

Title of Dissertation:

**Development of a Web Site for an English School with the
use of  Joomla!™ Content Management System
and a Business Analysis on the Case**



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Abstract

The objective of this dissertation was the creation of a Web Site for Eurolink® Foreign Languages Teaching Centre. This venture has been executed with the use of the *Joomla!* Open Source Content Management System (CMS). The site is hosted at the address www.eurolink.edu.gr.

The present document examines the benefits of the development of the site and presents a Business Analysis of the organization, using the *P.E.S.T.* and *S.W.O.T. Analysis* which are both tools of Strategic Management.

During the creation of the site complex issues concerning practical matters of the appearance and usability of the website were encountered.

A conclusion was reached that the development of such an application demands versatile knowledge and abilities, of both a designer-graphic artist and a programmer. These abilities extend to the operation of the HTML language, the CSS (Cascading Sheet Style) of the site, the format and process of an image or a video, to the setting up of a local server on the present system and moving afterwards the files in the remote server that are necessary for the final version of the website.

This is due to a website's demands, for both an attractive appearance for the visitor - especially in the case where it serves a commercial purpose - and usability as well.

In short, the combination of the artistic and technical aspects is the element that renders a website successful.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to Mr. Fakas George, owner of Easylogic Corporation – where the website is hosted - and a member of the Greek Community of *Joomla!* for his help throughout the process of the creation of the website.

I would like to thank my brother as well, Tapanaris Alexandros, for his guidance and advice on Business and Economical matters that are mentioned on this paper, as this was his field of studies.

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents for their support throughout my student life.

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Introduction

Before elaborating on the business matters and the analysis of how the site will affect the English School as an organization it would be pertinent to briefly refer to the construction of the website using the *Joomla! CMS* and the tool itself.

Joomla! is an award-winning content management system, which enables the building of websites and powerful online applications. Many aspects, including its ease-of-use and extensibility, have made Joomla the most popular website software available. (Joomla Community Portal - <http://www.joomla.org/about-joomla.html>)

Joomla!'s content management system keeps track of the essential content needed to create a website, like a local public library that keeps track of books and stores them. Content can be simple text, photos, music, video and documents.

Furthermore, Joomla is an open source solution that is freely available to everyone. Free templates that can be used are circulating on the web as well as various components and modules that are very useful and enriching to every website.

Of course, as many things free in life, free templates are usually inferior to the ones that you have to pay for, since they are in their majority simple layouts made by amateur users that wanted to create something simple to use in their own websites.

Therefore, a commercial template has been used in the creation of Eurolink website. This particular template was chosen because its theme suited the design needs of the website since it is decorated with stationary items that refer to a school environment.

Various extensions have been used as well, found on the web, to serve the requirements of the application such as a poll, a login module for the registered users – the students –, a calendar, a video link, a slideshow module and a pop-up and filmstrip feature for the pictures displayed.

