"Utilizing Educational Platforms in A Regular Classroom Setting"

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ABSTRACT
New technological era is changing the education world of today. It provides different ways for teaching on a daily basis. Old methods are still applicable and they produce results but they are not enough to satisfy the needs of current generation. Students are tech-savvy these days, online bound, they are young individuals who see and experience world in a new way, through different lens. They are being educated daily through the usage of technology. The virtual world is shaping the way students think, learn and grow. We need to realize that youngsters cannot be pulled back from keeping up with their own time. The educational system needs to advance and adapt fast. Considering that virtual reality is the current global trend, one solution is to create virtual classroom or a platform where students could learn online together with their teachers. Tests can be done online, competitions are being organized on the phone which students are using daily, materials are exchanged on the go, students, teachers and parents can seamlessly exchange information. All of this is easily accessible on any device. These are only some of the benefits a virtual classroom setting can bring in educational sector of today. It all starts with one teacher that will open up their mindset to creating a new interactive atmosphere for their students and teachers alike.

Keywords: education, online, platform, classroom, student

INTRODUCTION
In a world of affordable electric cars, personal assistants in the form of audios speakers, and all things being Internet-related in one way or another, the younger generations are met with more opportunities than the generations from just two decades ago had ever dreamt of. As such, the modern-day needs of the aptly named "millennials" (or Generation Y) are growing more exorbitant by the day. Translate that into their education and scholastic needs, and this is where things get complicated.

While the insides of the normative four classroom walls are "traditional" in every sense, there is an excruciating and notable pain point that must be addressed: the traditional educational environment must adapt to the needs, opportunities, and advancements of the present time. With a surplus of technological innovations and online-based practices, it almost might come as a surprise to one that schools still exist in 2017, or at least in the traditional sense and architecture of such.

The dawn of a new technological era is already here and it is totally revamping the world of education. Old teaching methods may still yield results, but they are simply not enough to

satisfy the learners of today. Virtual reality is the current global trend that the younger generations are growing their interest in. Deriving from that, the reality of modern-day education grows more certain by the day – today's young minds cannot be pulled back from keeping up with their own time. (Alić, 2017)

In sum, the learners of today are tech-savvy, online-bound, aspiring young individuals who look at the world of today through a different lens. Education is happening online. Teachers have to create an incentive to take it there. Consequently, the educational system of today needs to advance and adapt, as well.

One educational solution for this quandary is creating a virtual classroom, or a platform for students to take their education or classroom learning online. Tests can be taken online all the time, competitions are going down, everyone is available 24/7, materials are tossed around on the go, and students, parents, and other teachers are available for exchanging ideas on a global scale. All of this is accessible on-demand, at an instant, on any device. That is what a great virtual classroom (or educational platform) setting looks like.

"The processes by which learners learn and teachers teach are about as ever-changing as the seasons." (Wahlstedt, 2008) Even though new teaching methods that have originated in the last few decades have more or less revolutionized the overall educational process, none have reached the level of probable impact on the overall learning outcomes as much as e-learning. Often labeled as *distance learning* or *online learning*, e-learning provides facilitation of teaching and learning as a whole by simple means of communication without requiring a face-to-face contact in the same space and time.

Optimistic commentators see a new world of an educational process: "Every learner can, at his or her own choice of time and place, access a world of multimedia material...immediately the learner is unlocked from the shackles of fixed and rigid schedules, from physical limitations...and is released into an information world which reacts to his or her own pace of learning (Benjamin, 1994; Salmon, 2000)."

Lafayette (2009) has derived a distinctive discrepancy between all-around e-learning environments and online platforms as an enhancement of the traditional classroom setting to support the unfolding of the proposed hypothesis. Today's mobile reality as a sole reason to support the claim is more than enough to pinpoint the exact areas of improvement for scholars and educational practitioners alike. Further down the line, Alić (2017) levels the playing field by explicating the benefits of educational platforms in a regular classroom setting that have been derived first-hand. Consequently, such findings present a strong baseline for adopting the utilization of educational platforms in regular classroom environments in Bosnia and Herzegovina today.

