Personal Statement

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Overview

This narrative details my work activities, goals, and aspirations in the areas of research scholarship, teaching, and service. I aim to demonstrate that I have reached a level in my academic career that is commensurate with that expected for tenure-track faculty members, three years after their initial appointment as Assistant Professors. I will detail my efforts to establish an externally funded, internationally recognized research program, become an effective and inspiring teacher, and provide service to the University and the wider academic community.

Prior credentials

I earned my Ph.D. from the University of the Aegean in 2005, on the educational uses of virtual reality. Shortly after, I began working as a part-time Lecturer at the Department of Primary Education, of the aforementioned University, in both its undergraduate and postgraduate programs. My courses were about the educational uses of ICT, namely 3D graphics, virtual reality, and multimedia applications. In addition, my research interests included distance education, since, at that time, the Internet and its applications were gaining a significant momentum. During the summer of 1999, the research team, with which I was affiliated, was the first to install a fully operational teleconferencing and distance education system in primary schools located in remote islands of the Aegean Sea (with less than 300 inhabitants), even though high-speed Internet connections were not yet available to the public.

In parallel to the above, till 2013, I worked as a full-time primary school teacher, having a total of twenty-two years of service, with the last three of them being a primary school headmaster. I value a lot my prior career as a primary school teacher because I was given the opportunity to apply and test, in real-world settings, my ideas on how ICT can shape the future of education. Not only that but the outcomes of those early experiments and also the feedback I had from students and fellow teachers, fashioned my philosophy on the matter.

In August 2013, I "reinvented" myself and decided to pursue an academic career. This resulted in a significant shift in both my courses' content and research interests. Now, both focus on 3D multi-user virtual environments (MUVEs), which, among other things, can be used as advanced distance education systems, digital educational games, educational uses of augmented reality, and all forms of emerging technologies that have an educational potential. This was done because I believe that, as a researcher, I have to be at the forefront of the developments regarding educational technology. I have to admit that this is not an easy task, but I am highly motivated and encouraged by the preliminary results of this endeavor, as it will be further elaborated in the coming sections.

Philosophy

My first driving belief is that technology should be used in the service of humanity. Applied properly it will enhance health, safety, justice, economic equality, and education. The transformative power of technology is my second driving belief. In education, technology is commonly viewed as an enabler; it is widely used -to a varying degree- for supporting teaching. The rapid advances in ICT have transfigured technology. From an enabler, it became a driver, forcing changes in all aspects of human activity, leading many to envision the transformation of education by technology. Unfortunately, education is not responsive to changes; new technology trends are not easily accepted by the prevailing educational establishment. At the same time, the technological advances are constantly pushing for even more changes. This has resulted in a profound contradiction. Outside the classroom, students are highly engaged in using cutting-edge technologies many

of which are inherently educational and could easily be exploited by schools. Inside the classroom, these technologies are shut out of school-based learning.

In addition, though researchers have disseminated the findings of innumerable studies demonstrating the significant educational benefits of technology, educators still continue to flounder alone. Piecemeal research agendas and poor implementation strategies are not affecting the lethargic and resistant to changes educational systems. Consequently, I believe that we have to rethink and reorganize what, where, and how we teach our children with and through technology. For teachers, however, this would be a monumental challenge, since, to a great extent, how to use technology in teaching remains unexplored to modern pedagogy, and everything is new and strange to in- and pre-service teachers. Therefore, it is at the hands of academics to provide pre-service teachers with the necessary expertise that will allow them (a) to become proficient users of diverse -and even advanced and emerging- forms of educational technologies and (b) to make good use of the above tools during their teaching. It is my view that by educating the future educators in technological innovations, we are pushing the envelope in education, progressively creating a critical mass of individuals positively inclined toward technology, which will, hopefully, bring the much-needed educational reform.

Long-term agenda

Although in short-term, if I am to succeed in my personal goals, I must succeed in the day-to-day job of being a professor, there is also a "latent" long-term personal agenda, that of addressing the issues related to the integration of emerging technologies (e.g., drones, 3D printers, virtual and augmented reality, tablets, and mobile devices) in education. This goal is intimately intertwined with what I do: teaching, inspiring students, finding innovative uses of technology, and thinking.

I believe the best way to have the kind of impact I want to have in the world, is to build a successful research program that will seek new and innovative educational uses of technology, inspire legions of students to educate themselves, and to create a personal reputation of sufficient standing that when I talk, people will listen. Thus, in the long term, I would like to establish a center for emerging technologies, bringing together researchers from a broad range of fields. This center would explicitly identify future educational applications of technology. Further, it would encourage the research directions and collaborations necessary to enable those applications.

The first steps toward this end have already been taken with the research initiative Emerging Technologies in Education (ETiE) that I am leading. Its main purpose is to study the educational uses of emerging technologies in subjects taught at a primary and junior high school level. Though it is still an informal initiative, ETiE's team of academics, researchers, pre- and post-graduate students, as well as Ph.D. candidates, is steadily growing. We have studied the educational uses of drones, tablets, mobile apps, immersive virtual reality, and holograms. Also, models for explaining why and how students learn when using virtual environments have been tested. The outcomes of these studies have been published in a range of scholarly journals (e.g., Journal of Computers in Education; Journal of Information Technology Education: Research; Education and Information Technologies; Educational Technology Research and Development; and Technology, knowledge and Learning).

I realize that the university may be more interested in my shorter-term accomplishments and goals. As I see things, my job description consists of three major categories: scholarship contributions and research, teaching and advising, and service to the university and the community. In the sections below, I have outlined my activities in these areas.

Scholarly contributions

Until today, I have co-authored and published one hundred and ninety-three research papers in several conference proceedings, edited volumes, and journals. I am also the co-author of three books and co-edited seven volumes and conference proceedings and edited volumes. While I am the sole author in a number of papers, I think it is important to note that much of this work was the result of collaboration with colleagues, pre- and post-graduate students, as well as with PhD candidates. Not only I find that I work best when I

collaborate widely, but I also believe that science is best practiced in collaboration with researchers that excel in each of their respective areas and can come together to answer questions that may exceed the individual's ability to do so.

