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Boosting Students' Motivation with Google Apps for Education

The paper is an outline of how different Google Apps for Education can be used to boost students' motivation to study and improve their performance. It particularly focuses on the use of Google Classroom, Blogger, Google Drive, Google Sites, Google+, Google Calendar, which allow to hone students' professional skills and deepen their knowledge while enabling them to produce real-life outputs of their educational activity that will be of use to them in their future professional development. And these outputs are primarily what motivate the students to do the best job they can when completing the assignments.

Keywords: Google Apps for Education, motivation, brand, professional development.

The use of dedicated internet resources in education has been dynamically expanding in the recent years along with the expansion of the access to them all over the globe. The inclusion of such resources within the structure of the educational process is conditioned by the fact that they not only facilitate the process of learning and make it more engaging and interesting, but also help develop the real-life communication and collaboration skills, teach to be responsible and think critically.

The purpose of this paper is to illustrate how different Google Apps for Education can help boost students' motivation to learn better and to learn more.

The relevance of the paper lies in the fact that motivation is the driving force in any learning as motivated people achieve better results in whatever they are doing.

The statements of this paper rely on the empirical data obtained over the years of experimental implementation of different Google Apps for Education at the School of Foreign Languages (V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, Ukraine) since 2014.

The world educators' community has been advocating the use of Google Apps in education since the first of them emerged. There are abundant accounts of case studies describing the benefits of such apps for both teachers and students. Thus, Dan R. Herrick reveals "the potential of teamwork and idea exchanges made possible by Google Apps" [1]. Lindsay Oishi describes how "valuable interactive features in Apps make collaboration a lot easier" [2]. Dirk Schneckenberg's case study illustrates how the use of Google Apps helps build a "collaborative learning environment" and create "competence-oriented e-learning activities" that will "foster competence development of students" [3].

The School of Foreign Languages (V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, Ukraine) has also contributed to this pool of case studies and good practices of Google Apps use in the academic process.

Thus, the educational process organization with Google Classroom has proven to be helpful in enabling the participants to organize and manage the educational process more efficiently through a very user-friendly and intuitive interface of the application. The polls conducted among the students show that the use of this application improves students' self-organization and self-discipline, and helps them manage their time more effectively and efficiently [4].

The advantages of the use of Google Drive are most pronounced in writing course and diploma papers for it improves the quality of the written papers by facilitating plagiarism detection and prevention, ensuring the safety and accessibility of the information and offering time-saving and user-friendly co-editing features.

Particularly beneficial in terms of developing different professional and life skills is the use of Blogger. When integrated in the academic process, it has been proven to be effective in developing critical thinking, cultivating pedagogical tolerance and axiological values, honing evaluation skills of future teachers.

Google Hangouts application comes in very handy when there is a need to conduct classes during quarantine periods, or to illustrate how something is done in real time thanks to its screen sharing feature.

The above mentioned advantages of the use of some of the Google Apps in the educational process are also some of those motivating students to do better in their studies. The latter in mind, let us have a closer look at these and other applications from Google that are good at boosting students' motivation.

The application with the most potential for motivating students to learn better will probably be Blogger. Engaging students in group peer-reviewed blogging has proven to increase their performance and change their attitude to the assignments they are set. Understanding that their posts and comments will be read and evaluated not only by the teacher but also by their groupmates and potentially anyone in the net who may come across the blog is the most effective motivator for them to do their best in producing the best quality content for which they will gain praise from their peers, the teacher and the global internet community. Of course, production of such content requires much time and effort from the students, which at the same time means that they will do some thorough analysis and critical evaluation of the content before making it public. They treat such assignments with the conscious sense of responsibility. This significantly reduces, if not completely eliminates, cases of plagiarism because, with all the content published online, being caught on academic dishonesty is very easy and bears much more severe consequences than a bad mark – a damaged reputation of a liar in the global internet community is able to undermine the chances of landing a good job (a reputed employer is very unlikely to employ a person known for

plagiarizing). This 'public scrutiny', so to speak, motivates students to constantly improve, to come up with interesting ideas that will earn them positive feedback from and acknowledgement of their peers, in other words, to create a successful personal brand. And this in itself is the best motivation a student can have.