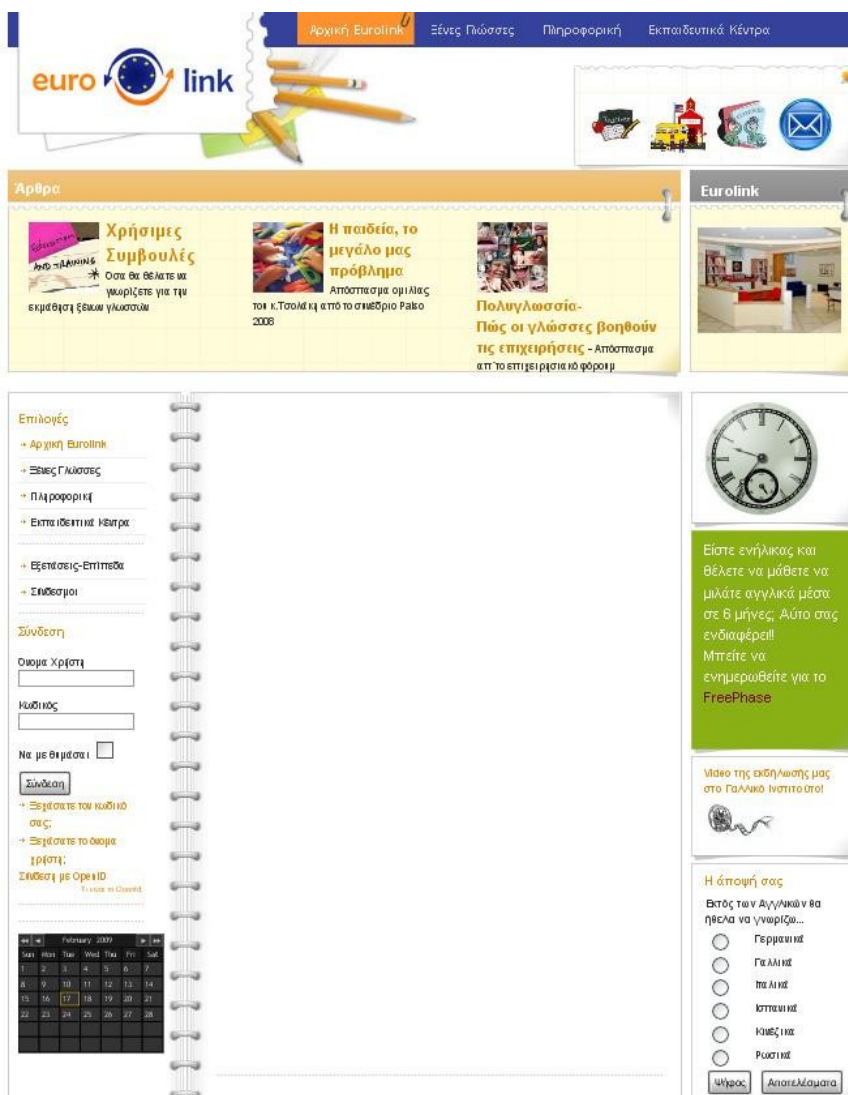
A short presentation of the website and its applications will be conducted further down.

1. Site layout

The basic parts of the site and special applications will be discussed as well as the process followed in each case.

1.1 Frame layout

The layout of the site consists of a “frame”, a part which is steady as the user explores the material of the site and the central article area where the content selected is displayed.



1.1 Depiction of the site's "frame"

This frame surrounds the site and comprises the menus and the choices that the user can make, in order to traverse through the site.

There is the main menu appearing in two parts of the frame; one is horizontally at the top of the page coloured with blue and turning the item into orange when selected, and the second is at the left side of the page situated vertical.

They both have the same content, with the exception that the left one has two more items featuring beneath it,

which are: “exams-levels” and “links”.

1.2 Menu Items

There is also another menu consisting of pictures for the display of the four items: “working positions”, “profile of the company”, “franchise” and “communication”.



1.2 Depiction of the two menus

The menu item “working positions” as mentioned before, is an article referring to the teachers or other personnel that are interested in submitting their curriculum vitae and being informed in matters of job opportunities in the Eurolink School Centre. Special requirements are being mentioned and information on that issue.

The concerned can also send an email by clicking on the right link which connects him/her with the “communication” menu item of the site.



1.3 Depiction of “working positions” menu item

The “communication” menu item displays the four school departments from which the user can choose to enter. Once selected, useful information and an email form to be completed by him/her are figuring. The email is being sent to the account info@eurolink.edu.gr that is made in the *C-Panel* web-hosting control panel for the English school.