There are two distinct periods in my scholarly writing and research; the first spans from 1998 to 2013 and the other started in early 2014. During the first period, I co-authored a total of thirty-two papers (including two books, four chapters in edited volumes, five papers in peer-reviewed Greek and international journals, and twenty-one papers in the proceedings of Greek and international conferences).

In the first book (Tsolakidis et al., 2007), we presented an extensive report on the problems that multi-grade schools (across thirteen European countries) face and how ICT can help to leverage these problems, allowing these schools to run more efficiently and also provide quality education to students. This was also the theme in a chapter (Tsolakidis & Fokides, 2010), as well as in five papers we presented in Greek and international conferences (Orfanakis et al., 2003; Tsolakidis & Fokides, 2001; Tsolakidis, Fokides, Fokiali, Saridou, Orfanakis, & Sotiriou, 2003; Tsolakidis, Fokides, Fokiali, Sotiriou, & Orfanakis, 2003; Tsolakidis et al., 2003).

The second book (Fokides & Tsolakidis, 2011), was the offspring of my Ph.D. thesis and examined from a theoretical and a technical perspective the issues related to the use of virtual reality in education. The same applied to two chapters in edited volumes (Fokides & Tsolakidis, 2013, 2010). Moreover, virtual reality in education was the theme in four papers in journals and in three papers in conference proceedings. In four we examined the issue from a theoretical perspective (Fokides & Tsolakidis, 2004, 2003a, 2003b; Tsolakidis & Fokides, 2004). In another three we presented the results of pilot projects in which virtual reality was used for teaching road safety to primary school students (Fokides & Tsolakidis, 2008) and for the development of a virtual museum regarding Byzantine and medieval art (Zouboula, Fokides, & Tsolakidis, 2008; Zouboula, Fokides, Tsolakidis, & Vratsalis, 2008).

In a chapter in an edited volume, we dealt with teachers' views regarding ICT (Tsolakidis, Fokides, & Vratsalis, 2005). This was also the issue in my first paper that was presented at a conference two decades ago (Kefalakis & Fokides, 1998), as well as in two other conference papers (Tsolakidis & Fokides, 2007, 2003). In a paper in a journal, as well as a paper in the proceedings of an international conference, we discussed how students' creativity can be enhanced through the use of computer-based learning environments (Kampylis, Fokides, & Theodorakopoulou, 2011; Kampylis, Fokides, & Theodorakopoulou, 2007).

Finally, distance education, video conferencing, and web-based education, were the themes in nine papers in the proceeding of Greek and international conferences (Tsolakidis, Fokiali, & Fokides, 2003; Tsolakidis & Fokides, 2002, 2000, 1999; Tsolakidis, Fokides, & Fokiali, 2003; Tsolakidis, Fokides, Skourtis, & Chatzopoulos, 2001; Tsolakidis C., Poupaki I., Fokides, E., Spyropoulos, K., & Touratzidis, L., 2001; Tsolakidis, Skourtis, Kavouklis, Abartzoglou, & Fokides, 2002; Tsolakidis, Skourtis, Kavouklis, Abartzoglou, & Fokides, 2001).

During the second period (2014-today), I co-authored another book and I was the co-editor in seven edited volumes and conference proceedings (Karamouzis et al., 2024; Katsadoros, & Fokides, 2022; Sofos, Skoumios et al., 2022; Sofos, Chionidou-Moskofoglou et al., 2022; Sofos et al., 2021; Sofos, Tsimpidaki et al., 2020; Sofos, Skoumios et al., 2020). I also published a total of one hundred and sixty-three papers (including twenty-two chapters in edited volumes, eighty-five papers in peer-reviewed Greek and international journals, and fifty-six papers in the proceedings of Greek and international conferences). Virtual reality gave way to a more sophisticated type of 3D applications, that of 3D multiuser virtual environments (MUVEs). In five chapters in edited volumes (Atsikpasi & Fokides, 2020; Chronopoulou & Fokides, 2020; Fokides & Chronopoulou, 2021; Fokides, Mastrokoukou, & Atsikpasi, 2017; Zampouli & Fokides, 2018), as well as in nine papers in Greek and international journals (Fokides & Atsikpasi, 2016; Fokides & Chachlaki, 2019; Fokides, Chronopoulou, & Kaimara, 2019; Fokides & Samioti, 2023; Fokides & Sfakianou, 2017; Fokides & Zampouli, 2017; Mastrokoukou & Fokides, 2015a; Sfakianou & Fokides, 2017; Zampouli & Fokides, 2016), and in twelve papers in the proceedings of Greek and international conferences (Atsikpasi & Fokides, 2019, 2020a; Fokides, Atsikpasi, & Zampouli, 2016; Fokides, Chachlaki, & Liarakou, 2017; Fokides & Chronopoulou, 2020; Fokides & Komizoglou, 2018; Kefalakis & Fokides, 2019, 2021, 2022a, 2022b; Mastrokoukou & Fokides, 2015b; Sfakianou & Fokides, 2018) my colleagues and I dealt with how MUVEs can be used to satisfy the needs of modern pedagogy in various teaching subjects, as well as for improving the well-being of students with special educational needs. I take great pride in two of the aforementioned papers. Namely, in 2018, the paper "Virtual museums in arts education. Results of a pilot project in primary school settings" (Fokides &

Sfakianou, 2017), received the best paper award at the annual excellence awards of the University of the Aegean. Also, the paper "Content and Language Integrated Learning in OpenSimulator Project. Results of a pilot implementation in Greece" (Fokides & Zampouli, 2017), was awarded, in 2017, an honorable mention at the annual excellence awards of the University of the Aegean.