A Google+ profile has a similar motivational potential for students. By creating and maintaining a Google+ profile, students are building their own brands as professionals. Their Blogger posts can be set to automatically appear in the profile feed. Moreover, the profile provides for the opportunity to join and follow the news and updates of the professional communities of interest, which enables the profile owner to keep his or her finger on the pulse of the latest developments in the field of his or her expertise. Keeping a Google+ profile also enables students to build their own communities based on the common professional interests, create their own or follow others' collections of achievements, life hacks, tips and tools in the relevant field. Thus, regardless of the field of expertise students are being trained to acquire, creating and keeping a Google+ profile may be a good motivator for them in deepening their knowledge and enhancing their personal involvement in the professional field. It is like creating a professional portfolio for potential employers and building a platform for like-minded experts to join in and share. The real-life benefits of the activity are thereby so evident that students do not doubt the usefulness and potential outcomes thereof, which increases their motivation to do better.

Another application from Google that can help manage students' time more effectively is Google Calendar. It is an easy and convenient way to make appointments (e.g. for a Hangouts session, or a meeting at a particular place) with teachers, students and/or parents, and to keep to a schedule, to set deadlines to assignments and to get notified of them at the desired intervals and frequency. In terms of motivation, it teaches students to be more disciplined and organized, and they soon notice how much they manage to achieve, and feel proud of their accomplishments, which in its turn, motivates them to do even more.

Yet another resource from Google that has potential to boost students' motivation to increase their performance in a particular area of study is Google Sites. This is a free and easy-to-use platform for creating personal websites. Students may be asked to create personal or group websites featuring particular topics, or accumulating the results of their research in a particular field. Like in the case with Blogger and Google+ profile, the website is public, which means that students, when completing their assignments, are strongly motivated to perform as best they can because everyone's contribution is evident. Creating a Google site is a good substitution for a project or research paper considering that it allows the executor to integrate not only bare facts, but also multimedia evidence of the points illustrated in it and interactive polls to collect feedback for subsequent evaluation of the impact made by the material presented.

As it was mentioned above, Google Drive is a good platform for writing diploma and course papers as well as other types of written projects, including group ones. Thanks to its co-editing functionality and facilitated plagiarism detection procedure (all materials being initially digital, all it takes is to copy them to the plagiarism detection software to see how much of them is borrowed), of which the students are informed and aware, the students are motivated enough to produce only original and good quality content. The activity tracking feature and revision history serve as a good motivator, too, because they clearly show everyone's contribution to and involvement in the process.

The last, though not least, resource from Google that I would like to cite within this paper as a motivation booster is Google Classroom. Although primarily organizational in nature, this service is good at motivating students to perform better thanks to the assignment revision option it offers. The teacher accepting, the student may improve the completed task after it is reviewed and graded by the teacher and re-submit an improved version thereof with the teacher's remarks taken into account. For more complex assignments, this process of editing may require several revisions before the desired result is achieved. In addition to that, Google Classroom provides for collaborative document editing though the use of the Google Drive elements (Google Docs, Sheets, Slides). This is a good tool for group projects, especially with the teacher being able to monitor and, if needed, steer the process in the right direction by occasional corrections, editing, commenting online. Moreover, when using Google Classroom, each student can only see his or her grades and no one else's in the class, which ensures the privacy some students, particularly those with lower performance, appreciate a lot.

Therefore, Google Apps for Education, particularly Google Classroom, Blogger, Google Drive, Google Sites, Google+, Google Calendar, when used in the educational process organization, or for completion of individual assignments, are effective in motivating students to increase their performance and produce better results thanks to their user-friendly interfaces, real-life outputs obtained and online presence in the internet for everyone to be judge of them. Their use enables the students not only hone their professional skills and deepen their knowledge, but also to create real products (profiles, blogs, websites, portfolios) that they will be able to use in their professional development even after graduation. And the students are aware of that, which in itself is the strongest motivator there is, for they are building their professional future, their professional brand.

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