Evaluation of the Contribution of the Social Networks to the Personal Effectiveness[1]

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Abstract

The current information era affects both countries, as well as institutions and individuals. Institutions and people make use of technology both in their professional and social lives. Nowadays, especially management styles are also affected by this transformation and managers are expected to be equipped with different skills. In order to attain the goals of the institution, their knowledge, skills, attitudes and values should divert from the conventional ways of administration. Managers should not only be equipped with up-to-date skills, but they are also expected to use technology efficiently. This study intends to evaluate the contribution of technology and social communication networks on personal effectiveness, information and business management skills of upper and middle level administrators at the Ministry of Education in Northern Cyprus. The participants were asked 18 questions in the fields of personal effectiveness, information and business management. The 5-point Likert scale survey used as data collection tool was developed by Bennett, Dunne and Carre (1999). The participants of the study included 7 directors, 7 assistant directors and 19 experts. The data collected, were analyzed according to the above mentioned skills as well as gender, seniority, and the position held, but no significant difference was found between them. The results demonstrated that the participants were aware of the fact that the use of technology supports organizational communication and personal effectiveness.

Key words: Use of technology, management, personal effectiveness, information management, business management

1. Introduction

Nowadays although technology is perceived as products including high quality scientific information and technique, it also involves the entire social and economic activities that suggests putting the technical knowledge into practice. In short, technology is using the scientific principles and innovations as solutions to the problems in the lives of both individuals and institutions (Aksoy, 2005). Currently, technological advances and changes affect the structure and functions of all institutions. The level of maximizing the benefits of the information society, relies mainly on people's and institutions capacity to update themselves and to catch up with the technological developments. Nowadays, while on the one hand, it is highly challenging to follow the pace of technological developments, it is highly important for people and institutions to adapt the possibilities offered by the technology in their personal and institutional lives so as to find practical solutions to problems encountered and to make their lives easier (Mertoğlu and Öztuna, 2004).

In this context, the Internet is considered to be a vast source of information and services in solving people's problems; besides this, information is also functioning as a means of rationalizing the power of the ones who have the authority to willingly create information (Aksoy, 2005).

However, with globalization, technological advances are now much more important in terms of taking all humanity under its influence; Technological products have become an important part of everyday life. This situation is naturally creating its own culture. The way we communicate, transport, the way we do business, the concepts we use and our perception of things happening around us is undergoing a significant transformation. Scientific studies that intend to understand this new culture and structure, which evolved with the acceleration of recent developments have improved within the last fifty years (Beşli, 2007).

Individuals who want to keep up with the developments, to have more information and to find solutions for the problems they encounter in their lives are speeding up the systematic and scientific research. These changing conditions require more qualified education for everyone. Nowadays, the changes and the improvements that are happening are hard to believe, therefore it is inevitable for our country to closely monitor the scientific and technological developments and to plan the work to be done very carefully if we want to have an important place in the globalized world, and in this process the importance of education is arising. In order to be a part of the

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communication and technology era which is affecting the whole world, our country is developing in many aspects and is also improving the quality and the quantity of the work being done. As education is the foundation of development and civilization, it is a need in our country to offer education to the children in coordination with the improving technology and changing conditions and to educate them in such a way that they can take their own responsibility and cope with the advancements in the future.

Information is in the center of the world which is changing and improving day by day, therefore it is aimed to educate individuals who can reach the information on their own and create different ways of problem solving when encountered with difficulties rather than taking and using information from a single source only. In this context, using materials that are prepared according to the principles of educational technologies is crucial for the individuals to gain these qualities.

1.1. The Use of Technology in Educational Institutions

Nowadays computers and the internet have reached such a wide range of usage that the educational services cannot be thought to be left outside (Bulun et all, 2004). Modern educational institutions are the creators of the most important possession in the globalized world today which is 'modern man power suitable for the information era'. They are responsible of educating individuals in such a way that they can reach the information on their own and create different ways of problem solving when encountered with difficulties rather than taking and using information from a single source only. In order to be able to do that, these institutions need to create material in accordance to educational technologies that can be used by students who are used to using technology as part of their daily lives, like the personal computers at their homes, video, cd players, mobile phones and satellite devices.

In Northern Cyprus, until the last few years, very little number of schools had 1 or 2 interactive white boards and projections. In the last few years, with the help of progressive school administrators, schools' parents associations, The Ministry of Education and various projects sponsored by The European Union, many schools have been equipped with computer laboratories, libraries with the internet access, interactive white boards and projections. Right now almost all the secondary schools in Northern Cyprus have been equipped with interactive white boards. Unfortunately, the same does not apply to the primary schools. Very few primary schools have interactive white boards and projections and these are rarely being used by the teachers. Tracing students from the portal which is widely used in many advanced countries is being implemented in our country this year and more than %70 of our schools have successfully updated the required information onto the system. The remaining %30 is expected to update the students' information onto the system at the beginning of the next academic year so that the progress of the students can be followed from the moment they start school until their graduation. However, it is not enough to technologically update the schools, the teachers who are going to put this practice into life need to be educated and to be able to use the technology not only for social purposes but for educational purposes without hesitation. Therefore all secondary school teachers have undergone short term in-service training on using the whiteboards and other technological devices effectively. In addition, in the web pages of all the departments in the ministry of education, the laws, regulations, circulars, curriculums and educational programmes are being shared with the public. All the personnel working in the Ministry of Education has access to a computer and the internet.

