

Chapter 6

Multimedia Use in UAE Education Context

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ABSTRACT

The growth in use of multimedia in United Arab Emirates schools has accelerated in recent years. Multimedia can be useful for both teachers and students alike. For example, multimedia is viewed as an important source of educational aids and a generator of resources that can add a lot to their performance. On the other hand, multimedia is positively perceived, for it makes the learning processes more comfortable and more enjoyable that leads to an improved performance. Generally, children are excited and fascinated by technology, and they are more receptive to lessons that are aided by multimedia. This is perhaps why many teachers are using multimedia in their classes to accomplish their learning objectives by creating a more interesting learning environment. For educators, multimedia provides a golden opportunity to promote interactive, technology-based collaborative learning that is perceived positively by all parties involved. This chapter investigated the role of the multimedia technologies in enhancing students' performance as many studies showed that technology has a great effect on improving students' reading, writing, and other skills. The study is also aimed at increasing educators' awareness of the importance of multimedia technology use in classrooms.

INTRODUCTION

Using multimedia in teaching can be an effective tool in enriching students' learning; though, it is of a great importance to integrate different kinds of technology into the curriculum to get the desired benefits. In order to reach this important result, cooperation should be established among teachers,

parents, students, administrators, specialists of curriculum, and researchers to be able to produce a successful integration of technology for the sake of the students' performance.

As part of the "Teachers for the 21st Century" initiative," the United Arab Emirates (UAE) plans to earmark up to \$55 million for a professional development program for teachers. International

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experts will advise UAE educators on ways to introduce modern educational methods in their classrooms (Middle East Educator, 2009).

According to Hofstetter (2001), stated that multimedia is the use of computer to present and combine text, graphics, audio and video with links and tools that let the user navigate, interact, create and communicate. Multimedia combines five basic types of media into the learning environment: text, video, sound, graphics and animation, thus providing a powerful new tool for education. Providing teachers with the tools they need to negotiate the changes is crucial to their success (Muir-Herzic, 2004).

This chapter provides an over view of different kinds of educational multimedia and their effective use as they pertain to the United Arab Emirates context; it provides an account of multimedia types, uses, and policies in the UAE with a critical analysis of its effective use with educators and academics in the educational fields. There is an increasing belief that Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) have been gaining importance in education and that its pedagogy has generated the need to preparing proficient ICT teachers who can effectively utilize it in different subjects. Even though the number of computers installed in schools significantly increased during the last several decades (Kleiner & Lewis, 2003), the way we teach in schools has changed little, and computers have not been fully integrated into school curricula (Collins & Halverson, 2009).

Generally, many multimedia types are used for different purposes in the UAE such as for presentations, online and print advertising, Email & viral marketing, e-cards, website development, database software creation, projects, development and production of CD ROMs & 3Ds, audio-visual shows, immersive media & high-end photography...etc. However, their uses in education have been limited to administrative and instructional uses by school staff and teachers. As indicated by many researchers (Forawi, Almekhlafi & Almekhlafy, 2011; Muir-Herzic, 2004) multimedia

activities can advance student learning of various subjects. Recently, Wu-Yuin, Rustam, and Szu-Min (2011) found that the designed learning activities supported by the VPen system, a multimedia program developed for students, could facilitate students' writing and speaking performance and therefore improve their learning achievement.

This chapter focuses on the multimedia and computer technology applications that are used in the UAE educational contexts and their effectiveness in advancing student learning. In particular, types of multimedia will be identified, schools' use of multimedia, and the UAE school experience with multimedia and computer technology.

BACKGROUND

It is believed that using multimedia and computer technology does not mean using computers only. When using any kind of technology in the classroom, it should open an endless access to different resources of knowledge. It should help in adding excitement and joy while learning. On the other hand, it should strengthen the idea of individual work as well as the group one for greater constructivist learning experiences. The importance of technology comes from the fact that it not only gives learners the opportunity to control their own learning process, but also provides them with ready access to a vast amount of information over which the teacher has no control (Lam & Lawrence, 2002).

Many studies showed that technology in general has a great effect on improving students' performance. On the other hand, using the internet in the class, as an example, can be fun. Internet is a whole world of information where students can benefit in an enjoyable way. Technology can provide teachers with the ability to convey concepts in new ways that cannot be achieved using other traditional instructional practices.

Since the secret of our success is our young generations who will be forming our future, so it

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