The use of Information and Communication Technologies from the Students of Elbasan University

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Abstract: This article analyses the use of information and communication technologies from the students of Elbasan University, which is one of the biggest and the most important universities in Albania. The data was collected through a questionnaire designed specifically for this study during two time periods: the first period was December 2004- June 2005 and the second one was during the year 2010. The analysis makes a comparison of the data for these two periods, which indicates that information and communication technologies are part of the students and their family's life. While some of them, such as mobile phones, are already widely used from the students, others like the Internet are still far. Therefore, this paper suggests that it is necessary to develop several specific policies in order to improve the actual situation.

Keywords: information and communication technologies

1. Introduction

An information and communication technology (ICT) is advancing very rapidly, and is one of the factors that give impact in the development of a country. "Its impact covers the structures of the state and civil society institutions, economic and social sectors, science and education, culture and people's whole way of living" *(The report of national ICT strategy for the development of Azerbaijan 2003-2012)[6]*. It's important to mention that each country is different regarding the development of ICT.

During the last years, science and technologies are developing very fast. The application of ICT is one of the indicators that show the intellectual and scientific level of a country. The use of ICT is the possibility of each country to solve its socio-economic problems.

According to Newton[5], information technology (IT) is "a fancy name for data processing".

"ICT includes hardware, processes, and systems that are used for storing, managing, communicating and sharing information. Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) are now widely accepted by developing countries as a critical tool in their efforts to eradicate poverty and to give part the development". (*"ICT policy formulation and e-strategy development" – a comprehensive guidebook*)[1].

With regard to ICT use, Sein and Harindranath (2004)[3] draw at least four different conceptualizations of the use of ICT in national development from the literature: as a commodity, as supporting development activities, as a driver of the economy, and directed at specific development activities.

Although ICT is considered as very important in Albania during the last years, there is not a wide correct assessment for its different aspects of the situation. On the other hand, there is not a systematic assessment for its performance in time. Therefore, the main aim of this study is to analyze this situation with focus to the University of Elbasan.

2. Methodology

For both phases of the study, the survey relied on certain principals: firstly, a correct representation of the student university environment; secondly, the survey of successive waves spread in a six-month period and thirdly, a content that reflects better the actual situation.

A total of 235 students were surveyed in the University of Elbasan. The representation maintained the proportionality: the dates for the number of students were taken in the University secretary. In university level, the representation was realized based on study programmers and years of study. The data was collected for each person individually and indicates the role and the recognition of ICT by each person in everyday life.

Furthermore, data was gathered on knowledge and equipping them with a computer in their home as well as a mobile phone, television, land line phone, scanner, printer, CD-writer, etc. The students were asked for the recognition and use of the Internet, purposes of use, proposals for the internet connection at home, assessments of central and local policies for the state and development of the Internet. Overall this content was discussed in 87 variables (indicators).

3. Analysis of Results
3.1 ICT, Knowledge, Estimation

ICT (Information and Communication Technology) in Albanian is translated "Teknologjia e Informimit dhe Komunikimit" and its acronym is TIK. During the year 2005, only 25 % of the students in the University of Elbasan are aware about the meaning of the acronym TIK. 35 % of the students declared that they have seen it somewhere, but they do not pretend to understand it. So, we can consider that 60 % of the students are aware about this acronym or have seen somewhere it. Approximately, 72 % of the students consider them as a necessity, while 24 % consider them important but not necessary, only 3 % of them stand on the idea that they are of second hand. Comparing with these results, the students of our university in 2010 are almost 100% aware about the mining of ICT and the students are conscious about the role and the importance of ICT into their daily lives.

3.2 Computer

The survey carried out in 2005 shows that only 30 % of the students have a computer at home. This indicator is lower than the respective one of the country for this group. On the other hand, those having a computer, in most cases, have no internet access. The use of computer continues to be considered as difficult or very complicated by a considerably number of students. Approximately, 40 % of the students think this way.

