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The implications of computer-integrated Theme Days for learners at St Alban's College

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This dissertation is dedicated to my children

Charlé and Elani Viljoen

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List of Abbreviations

CAE	Computer-Assisted Education
CIE	Computer-Integrated Education
CLC	Connected Learning Community (at St Alban's College)
HTML	Hypertext Markup Language
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEB	Independence Examination Board
ISP	Internet Service Provider
LAN	Local area network
N-Gen	Net Generation
PC	Personal Computer
OBE	Outcomes-Based Education
StaTech	St Alban's Technology Centre
UP	University of Pretoria
URL	Uniform Resource Locator
WWW	World Wide Web

Abstract

Candidate: Marlene Viljoen
Leader: Prof Dr Johannes Cronjé
Department: Teaching and Training Studies
Faculty: Education
Degree: MEd (Computer-Assisted Education)
Title of dissertation: *The implications of computer-integrated Theme Days for learners at St Alban's College*

This essay reports on an investigation of an integrative solution to facilitating cooperative learning for net generation learners in a technology-rich environment. Of specific interest is the changing roles of learners and educators as well as the enabling role of technology. The case study investigated and utilised to compile this dissertation is the *Earthly Aliens Theme Day*. Data obtained by interviewing and observing Theme Day participants is utilised to support the answers of the research questions.

The research results of this study have shown that St Alban's College successfully managed to implement computer-integrated Theme Days. The College broke the barriers between subjects; learners participated in a learning experience that is closer to reality than just another 'typical' educational experience during a normal day at school. The concept of group work has been introduced to learners, and they are allowed to be creative, lateral thinkers and problem solvers.

A small committee of learners gained managerial skills, while College graduates who are entering the job market are equipped with the necessary cross-curricular life skills to cope in today's technological advanced world.

Keywords

- Learners
- Educators
- Connected Learning Community (CLC) committee
- Pedagogy
- Cooperative learning
- Technology
- Computer-integrated Theme Day

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Definition of Terms

Bandwidth

The difference between the highest and lowest frequencies available for a network signal. A measure of information-carrying capacity of a transmission wire or the range of transmission frequency that a network can use (Schrum & Berenfeld, 1997:162). The wider the bandwidth the more information it can carry.

CD-ROM

Digitally encoded information permanently recorded on a compact disc. Information can be accessed very quickly.

Download

Standard method of moving files across the Internet. Files are transferred from a personal computer to an Internet server making use of FTP.

Email (Electronic mail)

A network application for exchanging mail messages over various types of networks using various network protocols. A messages can be addressed to an individual or a to a large number of people.

ERIC

Acronym for Educational Resources Information Centre. A United States funded information system that provides access to education related information.

Firewall

Intranet software that prevents external users from accessing a proprietary network, while allowing internal users such as the learners from St Alban's College access to external networks.

Homepage

The introductory first or main page of a Web site to which other pages or sites are linked. The home page *URL* is usually the Web address of the individual or company.

Information and Communication Technologies

Information and communication Technologies is the convergence of microelectronics, computers and telecommunications, which enable the transmission, and reception of digital data signals, including text, video and audio. ICTs incorporate the technologies such as storage e.g. CD-ROMs; networks e.g. fixed, wireless and satellite telecommunications broadcasting; and processing e.g. application software (Morgan, 2001:vii).

ITFORUM

ITFORUM is a list that discusses theories, research, new paradigms and practices in the field of Instructional Technology (http://it.coe.uga.edu/itforum/home.html).

Local area network (LAN)

A network linking computers over a short distance. LANs facilitate communication and sharing of computer resources such as printer.

Search engine

A type of software that facilitates locating files and information based on keywords and descriptions. Examples of popular international search engines are Altavista.com., Yahoo.com or a local search engine such as Ananzi.com.

Service provider

An organisation or network that offers connectivity to telecommunication services.

Technology

Technology is the application of science through the use of tools. Throughout this study, the important educational technology is taken to be computers and ICTs.

URL

The acronym for Uniform Resource Locator or an electronic address on the WWW. URL's define the domain name of the Web server where a resource resides and the directory path to access a named Web file or resource.

Web

Refer to World Wide Web.

Web pages

Files coded in the HTML language and accessible as part of a Web site.

Web site

The World Wide Web is often referred to as "the Web" or WWW. A large-scale, interlinked global system of distributed hypermedia resources with a graphical interface that can be accessed and from which information can be selected for retrieval to a local computer.

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