1.4 Depiction of “communication” form →



1.3 Site Components

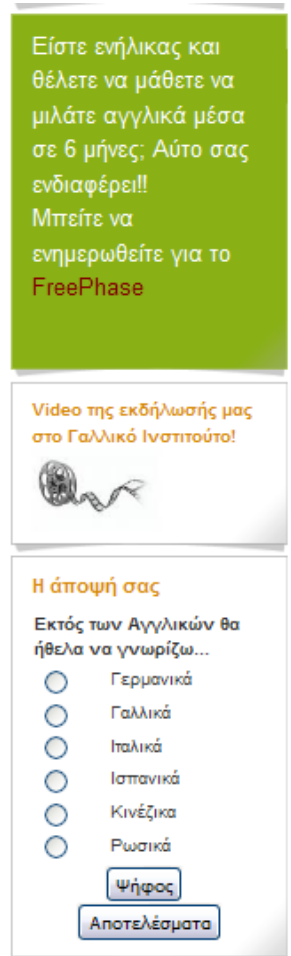
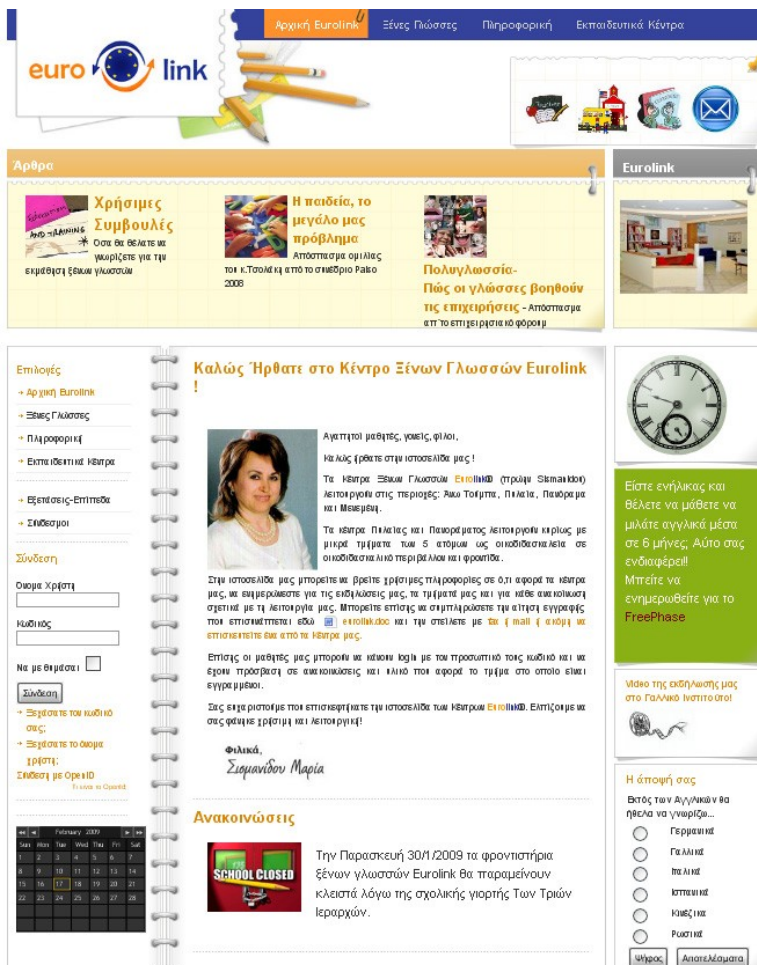
On the right part of the “frame” there is an area with a web link connecting the user to an E-learning application called Free-Phase with which the owner of the site is collaborating.

The visitor can enter the application and use the trial version of the Program or sign in if being a registered one.

A film of a Christmas celebration of the school and speech of the owner of the English school is also available by clicking on the correspond link.

This video has been processed and subjected to a montage in order to have the appropriate form and size for the site and be compatible with the Joomla! CMS requirements.

Last but not least, a poll is displayed for visitors to vote. There are two polls made, so the administrator of the site can change them when wanted. The users of the site have the capacity to view the results as well for both polls.



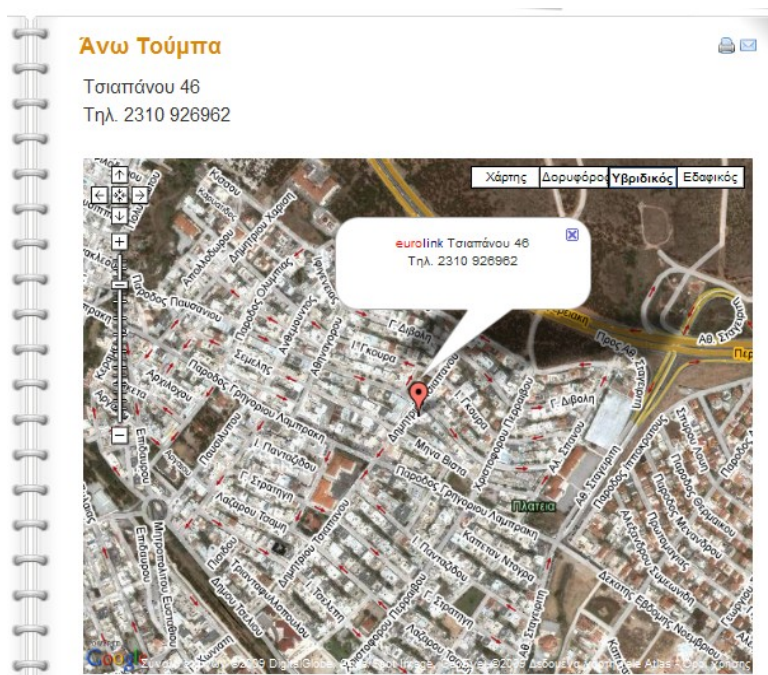
1.5 Depiction of the right part of the frame