While interventions and pilot projects that examine the learning outcomes when using MUVEs are quite significant, I believe that understanding how students and adults learn when using these environments is of the utmost importance. For that matter, different models were developed and tested, that allowed me to have a deeper understanding of the factors and intellectual processes affecting the learning outcomes. The results were presented in six Greek and international journals (Atsikpasi & Fokides, 2018a; Fokides, 2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d; Fokides & Atsikpasi, 2018a), in two chapters in edited volumes (Atsikpasi & Fokides, 2020b; Fokides & Atsikpasi, 2018b), as well as in one paper in the proceedings of a conference (Atsikpasi & Fokides, 2018b, 2020). Also, in a paper (Fokides, 2021a) I examined how users shape their avatars in relation to elements of their personality.

Since 2019, applications that incorporate 360° videos draw my attention. Such applications are generally seen as another form of virtual reality. In a chapter in an edited volume, I presented the fields in which they can be applied (Fokides, 2020a). In eight papers, published in a scientific journals and one in conference proceedings, we examined the use of such videos/applications for teaching history (Fokides, 2022; Fokides, Polydorou, & Mazarakis, 2020; Mourtou & Fokides, 2022), volleyball skills (Paraskevaidis & Fokides, 2020), about wild animals (Fokides & Vlachopoulou, 2024), for raising students' awareness of endangered species (Fokides & Kefalinou, 2020), and their impact when teaching subjects related to environmental education (Arvaniti & Fokides, 2021; Fokides & Arvaniti, 2020; Fokides, Atsikpasi, & Arvaniti, 2021). In a paper (Fokides, 2023a), I summarized and critically re-examined the outcomes of the above research projects. In parallel, starting from 2021, my associates and I, began to intensify our research on immersive virtual reality, resulting in a book (Fokides & Atsikpasi, 2022) and a series of papers in journals and conference proceedings (Antonopoulos & Fokides, 2021a, 2021b, 2022a, 2022b, 2024a, 2024b; Antonopoulos et al., 2024; Atsikpasi & Fokides, 2021a, 2021b, 2022a, 2022b, 2023; Fokides & Antonopoulos, 2024; Kasapakis et al., 2024).

Digital storytelling also caught my attention during 2016 and 2017. Contrary to digital storytelling's conventional uses (e.g., for the development of students' writing and reading skills), I was interested to examine if and how it can be used in other "unconventional" areas such as helping the integration of immigrant students in the school environment, informing students about bullying, and helping first-grade students during their first days at school. The outcomes of a number of short interventions were presented in a chapter in an edited volume (Fokides, 2017e), in four international journals (Fokides, 2017f, 2017g, 2016a, 2016b), and in the proceedings of three Greek conferences (Doudoni & Fokides, 2018; Fokides, Makarouna, & Saltidou, 2016; Fokides & Sarri, 2016).

I consider the educational uses of digital games as another very interesting research field. In a chapter in an edited volume, I presented my thoughts regarding their educational potential (Fokides, 2017h). In a paper in a Greek journal and in a paper in the proceedings of a conference, we examined the theoretical framework for their integration as educational tools in the family's everyday activities (Atsikpasi & Fokides, 2017), as well as their potential to increase motivation for learning (Kaimara, Deliyannis, Papadopoulou, Oikonomou, & Fokides, 2018). In eight papers in journals (Chartofili & Fokides, 2019; Fokides, 2018a; Fokides & Foka, 2018, 2017; Fokides & Lianou, 2016; Fokides & Pachidis, 2017; Fokides & Stamoulaki, 2020; Fokides & Xanthopoulou, 2016), as well as in ten papers in conference proceedings (Chartofili & Fokides, 2022; Fokides, Atsikpasi, Kaimara & Deliyannis, 2018; Fokides & Mallia, 2017; Fokides & Noula, 2019; Fokides & Savvati, 2017; Kaimara, Miliotis, Deliyannis, Fokides, Oikonomou, Papadopoulou, & Floros, 2019; Papadakis, Fokides, & Sfakianou, 2018; Valasiadis, Katsadoros, Kakampoura, & Fokides, 2017a, 2017b; Xaga & Fokides, 2024) we presented the learning outcomes when using them for teaching various subjects (e.g., language, EFL, maths, science, multicultural education, and folklore). Digital games can also be used for teaching basic programming concepts to young students. We presented the results of such research efforts in four journals (Chatzigrigoriou & Fokides, 2016; Fokides, 2017i; Fokides & Atsikpasi, 2017a; Fokides & Boukla, 2016) and in the proceedings of two conferences (Fokides, 2017j; Fokides & Atsikpasi, 2017b). In a chapter in an edited book (Fokides, Atsikpasi, Kaimara, & Delyannis, 2021), in six papers in journals (Fokides & Kaimara, 2020, 2022; Kaimara, Deliyannis, Oikonomou, Fokides, & Miliotis, 2021; Kaimara, Fokides, Oikonomou, Atsikpasi, & Deliyannis, 2019; Kaimara, Fokides, Oikonomou, & Deliyannis, 2021; Kaimara, Fokides, Plerou, Atsikpasi, & Deliyannis, 2020), and in two papers in conference proceedings (Atsikpasi, Fokides, Deliyannis, & Kaimara,

2019; Kaimara & Fokides,, 2019) we examined the effects of players' characteristics on their effectiveness. In two papers in journals and in one in conference proceedings, we presented a scale and a model for measuring users' experience when playing them (Fokides, Atsikpasi, Kaimara, & Deliyannis, 2019a, 2019b; Fokides, Kaimara, Deliyannis, & Atsikpasi, 2018). Finally, in two papers we examined the views of pre-service teachers about the use of digital games for collaborative learning (Kaimara et al., 2019, 2022).