The computer is a new device in their home. Most of the students have a computer in their homes for a period of less than one year. For those having no computer in their homes, the main problem is the computer price: 82% of students do not have a computer in their home, the reason being that it is very expensive. Considerations are insignificant to those who declared the complexity of use as a reason.
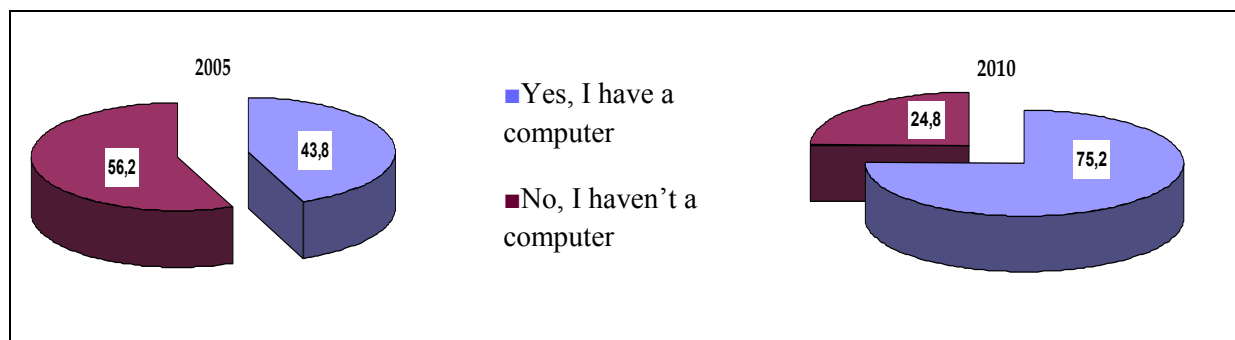

Figure 1. The use of computer

However, in 2010, 75.2 % of the students have a computer in their homes, and 31.7% of them have an Internet line in their homes. Only 4% of them think that the use of computer continues to be considered complicated and 23% of them having no computer because of the high expense. The differences of the results are given in the diagrams below:

3.3 Mobile phones

Mobile telephony has a high level of use by the students. About 93% of them use a cell phone; this level of use is high in the University of Elbasan, although it is lower than the index of all the country. Meanwhile, most of them have a telephone with card and those who do not have it declared to

have a big desire to have it. The monthly cost of a mobile phone for a student is about 1,600 leeks in average. Sending messages is a significant activity. About 18 % of the students send at least one message almost every day. Mobile phone is also significantly spread in their families. Only a few members of their families have not a mobile phone.

Comparing these results, Figure 2 gives the results for one of the questions in the questionnaire regarding the use of mobile phones in 2010. So, during this year, 100% of them use a mobile phone and 41% of the students send at least one message every day.
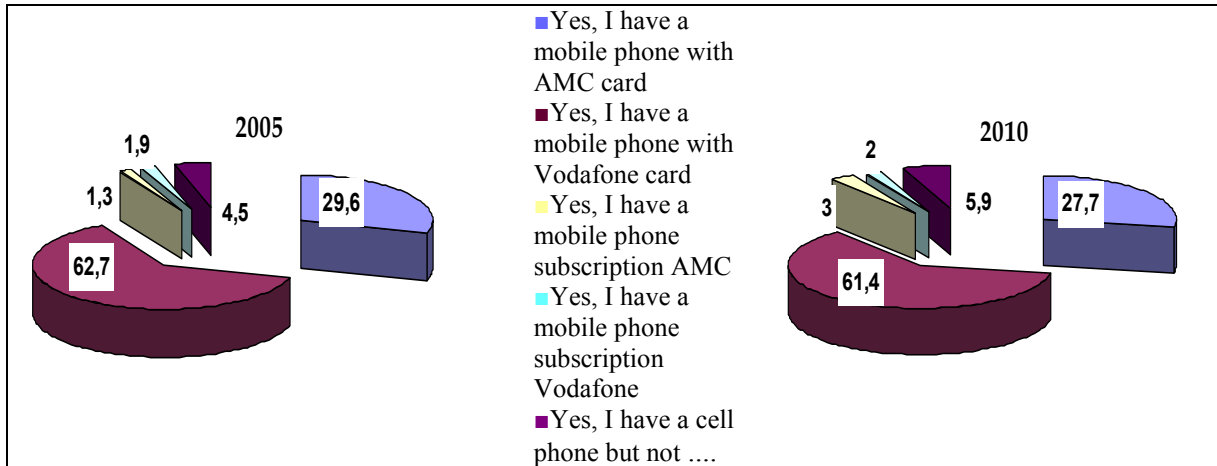

Figure 2. The use of mobile phones

3.4 Other equipments

All students, or almost all of them, have a TV at home. The majority have only usual TV antennas. During the year 2005, about 24 % have a parabolic antenna. Some new alternatives, such as the cable TV with or without payment is widely used. The fix telephony has a good distribution as well. The situation for some other equipment, such as fax, scanner, printer, and CD-writer is different. One cannot say that the fax is home equipment. Printer has a wider dissemination: about 15 % of the student families have a printer in their homes. The same thing is observed regarding the CD-writer, where, about 14 % of the student families have this. The scanner is less present.

Regarding digital cameras, although these are new equipments in the market, more than 29 % of the student families and the students themselves use them, which is higher than the above mentioned equipments. DVD is present in their families in the same percentage.

The digital TV is also present. The students receive in their families' one of these signals: Digitalb or Sat+ offered in Albania (8 % have Digitalb and 12% receive signals from Sat+).