The front page presents a welcome text and a note of the school owner. A registration form is also provided which can be downloaded and filled in by the potential customer and then be sent through email or fax to the school centre.

→ 1.6 Front page

The rest of the site will be presented only if worth commenting on something since the reader will either ways explore it.

Thus, it's worth mentioning the presence of the *Google maps* that show the location of each school department in the school chain. This has been done with the use of a short code including the coordinates and the parameters extracted by the application of *Google maps* and of course the appropriate integration in the *Joomla* administrator system.



1.7 Map of the school centres

The Log In environment serves the students that are registered in the school and hold a username and password given to them by the direction of the school.

This environment offers the students the opportunity to download material for their classes and to play educational games as well. Concerning the games, *flash* applications have been integrated found in the web for free.

Different folders for each class are created for students to select their own and enter.



1.8 Log In environment for the students

There is an area for announcements as well at the bottom of the page where the administrator or the teachers of the school can publish.

At this point it has to be mentioned that the advantages of E-learning and the use of new technologies in the learning process are being mentioned in the *S.W.O.T* Analysis.

2. Business Analysis of the Foreign Languages Teaching Centre

The purpose of this paper is the conduction of an analysis on how the construction of the website will affect the English School as an organization as mentioned before.

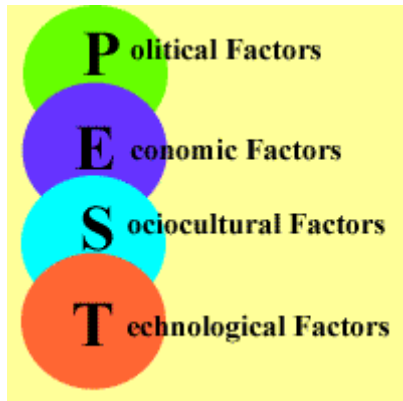
Speaking in terms of the science of Business and Economics a *P.E.S.T.* and *S.W.O.T* Analysis will be made. Prior to the analysis of the English School - which is the case study - it is imperative to give some feedback and theory background on these two methods of analysis.

2.1 What is a PEST Analysis?

In analyzing the macro-environment of an organization, it is important to identify the factors that might in turn affect a number of vital variables that are likely to influence the organization's supply and demand levels and its costs (Kotter and Schlesinger, 1991; Johnson and Scholes, 1993). The "radical and ongoing changes occurring in society create an uncertain environment and have an impact on the function of the whole organization" (Tsiakkios, 2002). A number of checklists have been developed as ways of cataloguing the vast number of possible issues that might affect an industry. A *P.E.S.T* analysis is one of them that is merely a framework that categorizes environmental influences as political, economic, social and technological forces. Sometimes two additional factors, environmental and legal, will be added to make a *P.E.S.T.E.L.* analysis, but these themes can easily be subsumed in the others. The analysis examines the impact of each of these factors (and their interplay with each other) on the business. The results can then be used to take advantage of opportunities and to make contingency plans for threats when preparing business and strategic plans (Byars, 1991; Cooper, 2000).

Kotler (1998) claims that *P.E.S.T* analysis is a useful strategic tool for understanding market growth or decline, business position, potential and direction for operations. The headings of *P.E.S.T.* are a framework for reviewing a situation, and can in addition to *S.W.O.T.* and Porter's *Five Forces* models, be applied by companies to review a strategic directions, including marketing proposition. The use of *P.E.S.T.* analysis can be seen effective for business and strategic planning, marketing planning, business and product development and research reports. *P.E.S.T.* also ensures that company's performance is aligned positively with the powerful forces of change that are affecting business environment (Porter, 1985).