While teaching at the University of the Aegean, I formed the belief that pre-service teachers do face problems regarding the use of computers and this may result in having problems integrating technology into their everyday teaching when they become in-service teachers. For that matter, I conducted a longitudinal study (from 2013 to 2018), and I also tried to form a model for explaining their intentions to use computers. Indeed, some interesting, though contradictory, results were noted, presented in a chapter in an edited volume (Fokides & Kostas, 2020), in two papers in journals (Fokides, 2017l, 2016c), and in two papers in the proceedings of Greek conferences (Fokides, 2016d; Fokides & Roufani, 2017). Also, I expanded the research on attitudes towards computers to students of other disciplines (such as students studying at the Theological Departments in Greece), with equally interesting results (Karamouzis & Fokides, 2017). Reflecting further on the matter, I presented, in a paper in a conference proceedings, my views on the relationship between teachers, students and technology (Fokides, 2019d).

I have to admit that I find rather interesting the educational uses of all types of emerging technologies. Thus, a substantial number of relevant have already been published in Greek and international journals and conference proceedings. In a conference paper and in a paper in an edited volume, I presented my thoughts regarding tablets' educational value (Fokides, 2019a; Fokides, 2019b). In another twenty-one papers we presented the results of pilot projects that examined the use of tablets and augmented reality for teaching various subjects to kindergarten and primary school students, and to children with special needs (Argirou & Fokides, 2019; Atsikpasi & Fokides, 2016; Fokides, Atsikpasi, & Karageorgou, 2020; Fokides, 2018b, 2018c, 2017k; Fokides, 2019c; Fokides & Atsikpasi, 2017c; Fokides & Foniadaki, 2017; Fokides & Makarouna, 2017; Fokides & Mastrokoukou, 2018; Fokides & Tananakis, 2017; Fokides & Zachristou, 2020; Kaimara, Deliyannis, et al., 2021; Kaimara, Oikonomou, et al., 2021; Kaimara et al., 2023; Karageorgou & Fokides, 2018; Karamanos & Fokides, 2018; Mastrokoukou & Fokides, 2017; Nakka & Fokides, 2019; Stegiou & Fokides, 2019). In two papers in edited volumes (Fokides, 2020b; Fokides, 2021b) and in another one in the proceedings of a Greek conference (Fokides, 2018d), I reflected on the results so far. In two papers in journals and in one in the proceedings of a Greek conference, we presented the results of pilot projects for teaching language, mathematics, geography, and physics using drones (Fokides, Papadakis, & Kourtis-Kazoullis, 2017; Papadakis, Fokides, Kourtis-Kazoullis, & Darra, 2017; Papadakis & Fokides, 2019). Finally, in three papers in journals, we presented the results from the use of Makey-Makey (Fokides & Alatzas, 2022; Fokides & Papoutsi, 2020; Papoutsi & Fokides, 2019), in one the results from the use of Lego MindStorms (Fokides & Chisenai, 2020), and in another one we conducted a scoping review on the uses of 3D printers in primary education (Fokides & Lagopati, 2024).

From 2022 the educational uses of holograms draw my attention, having as a result the publication of three relevant papers(Baboukli & Fokides, 2022; Fokides & Baboukli, 2022; Fokides & Kilintari, 2023). Also, in one paper in conference proceedings, we presented the results from the use of 3D-pens (Magafa & Fokides, 2023). Logically enough, the rapid developments in the field of Artificial Intelligence and its educational implications draw my attention in 2024, resulting in the publication of one study (Fokides & Peristeraki, 2024), while a series others are under review.

Finally, seven papers (three chapters in edited volumes, two papers in the proceedings of a Greek conferences, and two in journals) do not fall under one of the above categories, but they are interesting per se. The first, reflects on the relationship between technology and education (Tsolakidis & Fokides, 2018), while the second presents how online journalism can be used for misrepresenting certain ethnic minorities, namely Roma people (Atsikpasi, Notara, Grampsas, Fokides, & Skourtou, 2016). The third presents the views of education regarding the teaching of theology in our modern society (Karamouzis, Fokides, & Tsirevelos, 2019). The fourth and fifth dealt with the feelings, attitudes, and concerns of primary school teachers about inclusive education and the use of technology (Kaimara & Fokides, 2024; Kaimara et al., 2021). The final two, examined whether the attitude of Greek educators regarding the use of computers changed during the COVID-19 pandemic (Fokides & Kapetangiorgi, 2022; Kapetangiorgi & Fokides, 2022).

As it is evident, the above papers reflect my current research interests. I will continue to pursue this research agenda, at least for the near future. I also plan to seek contributions from the private sector in order

to expand ETiE, so that we can include 3D printers, HMDs (e.g., Oculus Quest), and remotely operated underwater vehicles in our research projects. As a final note, Figure 1 presents my research productivity through the years and Figure 2 presents my research impact. Both demonstrate the significant increase in my research output and recognition after I received tenure.

