Digital working and learning in Education

How does the digital workplace promote communication and cooperation in education?

SOGETI The Technology Leaders

The world is rapidly becoming increasingly digitalized. At the same time, we see that today's education does not yet support the workforce of the future optimally in this respect. Digital opportunities are still not being adequately utilized in this sector. Even though online applications could simplify the work of instructors and the contact with their students enormously.

Making education more digital does not necessarily have to start in the classroom. The average instructor spends almost half of his or her time on duties other than teaching. This time is spent on grading tests, preparing lessons or updating student records, for instance. This is where the first gain in working faster and more efficiently can be achieved. A digital workplace can help.

1. Education in the 21st century: digitalization poses opportunities

Instructors face a major challenge. It was not so long ago that students were trained to perform a specific profession. That certainty is gone these days. Not least because the labor market is undergoing significant changes. Some professions are disappearing and new jobs are arising. Jobs which we cannot even imagine at this point. This presents instructors with a major challenge as well: how can you train students if you do not know precisely what work you are preparing them for?

From subject-matter knowledge to skills

In order to stay relevant in a world that is constantly changing, it is important to move along with the times. According to Stichting Leerplan Ontwikkeling, the answer lies in developing 11 essential skills (see box) and acquiring relevant subject-matter knowledge. These skills prepare students for jobs in which they must continue to learn, work together and solve problems for the rest of their lives. Naturally it is important that instructors develop these skills as well. This is the only way for them to realize what is needed to ensure that the skills of today's students are geared to the wishes on the labor market.

Now and in the future: 11 essential skills for students and instructors

1. **Critical thinking** : formulating one's own well-substantiated view or opinion.
2. **Creative thinking**: coming up with genuinely new ideas.
3. **Problem solving**: identifying and solving problems.
4. **Computational thinking**: formulating/reformulating a problem in a process-oriented way so that the problem can be solved using computer technology.
5. **Information skills**: finding and analyzing information from sources.
6. **Basic ICT skills**: the knowledge and skills necessary to understand the functioning of digital technology and networks and how to operate them.
7. **Media savviness**: using the internet and social media responsibly and safely.
8. **Communication**: making sure the message really gets across.
9. **Cooperation**: working with others optimally towards a common goal.
10. **Social & cultural skills**: dealing with different types of people and cultures.
11. **Self-regulation**: working independently and taking responsibility for that.

Custom education

Many educational institutions and students have a growing need for custom education: education more closely attuned to the talents and needs of the students. In this context, the students themselves choose what subjects they want to take and whether they want an advisor from the business sector as a coach, for example. Technology is indispensable in this. Only smart ICT solutions can provide quick insight into the effects of individual teaching programs on, for instance, scheduling, teaching formats and teaching materials. Insight that is needed in order to further implement an individualized approach.

Performing under a great deal of work pressure

Not just the character of education is changing, but the conditions in which instructors must work are far from ideal.

The aging of the population means that many instructors are leaving the workforce and not enough new ones are joining. This increases the pressure on people still working in education. Added to this is the fact that government requirements are becoming increasingly stringent, resulting in a more onerous administrative burden. Smart digital applications can in fact relieve instructors of some of these administrative tasks. Think of the time that could be saved if administrative systems were better geared to each other, for instance, allowing instructors to obtain insight at a single glance and eliminating the need for them to enter data more than once.

The next generation of students and instructors

Finally, the expectations of students and instructors entering education in the coming years are also changing. While historically education has been a traditional environment that tends to follow the trend, educational institutions in the year 2018 (and beyond) can no longer avoid digitalization. For students, it is incomprehensible for instructors to only be available via email or during class.

The instructors now entering the labor market also come from a generation accustomed to doing everything online. This can cause friction with the traditional group of instructors. At the same time, it is an opportunity for faster adoption of new digital possibilities. There is one thing we can be clear about: in order to be and remain attractive to a new generation of students and instructors, educational institutions have no choice but to invest today in the possibilities of tomorrow.

2. Focus on the instructor, employee and student

Continuing to innovate is an absolute must, therefore. Educational institutions are increasingly seeking solutions geared to the wishes of students, instructors and employees alike. And even if every target group at your educational institution has a different need, there is one common denominator: the need to work together efficiently.

Educational institutions who want to make progress would be wise to focus on their instructors, employees and students, therefore. It is essential in this context to look carefully at the wishes of the individual user and the world in which they live. Students are accustomed to being in contact with friends at all times, no matter where they are, for instance. Whether via WhatsApp, Instagram, or while gaming. They therefore expect that during their study, that will also be able to access relevant documents at all times, no matter where they are, and communicate with instructors and fellow students.

Instructors and employees often still come from a different generation and are looking for a solution which allows them to do their work enjoyably without being inundated with technical gadgets. Above all they want an environment that helps them complete their administrative duties quicker, but also a method that makes grading tests less sensitive to error, for instance.

Schools perceive a challenge in this respect: how can an innovative solution be implemented that provides added value for students, instructors and employees alike? In short, how do you create a digital environment in which everyone can work?

Working together with whom you want, wherever you are

It may seem obvious, but whenever a solution must be found, an accessible solution that provides everyone with added value needs to be opted for. This is the only way to ensure that students, instructors and employees start working together in the same environment. A digital workplace, also called a Smart Workspace, can provide this.

