

The Internet - an essential resource for today's teacher

Ninette Lucia

This is an extract from a long essay written jointly by Ninette Lucia and Maria Mintoff.

“ Use the Internet as a learning environment not just a transmitter of information ”



Ninette Lucia is an assistant Head of School at Hamrun 'B' (G.P.) and is currently following a University course leading to a diploma in I.T. in Education. She attributes great importance to Primary School teaching and believes that computers in primary classrooms will bring about invaluable improvement in this sector.

Today's technology can provide teachers and students with opportunities for teaching and learning that were impossible in the past. The Internet has become a powerful means of communication, a unique combination of information and *people* who collaborate to create a massive web of resources and data available to anyone. In education, the Internet could be an ideal way of assisting teachers in their professional development. By providing ideas, material and data which are relevant, up-to-date and quick and easy to access, the Internet's potential as an educational resource and as an innovative medium of teaching is obvious.

It is, however, important that teachers use the Internet as a learning environment not just a transmitter of information.

The innumerable educational Web sites that can be accessed on the net offer a wide range of material that vary in accuracy, relevance and quality. This is due to the fact that the Internet is not managed by any particular organisation and as a result the information is not always reviewed by editors. Anyone is free to write and publish anything on 'Cyberspace'.

Issues concerning the use of the Internet by the teacher

If the Internet is to become an integral part of education as outlined in the draft document of the new National Curriculum for Education in Malta (March, 1998), then it is imperative for teachers to acquire the necessary expertise to be able to use it and have access to it. An

effort must be made to educate teachers in this new technology.

Network Literacy

In order to be able to manipulate 'Cyberspace' teachers have first and foremost to understand what the Internet is, its capacities and its limitations. It is also important that they gain a certain amount of technical detail and Internet terminology. Teachers need to learn how to navigate the Internet and how to upload and download files. It is necessary for teachers to be trained in the use of search engines, to know exactly what they are looking for and to find the right way to phrase their requirements. If not, the search might come up with too many unnecessary answers or no answers at all.

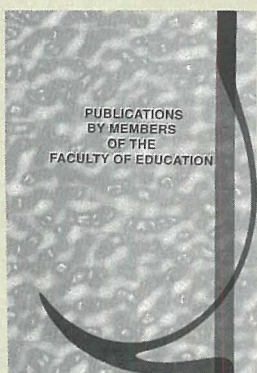
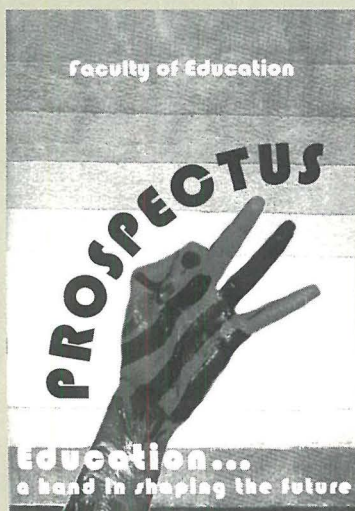
Digital Literacy Skills

Of utmost importance is the fact that it is the teachers' job to assess and evaluate what is located on the Internet. They should develop digital literacy skills which would enable them to

- evaluate information;
- sort the appropriate sites from the inappropriate ones;
- look for the type of information which is suitable for specific purposes.

It is correct to conclude that *'Nothing before has captured the imagination and interest of educators simultaneously around the globe more than the World Wide Web'* (Owston, 1997). This synergistic outcome is by itself already remarkable and certainly a phenomenon which Maltese educators should strive to be a part of.

The Faculty of Education celebrates its 20th Anniversary



As part of its celebrations of its 20th Anniversary, the Faculty of Education has published two important volumes: *The Faculty of Education Prospectus: Education... a hand in shaping the future*, and *Publications by Members of the Faculty of Education*. Both publications can be obtained from the Faculty itself.

“What better way to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the foundation of the Faculty of Education at the University of Malta than to present this list of academic publications of staff members to the community? ... Not only does it prove, if any such proof were required, the healthy - indeed thriving - implant of educational studies at the University, but it also speaks volumes to those who would wish to construct an educational community on a science of teaching and learning, in Malta and further afield.”

Ronald G. Sultana, Dean, Faculty of Education
from the Foreword to Publications by Members of the Faculty of Education