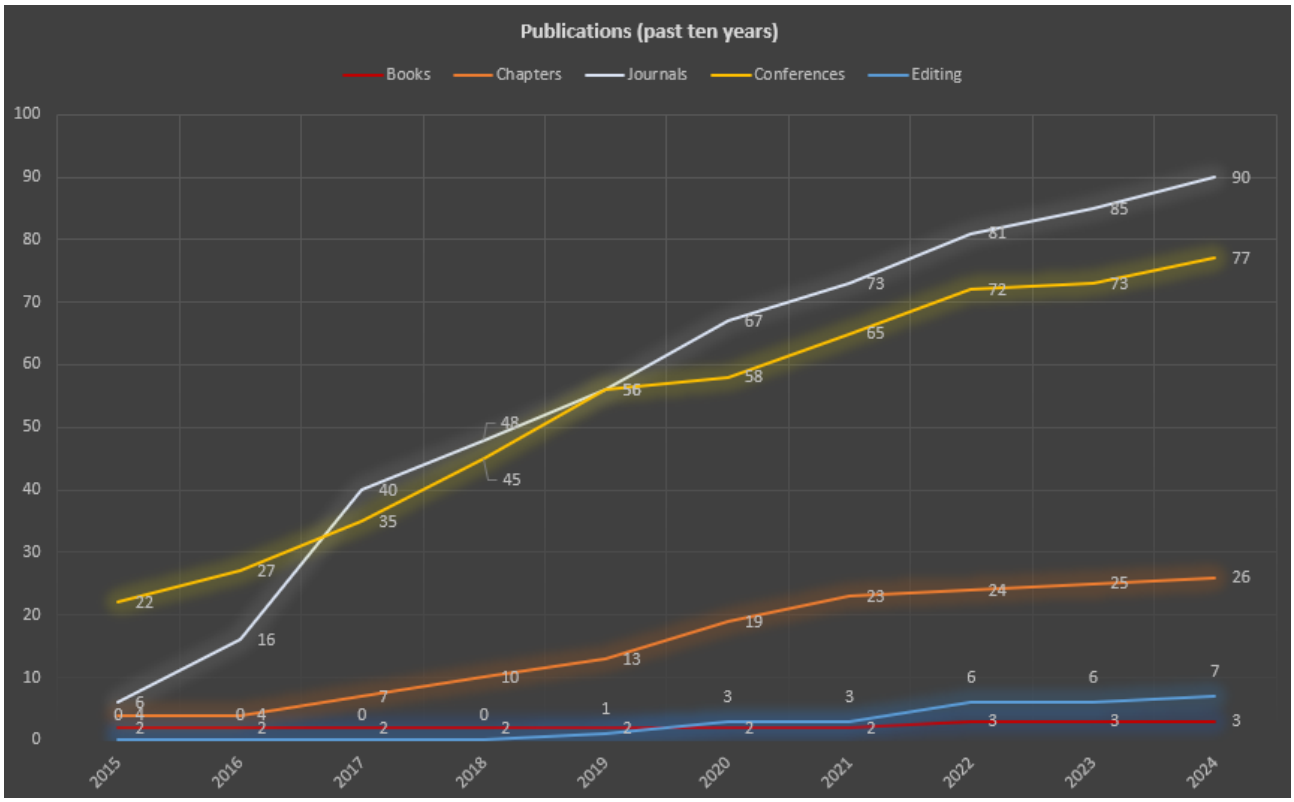

Figure 1. Cumulative publications (past ten years) per type of research paper and per year

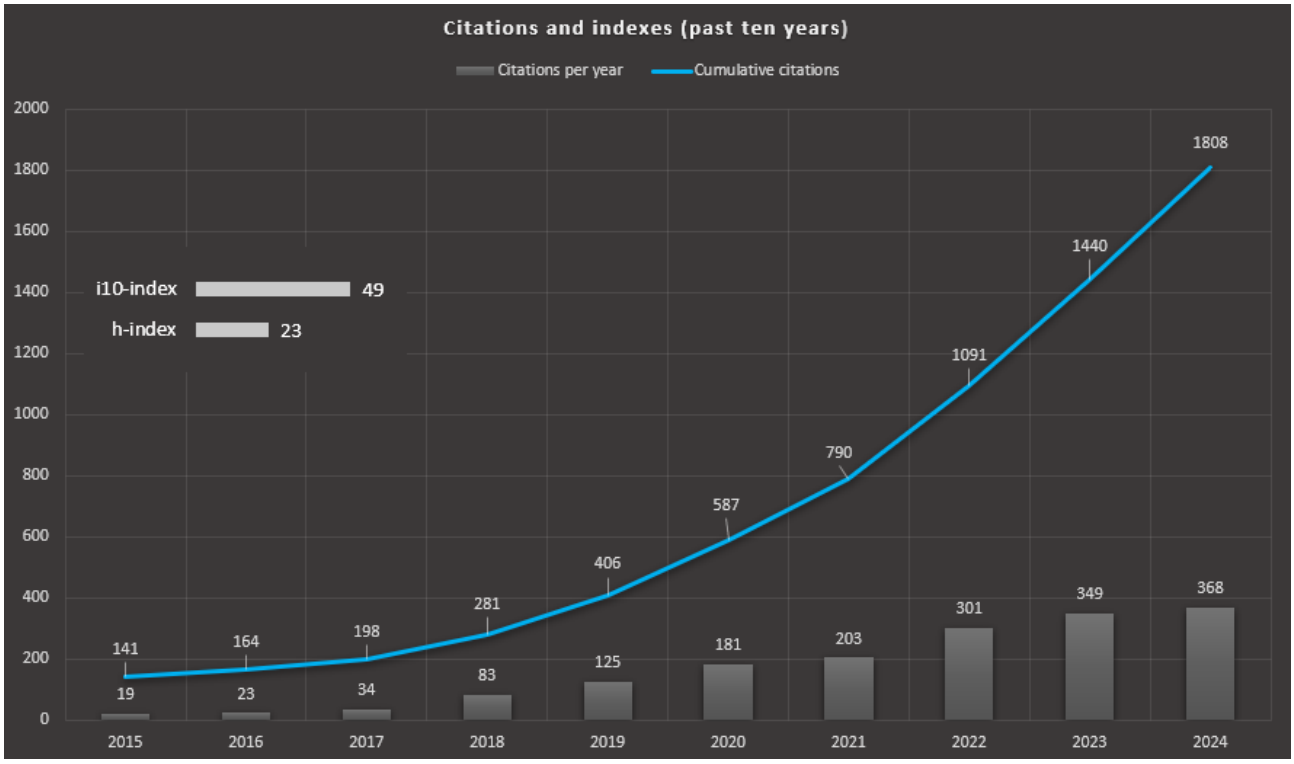

Figure 2. Cumulative citations and impact (past ten years)

Teaching and advising

How might I pursue my personal goal to see technology being applied to education? I could become an advisory teacher, counseling a -limited- number of teachers on curriculum developments with regard to ICT, or I could inspire generations of students to go change the world for me. The latter strategy provides better leverage. As a result, I take my teaching seriously. I am at a university precisely so that I can shape young minds. It is important not just as part of my job description, it is important to my overall goals.