Being a widely-used term used to define an integrity of tools and services for writing, storing, disseminating digital communication, manage students activities, searching information etc. (Railean, 2015), educational platforms are uttering a new path for modern education that is aligned with the latest and greatest discoveries of today, but more importantly, with the needs of today's learners. If there has ever been a time that has required the fostering of both communication and collaboration in education, where both teaching and learning occur in the digital, mobile, or online world, it is now. Classrooms should be taken online, even entire schools and school systems. A basis for such a move exists, but a complicated question is always prerequisite for such moves, even though the answer is as simple as it gets.

Just how does one take a classroom online? As it was previously mentioned, it is as simple as it gets. It is about leveraging educational platforms efficiently in an inefficient environment, such as one that is behind its time. However, in order to do so, one must first be aware of the world around themselves and the increasing learning needs of today's students, as well as have the necessary tech savvy to implement what is needed.

To sum up, if educational platforms were to ever reach a "mass consumption" scale, the final results of the process could finally demonstrate the full potential for such a bold step in a stagnant educational environment, particularly in the case of primary and high schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Nonetheless, some implications still exist. Even if technology is available and populations have the necessary e-literacy skills, there is no guarantee that technology alone can create a highquality learning environment. (Glencross and O"Hagan, 2014) In regards to this, exposing students to a hybrid of face-to-face and online education and recognizing that not all students learn the same way has proven beneficial in the long run for young learners. Moreover, because online learning leverages online technology, it can not only easily and efficiently supplement, but also transform the overall learning process.

Needless to say, a blend of e-learning and an educational platform that is targeting more effective teaching and learning outcomes could be the solution. This is not to say that a Learning Management System (LMS) needs to collaborate with a social media channel to combine the best of both worlds into a revolutionary educational platform. On the contrary, through thoughtful application of the latest technological innovations, such distinct platforms that blend the e-learning, mobile, online, teaching, and learning segments of education have already found their way onto the surface.

The market offers plenty of educational platforms with their own respective target audiences, goals, and functionalities; some good, many bad ones. Moreover, if there is one thing that is certain, it is that it takes time to build the optimal environment for students to have fun, enjoy learning, and improve learning outcomes, just like one would have to do in a regular classroom setting. Last but not least, nothing in this world is perfect due to cumbersome differences in individual perception but there plenty of examples where perfection was missed by a hair. One such example includes Edmodo.

Being a universal platform for all-around education purposes currently used by over 75 million users, Edmodo is bringing the virtual classroom setting to any device and creating a new interactive atmosphere for students and teachers alike. (Chase, 2017)

With a user interface and experience that resembles Facebook ever so slightly, it is almost obvious why the more than 75 million users – teachers, students, as well as parents - opted to choose Edmodo as the go-to educational platform in today's day and age. The platform provides a unique set of features that streamline the overall learning experience in a non-restrictive and completely affordable way, being that every bit of the learning process that would normally take place in a four-walled classroom environment is now seamlessly undergoing online. Moreover, the platform also provides a mobile app for its users, which is completely free, making all the more accessible and providing just one more (free) reason for its users to use it often.

In "Take Your Classroom Online", Alić (2017) provides an in-depth analysis of all of Edmodo's best features and essentials that allow teachers to effectively build an online classroom and

make the most out of it in a traditional classroom environment for relatively all teaching and learning needs.

In essence, one of the main reasons a teacher might insist on utilizing an educational platform in their profession is to relieve the burden of manual tasks. Educational platforms such as Edmodo significantly decrease the amount of manual work required in some key "teacher" tasks such as grading papers, contacting parents, entering grades, etc. It is about making a change for the better and future-proofing the teaching profession.

This does not necessarily indicate a lack of passion for the duties and hard work of being a teacher. It is, in fact, the exact opposite. Because teachers who value what they do want to get better over time year in and year out, they can do so even more efficiently be eliminating the redundancies in their manual tasks and focusing on improving everything else that otherwise would have been imponderable to even consider possible.