2.2 Main Aspects of PEST Analysis



Economic conditions affect how easy or how difficult it is to be successful and profitable at any time because they affect both capital availability and cost, and demand (Thompson, 2002). If demand is buyout, for example, and the cost of capital is low, it will be attractive for firms to invest and grow with expectations of being profitable. In opposite circumstances firms might find that profitability throughout the industry is low. The timing and relative success of particular strategies can be influenced by economic conditions. When the economy, as a whole or certain sectors of the economy, are growing, demand may exist for a product or service which would not be in demand in more depressed circumstances. Similarly, the opportunity to exploit a particular strategy successfully may depend on demand which exists in growth conditions and does not in recession. Although a depressed economy will generally be a threat which results in a number of organizations going out of business, it can provide opportunities for some (Robinson and et al., 1978; Thompson, 2002).

Economic conditions are influenced by political and government policy, being a major influence affecting government decisions. The issue of whether European countries join, or remain outside, the single European currency is a case in point. At any one time either exported or imported goods can seem expensive or inexpensive, dependent upon currency exchange rates. There are many other ways, however, in which government decisions will affect organizations both directly and indirectly, as they provide both opportunities and threats.

While economic conditions and government policy are closely related, they both influence a number of other environmental forces that can affect organizations. Capital markets determine the conditions for alternative types of funding for organizations. They tend to be a subject to government controls, and they will be guided by the prevailing economic conditions. The rate of interest charged for loans will be affected by inflation and by international economics and, although the determining rate may be fixed by a central bank, as it is the case with the Bank of England, that will also be influenced by stated government priorities.

According to Thompson (2002), government spending can increase the money supply and make capital markets more buoyant. The expectations of shareholders with regard to company performance, their willingness to provide more equity funding or their willingness to sell their shares will also be affected.

The labour market reflects the availability of particular skills at national and regional levels; this is affected by training, which is influenced by government and other regional agencies. Labour costs will be influenced by inflation and by general trends in other industries, and by the role and power of trade unions.

The sociocultural environment encapsulates demand and tastes, which vary with fashion and disposable income, and general changes can again provide both opportunities and threats for particular companies (Thompson, 2002; Pearce and Robinson, 2005). Over-time most products change from being a novelty to a situation of market saturation, and as this happens pricing and promotion strategies have to change. Similarly, some products and services will sell around the world with little variation, but these are relatively unusual. Organizations should be aware of demographics changes as the structure of the population by ages, affluence, regions, numbers working and so on can have an important bearing on demand as a whole and on demand for particular products and services. Threats to existing products might be increasing: opportunities for differentiation and market segmentation might be emerging.

Technology is widely recognised by various literature on strategic management (Capron and Glazer, 1987; Johnson and Scholes, 1993; Jan, 2002), as part of the organization and the industry part of the model as it is used for the creation of competitive advantage. However, technology external to the industry can also be captured and used, and this again can be influenced by government support and encouragement. Technological breakthroughs can create new industries which might prove a threat to existing organizations whose products or services might be rendered redundant, and those firms which might be affected in this way should be alert to the possibility. Equally, new technology could provide a useful input, in both manufacturing and service industries, but in turn its purchase will require funding and possibly employee training before it can be used.

3. PEST Analysis in the Case Study

In a *P.E.S.T.* Analysis Political, Economical, Social and Technological aspects are being investigated as mentioned above and how they affect the field of Private Education and particularly English Schools in Greece.

Before starting the analysis regarding the effect that the eurolink website has on both user and clients and the structure of the business itself, it is necessary to consider how the business environment is formed today, in the past and the future perspectives.

3.1 Social aspects of P.E.S.T Analysis in the Case Study

The so called private English schools “Frontistiria” in Greek were born as a new business market in the early 70’s. Looking back on the social structure of the Greek state it must pointed out that during the 60’s and 70’s, Greece had a booming economy (GDP growth reached on average 9%) with an increase demand for diversified products and services.