My core philosophy of teaching is to provide the knowledge and promote an atmosphere where students are actively engaged. Furthermore, I fully embrace the approach that students should get personally involved in the exploration of a topic. I believe that each student should interact with the information presented within a course both to make the topics personally relevant and to individually place the material in a larger context. I work to achieve these personal connections to the material by utilizing oral presentation assignments in most of my courses, where students have the freedom to explore focal topics of interest to them. The same applies to the applications they have to develop and present at the end of the semester. Thus, problem-solving skills and an ability for critical, creative, and independent thought are essential and encouraged as much as possible in both formal lecture courses and open-ended projects.

Consequently, my goals for teaching are to excite students about technology in education by integrating the basic principles and knowledge for a course with current "hot topics" to make the material personal and relevant. Equally importantly, I communicate to students that education is an active process, and thus one in which their own commitment translates into academic success and enhances their capacity to become informed and engaged human beings.

Knowledge, and to a great extent, scientific knowledge, is recognized as an important driver for productivity and economic growth. In light of the recent economic climate, it is more important than ever to engage students in the pursuit of scientific knowledge and encourage them to continue that pursuit after their formal education is completed. Consequently, I think that it is very important to help students see how what they learn in the classroom is linked to education.

Overall, I find teaching one of the most rewarding aspects of my job. I take pleasure in learning new concepts and developing a physical understanding of the world, and like most things in life, this is more enjoyable if the experience is shared with others. Quite early, I became aware of the importance of genuine communication with the class. So, I spend a lot of time getting to know and working with students, individually, in small groups, and with the class as a whole.

I have prepared more than ten different graduate and post-graduate courses over the years, while the new courses and/or revised ones that I have developed and taught since my appointment as a full-time Lecturer reflect my current research interests. Indicatively, in the coming paragraphs, I present four of my recent courses.

The first course (3D Graphics and Virtual Reality in Education, mandatory undergraduate course), examines how advanced ICT applications can be used in the educational process. Specifically, it deals with 3D graphics, multiuser virtual environments and with the educational uses of Virtual Reality. The course aims at the development of an in-depth understanding of the ways this can be achieved. The subject is approached both theoretically and with hands-on experiences. The major learning theories are analyzed, various types of software for the development of 3D applications is presented and examples of 3D educational applications are given. By using a relatively simple to use software, students have the opportunity to gain hands-on experiences while developing simple MUVEs educational applications. The course aims at giving students insight and perspective on the following topics: (a) cutting-edge technologies and their capabilities in supporting the learning process, (b) identifying hardware and software problems that must be solved when developing 3D applications (as opposed to the less demanding multimedia applications), (c) the categories and the wide range of 3D applications, (d) the software used for developing 3D applications, and (e) the steps required for the development of a 3D application (from concept to implementation).

The second course (Educational programming environments, optional undergraduate course), focuses on 3D educational games. Their role, as well as the role of games in general, is important in the process of knowledge acquisition because this is done with a pleasant way for the learner. Software tools appeared that allow the development of educational games easily, quickly and with a level of quality comparable to professional applications. So, the course is an excellent opportunity for students to get acquainted with the process of developing 3D educational games. For that matter, the objectives of the course are students to

(a) become familiar with programming in a pleasant environment, (b) develop a positive attitude towards programming, (c) understand the steps needed to develop a program, (d) improve problem-solving skills, (e) be able to work in an advanced programming environment for the development of 3D games, and (f) be able to create complex games and have a deeper understanding of complicated programming concepts.

A third course (Educational implications of ICTs, mandatory, post-graduate course), is addressed to all students regardless of their background or previous studies. It seeks not only to provide technical knowledge to students but also to acquaint and cultivate their relationship with technology in all its facets. A number of emerging technologies are introduced, that are expected to play an important role as educational tools in the immediate future. Also, the basic principles of distance education are provided along with its parameters and techniques. The ultimate goal is to demystify distance education as a teaching method and to explain how its techniques can be used in conventional teaching. Finally, easy-to-use software tools are introduced, in an effort to cultivate a comfortable relationship between students and ICT.

Finally, in 2023 I began to offer the course "ICTs and emerging technologies in education" (optional undergraduate course). In this century, rapid developments lead to the emergence of new, innovative technologies that extend and go beyond the framework of the ICT hitherto. These innovative technologies are described as "emerging technologies". Indicatively, emerging technologies include Artificial Intelligence, Nanotechnology, Fully Immersive Virtual Reality, object printing and holograms. Of course, it is not known what others will emerge in the course of time. Emerging technologies are gradually entering all spheres of human activity and, therefore, education. Emerging technologies have capabilities that enable sophisticated and powerful forms of learning, supporting distributed knowledge, contextualized learning, diagnostic assessment, psychological immersion, modeling, visualization and collaboration. Therefore, in modern educational institutions, and indeed in those concerned with education, emerging technologies have a crucial role to play in the development of learners and in the competitive position of both learners and educational institutions. The aim is, by integrating theoretical and empirical frameworks from different disciplines, to communicate to stakeholders the types, applications, benefits, strategic priorities, and advantages of emerging technologies, helping them understand how they support and improve teaching and learning, creating a new educational reality.

I have also contributed to the Department's curriculum by the development of hybrid and online sections. That is because, recently, it became apparent that we needed greater flexibility in how we offer courses to students. Thus, two of my courses, in addition to face-to-face lectures, are offered online. They are videotaped, streamed, and made available via the Internet not only to off-campus students but to anyone interested (open courses). Also, since 2015, I lecture at the Hellenic Open University and at the School of Pedagogical and Technological Education.

