

Is it possible to get to get the collaborative work skills through the E-Learning*

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Abstract

In the past years the attitude toward the idea of e-learning has drastically changed. The idea of getting knowledge on-line doesn't seem that surprising any more. But when it comes to on-line learning is it possible to get practical skills on-line? Is it possible to teach people to communicate with each other and be able to work in a group with somebody through the e-learning? This paper examines how people usually get the collaborative work skills and makes pattern for teaching it via the digital technology. A survey is put to see if people even see the need in such skill nowadays. The results are analysed from the different prospective to answer the question stated in the title.

1 Introduction

In the past year the term “E-learning” has become more widely used than ever before. The events happening in the world forced humanity to think about organizing the studying without the physical interaction between the teacher and the pupil. The “E-learning” itself has provided us with the idea of getting any possible information via Internet. It has opened a lot of paths for thousands of people, but at the same time it has brought to life several problems that need to be solved. The article “Improving e-learning to meet challenges in 21st century” published by Dilrukshi Gamage, Indika Perera and Shantha Fernando brings up the doubt about being able to get important practical skills through the e-learning methods. [1] Generally, because of the fact that E-learning doesn't really require constant face to face interaction, it suffers from the lack of group base learning, meaning that people don't interact with each other and don't know how to work in collaboration with others. It results in not being able to collectively solve the problem or the task. The other source “Developing Active Learning Experiences for Adaptive Personalised e-Learning” also focuses on this problem and the possible solution – a specific organization of E-learning and collaborative learning to overcome this problem. [2]

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2 The Definition of E-learning

E-learning – a term that came into our lives recently, but in the past year has taken its place in the educational environment. Modern reality has forced everybody without any exceptions to put their minds to it and, to a certain extent, to learn how to use it. But for a regular person this term is still not fully understandable, so firstly it's important to define it. According to the Oxford University dictionaries the e-learning is typically learning that is distributed through the electronic devices, in most cases via internet. Similar definition can be found in the Cambridge dictionary. They also add that this type of learning is done at home using computers. But there is also a separation within this term. The two approaches that currently exist are learning through and using technology. First one means that technology-enhanced learning is the only way of learning used, while “learning using technology” is more about technology being one of the many learning methods, but not the only one. For this article we will use the first approach, as the second one is usually not the one people think about when they hear the term “e-learning”.

3 Collaborative skills

It's a well-known approach that one of the missions of school is to teach children or more officially students to be able to communicate with each other. In the past several years this idea has been moved backwards and is not currently considered as important as it used to be. People become more and more self-centered and communication itself loses its importance. But when it comes to working in groups it's highly important to be able to communicate with your group partners, other wise the collaborative work is no longer “collaborative”. The absence of the communication skills highly affects human's ability to work in group and collectively solve the stated problem or task. This is where the idea of getting collaborative work skills appears. Firstly, it's important to define this term too, as there are many different definitions applied for it in several scientific fields. Generally, collaboration is the idea of working on something together in order to solve a certain problem. But a deeper perspective into what it is can only be the key to fully understanding what “collaborative work skills” means. For example, in 2019 as a second year software engineering student I got a task to create a software system in a group with my group mates. The possibilities were endless, so we started thinking about what we wanted to create. As ambitious as we were back then we decided to make a computer game. But when it came to making decisions about certain details of the project that's where we got stuck. Everybody had his own prospective on the final result and the ways of its achievement. The main reason for this was that nobody was ready to listen to his opponent and consider his idea as a possibility for the project topic. What I am trying to state here is that the first and main feature of collaboration is the ability to listen to other people. And not only listen but also to hear what they're saying. Secondly, it's important to be able to consider other ideas besides your own and be able to admit them. It's leads to realization of the main goal of every group activity – achieving a certain goal, where the group result is important and not the somebody's personal goal achievement. Work in a group is like a mechanism where nothing would work without participation

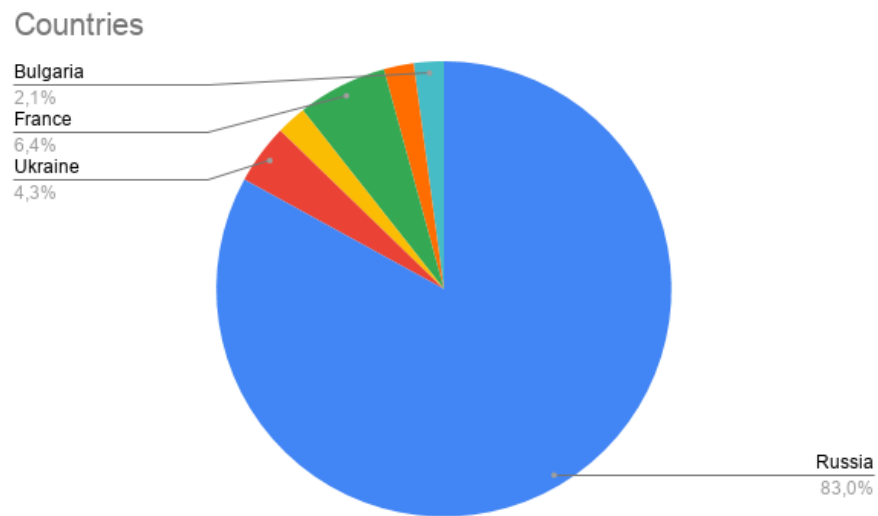
of all of the parts.