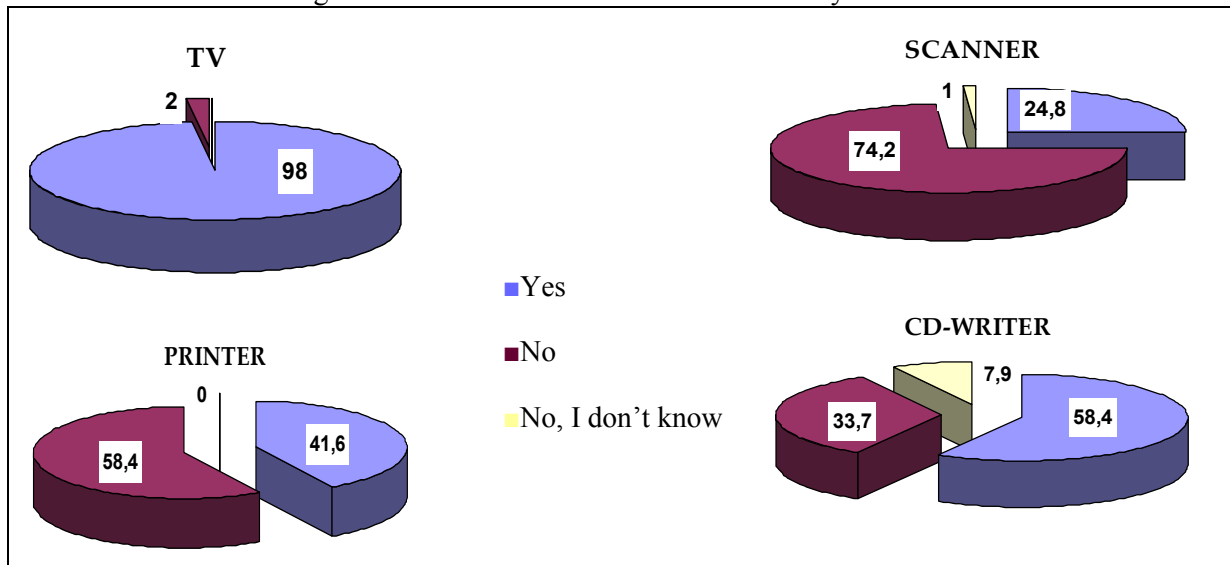The charts below give the situation of these indicators for the year 2010:

Figure 3. Use of other equipments

3.5 Internet

The Internet is known but, in 2005, it is used by 69 % of the students only. The students are not frequent Internet users: 14% claim to use it every day; 24 % use it several times in a week.
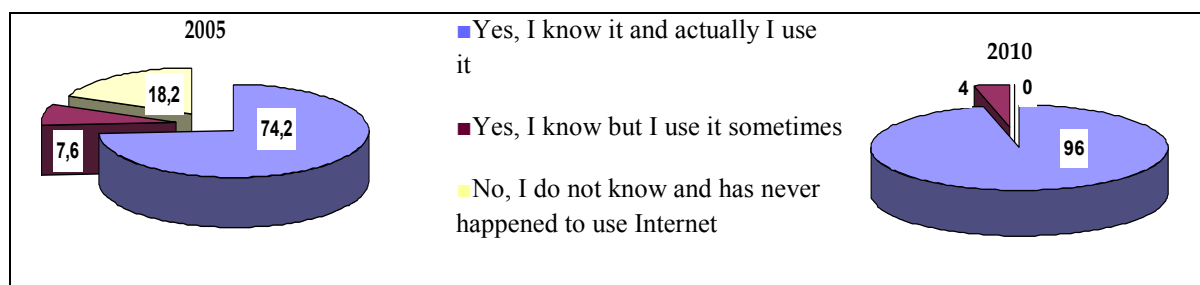

Figure 4. Use of Internet

We can tell that, for the year 2010, 96% of the students use the internet, and 62.4% of them use it every day. Internet-café is the place where the students go more often to use the internet. The second place is the school. Other places like the home and friends are far to be considered. The environment of the school that should offer the internet to the students is also far. In the year 2005, the home internet has a low proportion: only 9 % of the university students have internet in their homes. About 57 % of the students have a personal e-mail address, while 14 % of them use the e-mail of their friends. However, the situation is different during the year 2010: 53. 5% of the students have the internet in their homes and 89.1% of them have a personal e-mail address.

Yahoo and Google are the most available programs for online navigation. The Albanian web-sites are visited rarely by them. More frequently, they visit Shqiperia.com and Albania.com as well as the web-sites of the daily newspapers.