METHODS AND RESULTS

Taking Alić's (2017) methodology as both a quantitative and qualitative basis for understanding what the best approach to utilizing educational platforms in today's regular classroom setting, this research study requires an in-depth analysis of how the existence, utilization, and future impact of educational platforms as a whole can affect the traditional classroom environment so strongly present in the educational institutions of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Therein, the methodology of this research study involves quantifying and discussing a publicly disseminated survey among the teaching community in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which aims to frame a larger picture around the main research questions. Furthermore, the survey backed by the additional research based on Alić's "Take Your Classroom Online" should help round up a concise summary around the main questions of the research study and answer them to their fullest extent.

The following are the main questions of the research study:
1. Should the utilization of educational platforms in today's regular classroom setting be regarded as a useful addition or replacement to traditional education?
2. What is the current level of awareness and public opinion in Bosnia and Herzegovina about the utilization of educational platforms?
3. What is the true impact and array of improvement that such a change in the current educational system in Bosnia and Herzegovina as a whole could bring?

At the end of the research study, the results are expected to help bring significant benefits to the Ministry of Education, schools, and individual teachers in the form knowing, visualizing, and understanding all the necessary steps and essentials when deciding to utilize an educational platform in a regular classroom setting in traditional education hence bring them closer to such a bold step in today's perceived stagnant environment.

Moreover, the results of the study are expected to shed more light into the overall perception of what such a change could bring in traditional education in Bosnia and Herzegovina in order to be able to properly weigh in on what level of intensity the pros and cons of that utilization are going to send across, as well as analyze the possibility of such a change happening to a meaningful extent.

Taking into account the main research questions, the research study is based on the following hypotheses:

1. Educational platforms in today's regular classroom setting can be regarded as a useful addition or replacement to traditional education methods.
2. The current level of awareness about the benefits of educational platforms in the case of traditional education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is still not on a satisfying level.
3. The utilization of educational platforms in today's regular classroom setting is growing in popularity but it will not reach the necessary level of mass adoption any time soon.

In order to properly weigh in on the level of intensity that the pros and cons of utilizing educational platforms in today's regular classroom setting are going to send across, which are implications in itself, the research study is about to redirect its focus on analyzing the public opinion and first-hand experience accounts from the teaching community in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The goal of the research survey is to analyze the public perception of the possibility of reshaping the current educational system and approach in a more modern way through the utilization of educational platforms in a regular classroom setting across schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The main focus is to accumulate information that relate to the awareness, understanding, perception, and feedback from the educational community in all regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina in regards to the research question.

Much alike the objectives of the research study, the survey is fueled by determining the true impact and array of improvement that such a change in the educational system as a whole could bring and analyzing the level of awareness and public opinion about it to properly weigh in on what level of intensity the pros and cons are going to send across, which are implications in itself.

In addition, the insights derived from the survey can help determine whether or not the society and the educational system as a whole in Bosnia and Herzegovina are ready for the concept of educational platforms being utilized in a regular classroom setting to come to fruition in today's time and age.

The entire survey was conducted online, utilizing the Google Surveys platform. The survey subjects include individuals from the educational community in all regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina that differ in their individual expertise, work experience, and educational background, particularly their current educational level and/or degree.

Following both quantitative and qualitative analyses of each individual question of the survey, the answers provided a unique basis for a subsequent survey summary, which is expected to help bring significant benefits to the Ministry of Education, schools, and individual teachers and bring them closer to understanding whether the utilization of educational platforms in today's regular classroom setting can be regarded as a useful addition or rather as a replacement to traditional educational methods, tools, and process.

In sum, the results of the research survey are a bit of a mixed bag, for the lack of a better term. While the teaching community in Bosnia and Herzegovina is aware of the reluctance present in the country's educational system to adopt new methods of teaching, they are nonetheless supportive of such a disruptive idea that is the utilization of educational platforms in today's regular classroom setting and traditional educational system.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Most, if not all, of the innovative aspects that an all-encompassing educational platform could bring into the world of education today have been welcomed by rather extreme support from the survey subject group. They recognize these innovative aspects as positive reinforcements, and are aware of some minor implications they might bring, even though educational platforms such as Edmodo do a phenomenal job at handling those implications. Moreover, while the members of the subject group are generally in favor of such an idea, they are still uncertain as to when (if ever) such a feat would actually be possible and/or become a reality within the educational system of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Furthermore, findings show that the teaching society in Bosnia and Herzegovina encourages such an idea to be tested in the current environment, but fails to understand the end-to-end improvements it could bring.