The purpose of this research is to evaluate the contribution of technology and social networks to the improvement of personal effectiveness, information and management skills of the managers. In this context, the aim is to examine their contribution in the development of basic skills of high and mid-level directors at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in Northern Cyprus.

2. Method

This research adopted quantitative research method. The survey population consists of 9 high, 7 middle level managers and 20 experts. Data were obtained from 7 department directors, 7 assistant directors, and 19 experts. Participants were asked a total of 18 questions in the field of personal effectiveness, information and business management. The survey developed by Bennett, Dunne, Carre (1999) was used as data collection tool and it aimed to display the results on a specific situation.

The data were collected from 33 participants through a survey. SPSS 20.0 was used in the analysis of the data. T-test and ANOVA test analysis have been employed for analyzing the collected data.

3. Findings

In general, no significant difference was found among the participants concerning 3 different skills (personal effectiveness, management and information skills). Similarly further analysis done in terms of gender, position and seniority did not identify any significant differences in the views of participants. As a result of the analysis, it is concluded that Ministry directors and experts have a high level of self efficacy perception of their abilities improved by using technology and were aware of the fact that the use of technology supports organizational communication and personal effectiveness.

Table 1. *Personal effectiveness T test results*

Sex	N	X	S	Sd	T	p
Female	15	25.46	3.71	31	.024	,981 (p>.05)
Male	18	25.50	4.21			

As it can be seen from the table no significant difference was seen between male and female high and middle level directors and experts working at the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports on the contribution of social network and technology on their personal effectiveness (p=,981).

Table 2. *Information Management T test results*

Sex	N	X	S	Sd	T	p
Female	15	27.13	1.68	29.932	.733	,469 p>.05
Male	18	27.66	2.47			

The results displayed in Table 2 shows that there is no significant difference among the participants on Information management (p=,469).

Table 3. *Business Management T test results*

Sex	N	X	S	Sd	T	p
Female	15	26.00	3.07	31	.502	,619 p>.05
Male	18	25.27	4.81			

As it can be seen from Table 3 there is no significant difference according to the sexes of the directors of the Ministry of Education on Business Management (p=,619). When the findings are examined although there is no significant difference, it can be concluded that women benefit more on the use of technology and social networks on personal effectiveness (X=26.00).

Table 4. *Position Anova Test Results*

Source of variance	N	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Between groups	33	284,046	30	142,549	1,908	,166 p>.05
Within the group Total	33	2241,196 2526,246		73,707		

When Table 4 is examined it can be seen that there is no significant difference among the participants according to seniority (p=,166). According to these results it can be said that there is no significant difference between the seniority and the use of technology and social networks on their personal effectiveness.

Table 5. *Seniority Anova Test Results*

Source of variance	N	Sum of Squares	Sd	Mean Square	F	p
Between groups	33	304,137	2	152,096	2,053	,146 p>.05
Within the group	33 32	2222,105 2526,242	30	74,070		
Total						

The results in Table 5 displays no significant difference between the posts of the participants and the use of technology (p=,146). According to these results there is no significant difference between the participants' positions and the contribution of the use of technology on their personal effectiveness.

3.1. The limitations of the Study

The study included only high and middle level directors at the Ministry of National Education, Youth and Sports. It will be useful if the survey was applied to all the Ministries in order to find out the steps taken in Northern Cyprus in the field of becoming an E-nation; besides, it will be extremely valuable to support the research with qualitative data so as to test the validity of the data collected through the quantitative method.

4. Discussions and Conclusion

While information is considered as the most important strategic weapon in the fast changing global competition environment, information technology systems which are effective on producing and administering the source, play a significant role on the decision making process of the administrators (Koçoğlu, 2010). On the other hand, in the global world the most important intellectual capital is 'the power of contemporary people eligible for the information era.' The builders of this capital are accepted as the contemporary educational institutions. In this context, the Ministries of Education, which guide the educational institutions and are responsible for the effectiveness of these institutions in contemporary countries, play an active role in transforming them into information societies and shaping the transformation on one side and on the other side, having been affected by this transformation, are showing effort in becoming information based institutions (Bensghir, 1999). For this reason, the information and skills of the high and mid level managers working at this organization gain importance. A use of technical information has developed which affect and enlighten the decision makers, direct them in making mandatory decisions, utilize the operators and orderers in the industry rather than sharing it in public sector. Information functions as a tool especially for people who can demand to produce information to rationalize their power (Aksoy, 2005).

One of the many external sources which forces educational institutions for change can be accepted as the developments in information and communication technologies and their speed in entering our lives. So that, educational institutions come face to face everyday with students who use computers, videos, CDs and mobile phones in their homes everyday, and who are familiar with satellite equipments. This situation describes the change in one of the most important educational input (Aksoy,2005 cited in Demir et al., 2011). The findings of the research show that in general, the high and mid level managers of the Ministry of Education have a high level of self efficacy perception in having their abilities improved by using technology. It is also observed that, the managers have high level awareness in realizing the support of technology use in organizational communication and personal effectiveness. While there are a lot of researches in the literature about technology use and personal efficiency perception of the school directors, there are few researches about the Ministry of Education directors and high level managers. However, which specific abilities the directors are improving cannot be seen, since the data were collected only by using quantitative research design. For this reason, it will be beneficial to conduct a qualitative research in order to identify especially these abilities. It will be very useful to conduct the research on the other Ministry directors in order to realistically bring out the steps taken by Northern Cyprus to be an E-nation and in order to have more detailed data and to examine the validity of the data collected by using qualitative research design besides the quantitative one.

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