4 Current Approach

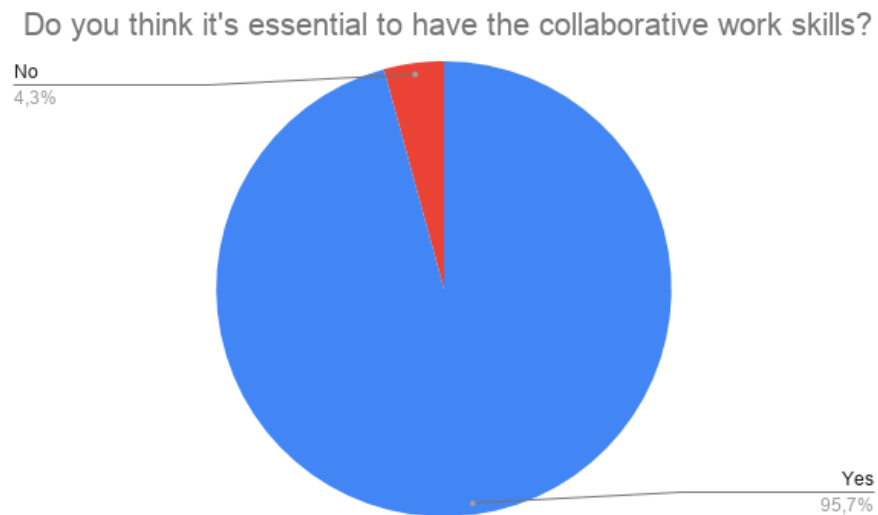
In the modern world the idea of traditional organization of work and study is slowly coming to its logical finale, the priorities change with the development of the world wide web. More and more organizations replace the traditional office environment with the virtual office. The majority of organizational work is moved on-line. But the tasks remain the same. People learn how to solve them in the new reality. But as for the younger generations for whom it is almost natural to live “on-line“ the situation is different. All the practical communication skills mentioned before for these younger generations are something that seems not as important. What is stated here is not that children do not know how to talk to each other, it is more about them not being able to solve the task in cooperation with others. It is not something that is learned naturally throughout life, but something which requires some specific training, which is usually provided by schools, then universities. Modern e-learning system focuses on giving children study material, organizing exercises and giving test to see if the material was successfully understood. But it does not focus on building the relations between students.

4.1 Statistics

To understand the current situation more a survey was held among 47 respondents from 6 countries. The purpose of this survey was first of all to define the importance of getting the collaboration work skills and see if people who spent the majority of their life studying and learning traditionally obtain the following skill. It’s important to note that 80,9 % of the respondents are from the age of 18 to 24, 12,8 % - from the age of 25 till 30 and only 6,4 % older than thirty. Among the ones who passed the survey 44,7 % are current students. Statistically speaking the results would mostly reflect the views of current students getting the bachelors or the masters degree.

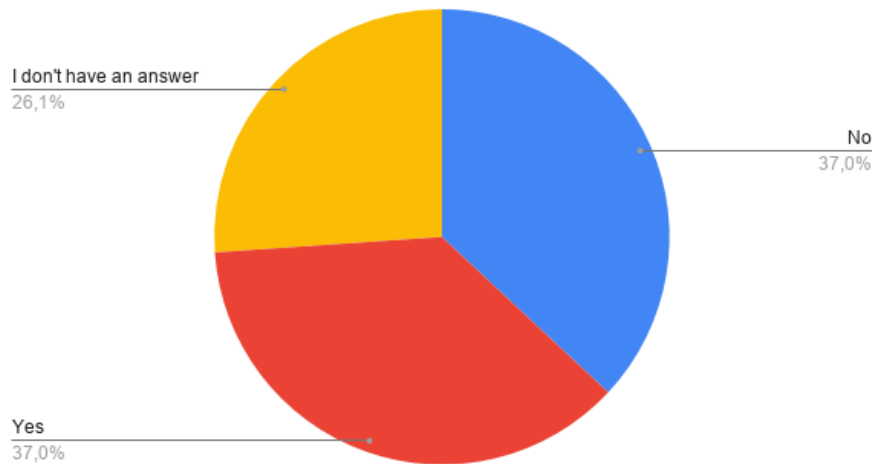


Almost all of the respondents said that it is essential to have collaborative work skills, which gives the right to conclude that in the modern world people still do collaborative work and the skill is still important.