I find it extremely rewarding that my students' evaluations, both formal and informal, are very positive. Above all, they comment on my genuine willingness to help, my ability to explain things in a way they understand, and that my approach and style in the classroom to attain my goals are effective. My evaluations are respectable and rank either on par with or higher above the Department's averages.

Of course, I am advising the usual array of students, including a current set of three Ph.D. and five M.Ed., whom I supervise their dissertations. I have graduated an additional forty M.Ed. and seventeen undergraduate students (all successfully admitted to master's degree programs). I also actively advise three Ph.D. candidates as a member of their supervisory committees. Likewise, over the past years, I was a member of the supervisory committees for the theses of over a hundred M.Ed. and twenty-three undergraduate students.

In mentoring research students, I encourage active discussion stressing that creative ideas and hypotheses are essential to a successful research program. My central aim in mentoring these students is to build their confidence so that they can think about a topic and discover new knowledge for themselves. Naturally, expectations for graduate and undergraduate students differ, but I strongly believe that, whatever the level, scientific research is fundamentally the same. I stress to all students that start working with me that I want the teaching role to work both ways: I will teach the students how to be effective researchers and in turn, I expect them to teach me new science. With encouragement, almost every student I have mentored so far has managed to achieve this goal.

A strategy for organizing research amongst the students has developed over the last few years. I give each M.Ed. and undergraduate student an independent research project of appropriate length and complexity. Each of the students then becomes the leader of their own mini-research program with the

autonomy to design and run experiments by themselves, while reporting regularly back to me. Students working on closely related projects often meet with me to discuss their work and all (including me) introduce what we are currently working on to the entire group during weekly meetings. So far, this strategy has worked well, but I need to focus on better ways to help graduate students become comfortable with semi-autonomous research more quickly. It is important that students regularly write up their research so I require that all undergraduate and graduate students produce a write-up of their work every month. I have been fortunate to attract a good number of talented research students (including the winner of an honorable mention at the annual excellence awards of the University of the Aegean) and I have been able to build an active and dynamic research group. Mentoring them has been a particular joy. Overall, I believe my scholarship in the area of mentoring meets or exceeds departmental standards.

Service contributions

A great deal of work is necessary to keep the Department of Primary Education functioning and serving students' needs. Moreover, the Department has gone through many changes since 2013. I, like most in the Department, have worked hard to bring these changes about through service activities. Indeed, in my eight years as a faculty member, I served as a member of various committees, including contributions to institutional effectiveness, planning, and assessment, curriculum development, as well as in an assortment of administrative committees.

I review articles for journals fairly often. This includes journals such as Virtual Reality, IEEE Access, Computers & Education, Journal of Computers in Education, New Review of Hypermedia and Multimedia, International Online Journal of Educational Sciences, Journal of Teaching and Learning with Technology, Research in Learning Technology, Technology, Knowledge and Learning, Higher Education Pedagogies, and Education and Information Technologies. It was a great honor for me that, in 2020, I was recognized as being among the 10% of Springer Nature's top reviewers. I have also been an ad hoc reviewer for manuscripts from various journals and edited volumes in my field, such as the Encyclopedia of Information Science and Technology, Teaching, learning, and leading with computer simulations, Integrating multi-user virtual environments in modern classrooms, Contemporary Education, and the International Online Journal of Educational Sciences. I also served on several conference committees. Finally, I serve as an associate editor of the International Journal of Innovative Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (IGI Global) an as a member of the scientific committee in a number of Greek and international journals.

Communicating my knowledge and expertise to the community at large is an important aspect of my activities. I have been able to do that in several instances and by several ways, focusing on areas of service that suit my expertise. For example, from 1996 till 2003, I conducted a series of seminars regarding the use of computers and office applications that were addressed to primary school and high-school teachers, librarians, judicial staff, and unemployed young adults. From 1999 to 2011 I served as an ICT instructor to technical profession training institutes, teaching courses such as introduction to multimedia applications, databases, image processing, computer networking, Web pages' design, network administration, animation, and programming. During 2003, I taught the Greek language to repatriated Greeks from Russia.

I lectured on four summer schools; Multigrade Teaching, New Educational Methodologies for the Standard and Multigrade Schools (2009 & 2010) and Innovative Educational Methodologies for Schools (2011 & 2012), addressed to educators from Europe. I have been the coordinator and an instructor in another five international summer schools; Digital Storytelling Summer School, DiSSS 2015, Designing Educational Games Summer School, DEGSS 2014 & 2015, and Educational Uses of 3D Graphics-Virtual Reality, SSVR 2014 & 2015.

During the summer of 2015, I was the coordinator and the instructor in a series of seminars addressed to the elderly that were conducted to a number of islands in the Aegean Sea. The topic of these seminars was the use of the Internet for communication, e-commerce, and e-government. Also, in 2016, I lectured on a students' exchange program, offering courses on the educational uses of MUVEs and on 3D educational games, to university students from the USA. Finally, starting from 2017, I serve as a member of the National Committee for the Acquisition of Greek Citizenship.

In the coming years, I seek to further expand my service both within and outside of the bounds of the University. In doing so I will aim to enhance my leadership roles in positions that can best utilize my knowledge and expertise potentially including: (a) playing a more substantive role in organizing conferences,

(b) being recognized as a leader in the field by serving on academic journal editorial boards, and (c) organizing more seminars addressed to the local community or to specific groups of people.

