to the respect of thinking and sense perception; to the processes occurring in the nervous system and plays an important role in shaping human behavior, as well as neurological processes in the field of perception - sight, hearing, tactile sensations.

Linguistic - has to do with the language model, which plays an important role in the achievement of mutual understanding between the people and the core components of communicative processes.

Programming - points to the way in which we organize our thinking, to ultimately achieve their goals.

Alternative Teaching Methods: The Multiple Intelligence Theory

Theory was first published in H. Gardner's book (1984), *Frames Of Mind*, one of the most renowned scientists in the field of education in the United

States, author of monographs and more than a hundred scientific papers on cognitive development and neuropsychology. His book "The boundaries of thought: the theory of multiple intelligences", published more than in ten languages, G. Gardner (2002) made one of the most influential representatives of educational theory and practice, and has won him international fame.

G. Gardner (2002) identified eight relatively autonomous intellectual capacities: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, musical, bodily kinesthetic, interpersonal, and intrapersonal and natural - testing. The latter allows you to identify, categorize, and use the properties of the environment. Mr. Gardner (2002) also notes that new intellectual abilities can be identified, if they meet the criteria. This theory is applied at all levels of education - from pre-school to adult education; in teaching academic subjects, in the course of training, in the classroom - for normal and gifted students and children who have problems in the study of various disciplines. This theory confirms what teachers face every day: people think and learn in diverse ways. This theory also defines the conceptual framework for the institute and reflection in the process of curriculum development, evaluation of the effectiveness of education and teaching practice. In turn, such reflection allows many teachers to develop new approaches that can meet students' educational needs effectively.

Mr. Gardner (1984) was aware of the heterogeneity of multiple intelligence theory to practice, so he focused on developing new approaches to the problems of assessing the quality of education, developing an understanding of the various disciplines and work; and believes that the main objective of education should be the development of understanding. His pedagogical concept is simple: "A profound understanding should be the main objective: we must understand that in a particular cultural context some is considered to be true or false, beautiful or ugly, good or bad. These topics motivate individuals to learn and understand the world around them." Education concept corresponds to an empirically understanding of cognitive processes, as well as the reality of modern educational systems that function in the context of a multi-ethnic, in societies whose development is increased due to modern technologies.

Discussions and Conclusions

Despite that the traditional methods of teaching have been more or less similar around the world, the adaptation of teaching strategies and styles to different social, economical and educational contexts has been always an issue for consideration. The growth of technology and computer applications affected almost every aspect of everyday life, worldwide. This is also the case in the field of education; the latter has changed dramatically by endorsing applications that help students improve their written and verbal abilities as well as help them develop new skills that broaden their potentials. The literature review presented in this paper shows that the process of learning in a virtual environment has contributed significantly towards a social change in higher education; this is achieved through the provision of new media allowing access to new knowledge, promoting dialogue among teachers and students and also, among students themselves (Zane & Muilenburg, 2000).

In general, it is not an overstatement to claim that the internet has strongly affected education including the dynamics and speed of learning while electronic

learning (e-learning) has also placed new challenges to the design of the relative curricula.

The main methods of contemporary teaching include video watching and role-playing, while students are encouraged to attend and participate in lectures via interactive whiteboards, too (Cottel & Millis, 1993; Bonner, 1999). Different functions of the virtual learning environment such as chat rooms and self-assessment encourage essential communication skills and interaction among members of the digital educational environment.

Technology of information and communication are the new dominant tools for teaching such courses, effectively. This is in line with Beattie et al. (1997) who for instance, argued for the importance of “in-depth learning” in any given academic subject as opposed to superficial knowledge or learning offered by different education providers, worldwide. Traditional teaching methods including case studies, group quizzes, lectures and –more recently- collaborative teaching, homework, use of blackboard and –even more recently- computer programs and other techniques like the pause method, allow student participation in lectures while providing them with the opportunity to select their own learning process. Modern teaching methods, on the other hand, including contemporary software programs, distance-learning for the same end. It should be noted however that, students’ background knowledge, academic performance and learning abilities need to be taken into consideration for the selection of the most suitable teaching method and combination of teaching applications (Bonner, 1999).

By implication, teaching curricula and academic goals should be formed according to the needs, demands and ambitions of a given student population and educational context in order to strengthen students’ motives and ensure active participation in the learning process. In the field of accounting, a wide range of software programs could be applied, according to each academic subject’s structure, goals and requirements. These programs may include quizzes, simulation games and multiple choice questions, which provide feedback and promote students’ analytical skills and self-monitoring abilities. Bear in mind however, that such practices need to be implemented carefully, so that they do not lead to “coded” and superficial learning styles (Boyce, 1999).

Implications and Recommendations

The materials of the articles will be useful for teachers willing to adapt to new methods in the modern system of education.

Distance-learning programs may include interactive multimedia CDs containing case studies and tele-education via interactive television. Furthermore, distance-learning programs may provide virtual learning environment via the internet and interactive whiteboards, which have proven to be quite popular among students, although traditional teaching methods are still preferred by a great number of students. Indeed, it should be mentioned in this context, that students have been found to prefer traditional teaching and learning that facilitates student interaction and student-teacher interaction, despite that all students’ exam performance in that particular study satisfactory, irrespective of the learning method used. Another popular distance learning application, especially among male students, is teaching through the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT).

Students prefer ICT applications as a supplementary rather than the main teaching method. A similar method is the online Tool Blackboard, also preferred among students as an auxiliary strategy, which – according to them should not completely replace traditional teaching. Hybrid teaching models include both traditional face-to-face interaction among students and teachers and alternative teaching methods. They seem to be quite popular, especially among students.

Other teaching models applicable in the real business world that seems to be useful as secondary learning tools. Assessing the effect of modern teaching methods in universities, we found that such methods are extremely popular among students primarily and they should be better integrated in the teaching process. An e-learning platform of was quite effective according to teachers and students, while the implementation of a virtual software environment called “infonomics” was widely accepted by students too. However, the students’ exam performance did not seem to be significantly affected by the use of the former program, a finding that contradicts with the effectiveness of a virtual learning environment.

To conclude, it could be claimed that, although different studies have looked into student responses towards modern teaching tools and their effectiveness measured in terms of student performance in final exams, there are issues pertaining to such tools that are still unclear. It is noticeable that many students report preference for personalized teacher-centered teaching methods and suggest the use of the above modern teaching tools and practices as ancillary tools, only. In light of the above, it could be argued that modern teaching methods, strategies and tools should adopt and integrate Information and Communication Technologies on the premise that the latter are adapted to each student population’s interests, abilities and ambitions. Individual differences should always be taken into account while student-teacher interaction needs to be encouraged in all cases. By doing so, the learning process becomes more effective and interesting while students will be able to broaden their knowledge, develop key skills and competencies to remain competitive in the market place as well as meet industry demands for well trained, creative and productive employees.

During the research we revealed new problems and issues to be considered in future. It is quite necessary to continue findings in hybrid methods and work out solutions for the professional educational establishments so that they could use alternative methods in the system of advanced professional training.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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