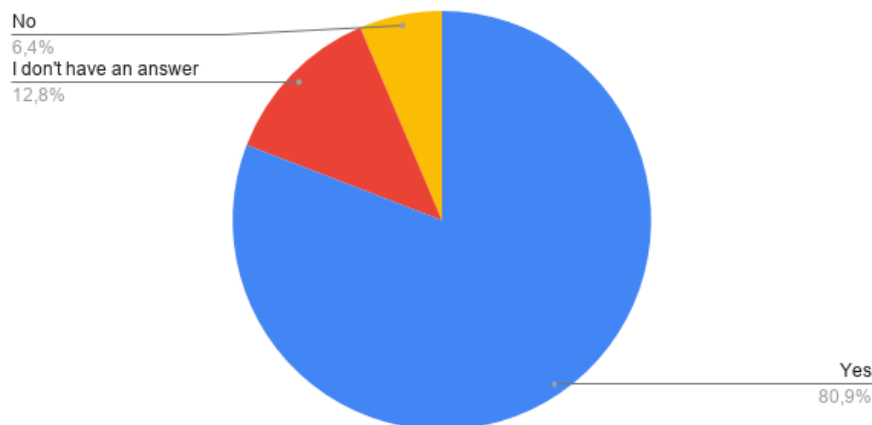
Next question was aimed to see if people consider the possibility of solving a task in a group on-line. The majority of respondents answered positively.

Is it easier for you to work on a project online?



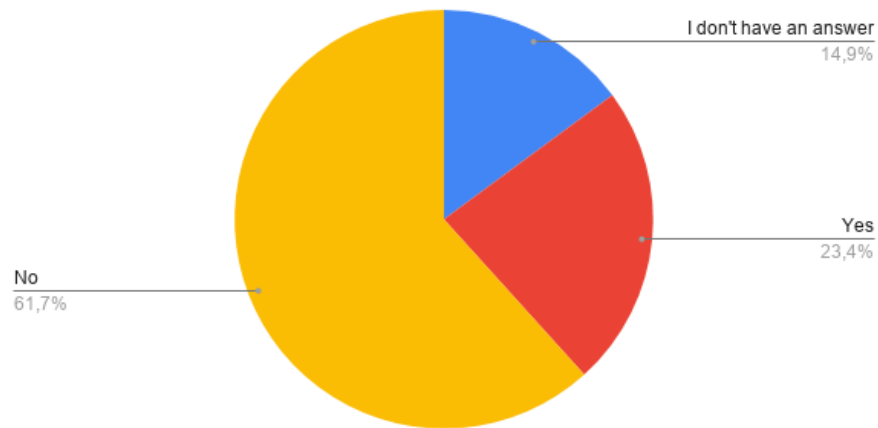
However, when the respondents were asked about the whole process of education and possibility to transfer it on-line, people were not as positive about it. Only 23,4 % said they consider such option. The majority still answered that they would prefer the traditional way of education. When they were asked to specify the reasons why they don't consider such options 30,3 % said that the practical skills cannot be learned through the digital devices. Some even specified and pointed out the idea of getting the skills of working in a group.

Do you think it's possible to organize a group project with several people involved online?



The last question of the survey was aimed to determine whether people feel comfortable doing project work on-line. Equal number of people answered positively and negatively.

Do you think it's possible to make all education at schools and higher education facilities online?



4.2 Analysis

5 Psychological Background

6 Changing the prospective

7 Conclusion

References

- [1] Christopher Brooks, Jim Greer, Erica Melis, and Carsten Ullrich. Combining its and elearning technologies: Opportunities and challenges. In Mitsuru Ikeda, Kevin D. Ashley, and Tak-Wai Chan, editors, *Intelligent Tutoring Systems*, pages 278–287, Berlin, Heidelberg, 2006. Springer Berlin Heidelberg.
- [2] Declan Dagger, Vincent P. Wade, and Owen Conlan. Developing active learning experiences for adaptive personalised elearning. In Paul M. E. De Bra and Wolfgang Nejdl, editors, *Adaptive Hypermedia and Adaptive Web-Based Systems*, pages 55–64, Berlin, Heidelberg, 2004. Springer Berlin Heidelberg.