Research support

Working at a Greek state university can be a problem for one who seeks funding from the private sector for their research projects. Certain restrictions do apply, rendering the whole process -almost- impossible to cope with. In any case, as a Principal Investigator, I have managed to raise funds for a number of small projects (< 10,000€ each). On the other hand, working at a state university is an advantage when it comes to E.U. and state-funded projects. I was involved, as a Co-Investigator, in a number of such projects, having a significant involvement in the proposal writing process and subsequent research activities. Combined, the total of such projects is just over 6,350,000€. My funding history of major projects is presented below:

- 2022-2024. Co-Investigator, project: "REVEALING-REalisation of Virtual rEality LearnING Environments (VRLEs) for Higher Education," within the framework of KA2 ERASMUS program. Funding 150,000€. Participation in the research team of the University of the Aegean. The objective of REVEALING is to create a VRLE Model using a VR platform, adapted to the learning needs of higher education institutes, and thus, their students. This will impact the partner universities regarding their technological capabilities not only in terms of cross-cutting research but also regarding the actual implementation, an aspect which is crucial for the post-pandemic world. The model will be flexible so that it can be adjusted to different learning situations and contexts according to the needs of the end users.
- 2022. Co-Investigator, project: "Digital guide using augmented reality and holograms", within the framework of the Operational Program "Ionian Islands". Funding: 232,500€. Participation in the research team of the Ionian University. The project concerned the development of an integrated multimedia, interactive tour guide to the Old Town of Corfu, as it is geographically defined in the decision to include it in the UNESCO World Heritage Sites.
- 2016-2017. Co-Investigator, project: e-Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques (e-Reflect), E.U. funded project. Funding: 26.500€. The project aims to develop and implement a high-quality continuing professional development e-course on active citizenship education for teachers and young children education professionals. The courses will introduce school educators in a rich technological environment for the implementation of the Reflect Approach in contemporary school settings. The innovation of this project lies in the exploitation of digital literacy in order to stimulate active citizenship and social entrepreneurship. Particularly, it takes advantage of contemporary digital technology to cultivate democratic spaces for communication, collaboration and action, and encourage discussion so that people can develop reflectively their own learning materials.
- 2006-2009. Co-Investigator, project: Rural Wings, E.U. funded project. Funding: 302,000€. The strategic objective of Rural Wings was to provide end-to-end satellite telecommunication (SATCOM) systems for tele-education applications in remote areas and rural areas where the existing communication architecture does not support broadband applications. The project offered e-learning services by installing satellite terminals equipment into 128 pilot sites in 13 European countries (Greece, Spain, Sweden, France, Romania, Cyprus, Estonia, Poland, UK, Israel, Armenia, Georgia, and Switzerland).
- 2003-2006. Co-Investigator, project: ZEUS, Satellite Network of Rural Schools, E.U. funded project. Funding: 126,000€. The ZEUS project implemented advanced communication technologies for the provision of support to isolated schools in Greece. The project was based on a close cooperation between pedagogical experts, trainers, teachers, software developers, and communication experts to design, develop, and implement an advanced learning environment which was based on satellite communications in order to support the training of teachers in schools located in rural areas, mainly in Central Greece and in the Aegean Sea.
- 2002-2004. Co-Investigator, project: MUltigrade School Education (MUSE), Socrates-E.U. program. Funding: 71,000€. The MUSE project aimed at the development of an in-service training program designed to meet the needs of multigrade schoolteachers in order to improve their educational performance in the multigrade school environment. The training was based on methodological approaches to multigrade teaching and on the use of ICT applications so as to provide: (a) an in-service

training program for teachers of multigrade schools, and (b) the use of the Internet in order to develop a platform for training, collaboration, networking and exchanging of ideas between teachers, students and trainers.

- 2000-2001. Co-Investigator, project: School Educational Network (SXEDIA). Greek Ministry of the Aegean funded project. Funding: 95,000€. The purpose of the project was to introduce IT applications to schools of the Aegean, containing a relatively large percentage of multigrade schools. It involved the installation of computers in 44 schools in 32 islands of the Aegean Sea. It also involved the connection of the schools to the Internet, teacher training, work with educational software, development of web pages to represent the schools and help them communicate and distance learning from the University of the Aegean in Rhodes.
- 1996-2000. Co-Investigator, project: Aegean-Net. Greek Ministry of Education and E.U. funded project. Funding: 5,426,000€. The purpose of the project was to design and implement a technologically advanced network that interconnects all the Departments of the University of the Aegean (that are spread in five islands and in Athens). Initially, 2 Mbps leased lines were used, but at the later stages of the project, the connection speed rose to 2 Gbps, making the network one of the fastest in Greece at that time.

Conclusion

As this narrative demonstrated, I am a deeply committed scholar and educator whose expertise has grown substantially -both professionally and institutionally- since starting at the University of the Aegean as a full-time Lecturer in August 2013. I have been able to expand upon my early efforts in disseminating scholarly products (e.g., one hundred and ninety-three peer-reviewed publications total, one hundred and sixty-three since appointment, ninety-eight first or sole author). I am also the co-author of three books and I co-edited seven conference proceedings and edited volumes. All helped to promote the visibility of the University of the Aegean, the Department of Primary Education and the "Education with the Use of New Technologies" post-graduate program.

Along with publishing essays and articles in an extensive range of venues, I have developed a series of courses focusing on the educational uses of a wide range of technologies. I have also mentored and advised a significant number of graduate and post-graduate students, as well as Ph.D. candidates. Following my appointment, I have made meaningful strides towards growing my emerging program (ETiE) along with other initiatives that I am involved in. Especially ETiE, not only combines my research and teaching interests but it is also a long-term venture that will mature over the next years and contribute to the academic community in myriad ways.

Through cultivating strong relationships (e.g., with fellow faculty, students, and members of the academic community) and working hard in the pursuit of collective goals, I believe that my record to date demonstrates that I have excelled the standards for an Assistant Professor at across all three professional domains. I am eager to get started with enacting the future directions outlined throughout this statement during the next phase of my academic career. As a scholar, teacher/mentor, and community citizen, in the years to come, I will continue to strengthen my commitment to advancing my mission, that of seeing the successful integration of technology in education.

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