A digital workplace is in fact nothing other than a personalized workplace that can be contacted at any time, from anywhere. Whether you log in with your desktop, laptop, tablet or smart phone, you are always shown only the information that is of interest to you. After logging in, users no longer need to switch to a different environment. Chatting, emailing, or working on a document: you can do it all from your own digital workplace. Consequently an environment is created in which everyone can really work together.

The only thing users have to do is log into their own environment and they are given access to the applications they need. This enables instructors to start on their lesson preparation and then continue working on this while on the train, for instance. It could also allow students to start working on a project during the lecture and then continue working on it together with others after arriving home. And the instructor can observe and give students assistance in real time, regardless of where he is at that moment.

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4

Access to one's own personal environment

One great advantage of a Smart Workspace is that everyone can access his or her own personal environment on the basis of authentication. The underlying technology is identical for the entire educational institution, but the different target groups are given access to the applications and information important specifically for them.

Students
The digital workplace gives students an environment in which they can work with their classmates and instructors. They have all the relevant educational information in one workplace which they can access easily from their smart phone and laptop.

Instructors
In the digital workplace for instructors, they can easily use and make their educational tools accessible for their students. Within the Smart Workspace, they receive education information via the intranet and the applications they need; from administration to educational tools.

Employees
Employees can work with each other in the Smart Workspace. They find the applications they work with daily in their own workplace. They also have access to an intranet, of course, where they can find all the information relevant for them.

3. Smart cooperation in education

By using cloud technology, students, instructors and employees always have access to the Smart Workspace, wherever they may be and using whatever device they wish. This workspace is then configured entirely according to the wishes of your educational institution.

Basic functionalities in education
The digital workplace is based on Microsoft technology and is consequently an excellent match for educational institutions that predominantly use Microsoft. In the Smart Workspace, educational institutions will find Microsoft Office 365, for instance, in which users can send email using Outlook, create documents in Word, Excel or PowerPoint and share and edit information using SharePoint.

Educational institutions can use SharePoint to easily create their own intranet environment in which education information, education news and teaching materials can be shared. The integrated chat function and Skype possibilities allow users to chat and (video) call each other in real time. Working together efficiently and flexibly has never been so easy.

Integration with other applications
Educational institutions use electronic learning environments where course material, information about instructors and students, discussion forums and testing possibilities can be found. This is convenient if the information from the electronic learning environment is also accessible via the digital workplace. The Smart Workspace makes this possible; when links are created with other applications, such as the electronic learning environment, everything can be accessed from one location. This could also include links with the Student Information Systems, student monitoring systems or a personnel information system, for instance. The advantage of this is that if an application is changed or updated, users can simply continue working in the way they are accustomed to.

Getting to work immediately and securely
With the Smart Workspace, educational institutions benefit from existing technology and no lengthy implementation process is required. Workplaces are set up based on authorizations and users are given direct access to the applications relevant for them.

The digital workplace is well secured, naturally. In addition to a password, it is also possible to opt for an extra security layer using a code received on one's cell phone, for instance. The Smart Workspace is so intelligent that it can see on what device the user is trying to log in and whether he or she is within or outside the network.
This allows you to require users to be subject to an extra layer of security when working from home, for instance, which is not required within the walls of the educational institution. This option is also possible on the application level; the personnel information system can always be secured with an extra code, for instance.

Always up to date
The Smart Workspace for education is a standard solution that can save educational institutions a great deal of time. Not least because IT departments will no longer have to spend hours on keeping systems up to date and maintaining workstations. The Smart Workspace guarantees you that you are always working in the latest version.

And if a student's, instructor's or employee's device stops working, they can use a different device to log in to the digital work environment and immediately resume their work. Without data becoming lost or available to unauthorized people.

4. Making a starting on the Smart Workspace

Technology is developing at a rapid pace and offers educational institutions more and more possibilities nowadays. But how can educational institutions be sure they are using the right solutions?

Sogeti helps educational institutions find their way in the digital world. We know how to meet the needs of students, instructors and employees. For us, the end user is always the focus in creating user happiness. Based on the needs of students, instructors and employees, we create functionalities that offer simple implementation, supported by smart technology.

All in a single, personalized and user-friendly digital workplace which allows people to work at any time, no matter where they are: the Smart Workspace.

We also remain involved as a partner and ensure that you can continue to inspire your employees, students and instructors. For example, by creating a digital colleague with a chatbot or by using the possibilities of facial recognition.

And we know better than anyone how important it is to create support within the organization for new solutions. With accessible workshops and custom support, we ensure that the Smart Workspace is also actually used by all target groups. This assures you that you are investing in a future-proof solution that will be embraced by students, instructors and employees.

Would you like to learn how the Smart Workspace could optimally support your instructors, students and employees as well? We would be happy to show you the possibilities. If you are enthusiastic about the idea, we can of course help you set up the Smart Workspace.

The educational institution's objectives are the focus in this process, along with the needs and wishes of instructors, students and employees. Once these are clear, we can set about configuring an optimal work environment for your educational institution. And because the implementation lead-time is short, you can quickly make the digital work environment available to your instructors, employees and students. Making your educational institution ready for the future as well.

Advantages of a Sogeti Smart Workspace

▶ Efficient and secure cooperation for students, instructors and employees.

▶ Single login to access all relevant information.

▶ Save time with applications that are always up to date.

▶ Simple management.

▶ No worries about a secure environment.

▶ Support from an IT partner with experience in education, see also the case of ROC Friesland College, for instance.

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Winner Partner Project
of the Year:
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Want to know more?

Curious about what the Smart Workspace could do for your educational institution? Visit www.sogeti.com/solutions/digital/smart-workspace

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