The main take-away here is that utilizing educational platforms in a regular classroom environment in what is perceived to still be a traditional educational system in Bosnia and Herzegovina today is still an idea worth the teaching community's while. To a larger extent, they recognize, comprehend, and support the positive reinforcements and novelties such a great change in the overall educational system could bring – one that could lead this country" education into the future far faster than anyone would have ever thought. It is just up to the reluctant teaching community to take a bit more responsibility for their students" futures and accept that running away from most new technological and mobile advancements that the world is throwing at them is definitely not the answer. If that still is the case in five to ten years, the educational system is certainly considered to trail behind the global educational trends in decades" worth of quality education, to say the least – something that the learners of today simply cannot afford, nor should they.

All three hypotheses of the research study have been proven to be true and in complete accordance with the data acquired from the research, which are:
1. Educational platforms in today's regular classroom setting can be regarded as a useful addition or replacement to traditional education methods.
2. The current level of awareness about the benefits of educational platforms in the case of traditional education in Bosnia and Herzegovina is still not on a satisfying level.
3. The utilization of educational platforms in today's regular classroom setting is growing in popularity but it will not reach the necessary level of mass adoption any time soon.

We can conclude that the utilization of educational platforms in a regular classroom environment of today unequivocally benefits, improves, and provides more transparency into the entire process of learning, making the correlation between teaching and learning that much clearer. The results of this study will bring significant benefits to the Ministry of Education, schools and individual teachers who can decide for themselves if they want to push the boundaries of education at their current institutions for the benefit of the learners, the system, and most importantly, themselves.

In Alić's (2017) words, when it comes to educational platforms in the today's time and age, there are just plenty of reasons to explore, even more not to ignore. A new age of technological advancements swarming from all sides of the globe is happening and we are part of it. Teachers, schools, and entire teaching communities must simply make peace with it. They must use it up, adapt to their students, create new opportunities, and make the best out of every class. Students spend most of their time online anyway, so teachers might as well make them find quality education there, as well.

Consequently, it can be argued that making the process of utilizing educational platforms such as Edmodo in today's traditional classroom environment a widespread factor in today's education would be a giant step forward for the entire educational system of Bosnia and Herzegovina and beyond, regardless of the students" educational level, geographical location, and cultural background.

Nonetheless, for as long as issues such as the reluctance to test new things out, the aversion towards technology and technological/mobile innovations, and the inability to adapt to the never-ending modern-day teaching practices exist, educational platforms and their positive effects are going to remain an ideal that is only praised and spoken about in tight circles of the teaching community by the actual few individuals that are utilizing them and making the utmost use in their classroom, teaching methodology, and their students" learning outcomes.

Utilizing educational platforms in a regular classroom setting in today's traditional teaching environment is a proven positive addition and reinforcement to any-sized classroom that revolutionizes the way the teaching process has traditionally been conducted.

The virtual world is shaping the way students think, learn, and grow. Educational platforms are the future of education – an addition generously welcomed by teaching communities around the world, just not Bosnia and Herzegovina. That being said, the teaching communities of today in Bosnia and Herzegovina and further are the ones who have to create the incentive to take the current educational system, their educational institutions and students, as well as themselves just there – to the future.

The Internet is here to stay and the entire global teaching community is here to adapt to it. The whole purpose of moving the complete classroom setting online is to stay on pace with the time, decrease manual work, and make the teaching job easier, gain more unparalleled experience, and make sure that education is not an anchor pulling teachers down, but a speeding train of knowledge they move forward with.

In sum, the overburdening tasks of a teacher can be made as easy as a few clicks of a button, nonetheless taking nothing away in terms of quality, effort, and most importantly, results. It is what matters the most, after all.

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