3.6 The future personal use of Internet

The results show that in general the students are interested to have Internet in their home. According to about 68 % of the students declared that the main obstacles are the lack of home computer and internet high tariffs. Other alternatives like: *not covered, don't need, do not have a fixed phone, do not know how to use the Internet, don't know English, and don't know computers*, etc. are not an important reason. Meanwhile, some students do not know how to have Internet at home.

The students have confidence in the future use of the Internet: 65 % of them believe that they will use the Internet more than ever. The portion of those who think that they would use Internet less than now is insignificant. Indeed, in the year 2010, 96% of the students use the Internet and 100% of them believe in the use of the Internet in the future more than ever.

3.7 The purposes of the use of Internet

The main use of the Internet in the University of Elbasan is for e-mails messages. Also, it is used for searching purposes of information and materials. Ranking of these goals is the opposite at the national level. The third important goal is the use for fun, relaxation and downloading music, movies and chat. These are followed by the personal sites and use for news. Participation in forums of discussions and on-line games is the last use.

3.8 Internet in the future, E-governing and E-university

The Internet sites and local or central bodies are not in the attention of students. About 71 % of them declared that they have never visited sites of central or local governments. If we add these and the rest of those who do not use the Internet, the results show that about 84% of students do not ever visit any site local or central government. There are about 10 % of the students who open such sites very rarely, and 4 % more often. Only 1 % declares that they open often such sites. The majority of the students do not know if the university has a web site or not, this part covers about 65 %.

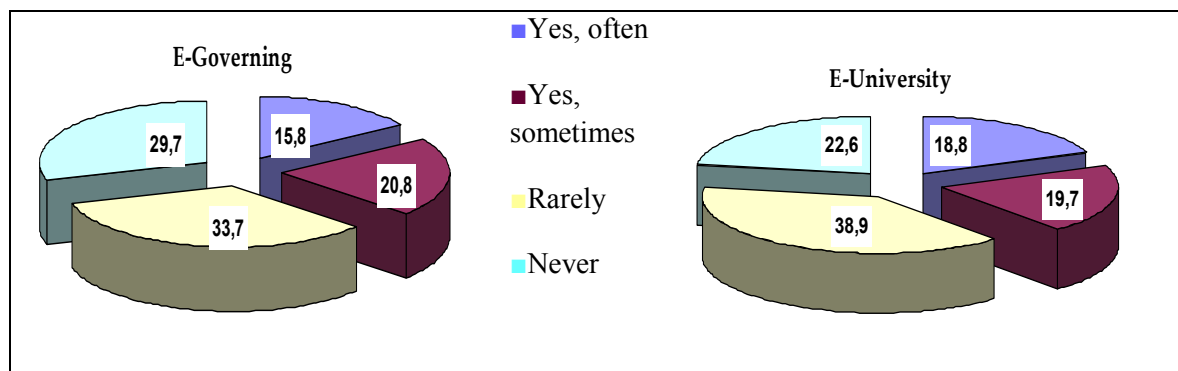For the year 2010 these results are given from the chart below:

Figure 5. E-Governing and E-University

The university web site is not a site where the students can search and find information; it does not serve as a communication instrument. Generally, the students don't know what to say if the university leaders and the academic staff pay attention to ICT or not. About 64 % of the students do not reply. About 30 % of them think that they are concerned about the development of ICT in university. The rest thinks that the interest is lacking, or they show interest because of the task hung on them. Irrespective of that, about 89 % of the students consider ICT is a necessity or as important but not a necessity. By the way, the students during the year 2010 positively estimate the efforts of the university regarding the development of ICT, and they think that it is an advantage for the university policies. The part of those being not aware or are not interested in or have opposite opinions, consists of about 23 %. In the year 2005, about 75 % thinks that the university tries a lot working for ICT, while 23 % think that the university is working but not so much, while compared with those, in the year 2010, only 85% of the students believe in working for ICT University, and 13% of them not have this faith.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

The level of ITC application is one of the main indicators of every country's intellectual and scientific potential. Global experience shows that wide use of ICT serves the overall development of the country, and these technologies are effective means in reducing poverty and solving socio-economic problems of the population. The results of this paper show that the information and communication technologies have already made their first steps in the university environment. Comparing the results for the two study periods, it is obvious that the private use of mobile phones is more developed than the computer use. One of the most important reasons regards the price, which seems to be too high for the latter. The development of technologies for family intention is still insignificant. Although many students use Internet, we cannot say that it is a massive communication tool. The school itself offers few possibilities for its use compared to the market. The students usually use Internet in places like Internet-café. The majority of students do not have Internet access at home. Finally, the students appreciate the role of these technologies for the future and ask for local or national government assistance by making greater investments on their introduction and rapid use.

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