The impact of a booming economy was translated in terms of salaries which year after year were shifting consumers’ expenditure, and so was the need for diversified services or products as higher salary elasticity occurred. To explain things better, if a consumer was receiving an x amount of money and then every year following he would receive $x+10\%$, he would have a better power of purchase, and start spending the additional extra income on products or services he could not afford the years before. As income increases, living standards also increase, meaning that money could be now spent even on luxury products or services, as people could not spend in the past.

Since primary needs were covered, people would now spend the additional part of their income on more sophisticated products or services. By the years of 70’s Private English schools were considered as a new diversified kind of services that people were able to afford.

Apart from the financial approach to the issue, the reason why would the customers -in this occasion the parents of young students- would accept to support the new so called Private English Market must be seen.

Looking into the social part of the issue it must be underscored that the Greek society has adopted a mentality on the issue of education that stands out by far to what the rest of Western Europeans stand.

Greek parents pay great tribute to their children's education, to the extent that they are willing to spend a big percentage of their annual income for their children's education. To understand things better, an example of what a typical family in the 70's would look like will be examined.

It is assumed that an adult parent in the 70's would be close to his/her early 30's. This means that he /she would be born in the early 40's. This is the World War II period. If a closer examination of the profile of a 70's typical parent is done, it may be well understood that he/she has suffered during his youth hardship and poverty of post-war years. It is taken for granted that by the years these typical 70's parents did not have the chance to receive proper education (there had been only public schools by the time) as the state was trying to recover from W.W.II and after that civil war (which occurred early 50's) quite many, of that generation were raised into adults being illiterate.

However, that structure of society paid high tribute to people with high education profile. It's so common in old Greek films, how the society points out adults that became doctors – lawyers or scientists in the years of 60's.

This group of people were even ranked in the social hierarchy just because they had graduated from a university school and avoided to become farmers - which was the most common profession by that time. Since the majority of the population had a very basic education, university graduates were highly absorbed by the local booming business market, as there was excess demand for the very few well educated personnel.

It is no surprising that educated people would enjoy better living standards and have public recognition for what their profession was, compared to what the majority was, workers and farmers.

The stereotype of a successful person was much depended on education back then. Better education meant better life, recognition by rest of the society...and it could even make, what was called “a good family”. People used to say for educated people that “he/she comes from a good family...so he/she is a good choice to marry”

Looking on the impact that good education had on the society, it's no surprise why the future generations decided to invest/spend a great amount of money on their offspring. Through education they considered that they would improve their children's future life, "buy" social recognition, or even provide to their children what they could not have as youngsters.

But is this evidence or argument enough to explain why the private English schools became a blooming market? At this point, an in-depth analysis of the government policies implemented in public schools, or even better the government expenditure and investment on public education has to be taken.

3.2 Political aspects of P.E.S.T Analysis in the Case Study

Greece's major problem through the years has been tax evasion. Less taxes means smaller government budget and so less funding on education. Funding on education had always claimed approximately 3% of GDP (Gross Domestic Product). Same time Western European governments spend the double amount out of their GDP, having much higher standards on their educational system.

With a tight budget given every year to public education, like primary education, secondary education and Universities, funding is never enough to bring expected outcome. It is quite common that the quality of education in Greece had never reached in terms of infrastructure or general in terms of qualities the European average.

Government spending on education had always been poor, bringing a zest for recrimination among politicians in public dialogs.

Parents also realized that, as young students complain, class teaching in public high schools or Lyceums, is not sufficient as to successfully sit the exams for English Diplomas or Certificates.

Complementary teaching by other educational sources is regarded as a necessity. For this reason many parents regard that private English schools have the quality in teaching a foreign language that the public education is missing.

At his point, it should be noted that the objective of this paper is not to examine if the mentioned statement stands true or not, however it represents the public opinion.

3.3 Economical aspects of P.E.S.T Analysis in the Case Study

Concerning the English Language diplomas, it should be underscored that until recently the Greek state had no institution that would officially, on behalf of the state, recognize a student's level in foreign languages. The role of asserting an individual's ability in foreign languages was given to overseas educational institutes such as Cambridge University (holding the Cambridge Lower Examination), Goethe Institute (for the German Language) Sorbonne University (for the French Language) e.t.c.

The official government's policy for an individual's proof of skills for a foreign language was derived by foreign Institutes only, until recently.

These well known overseas Universities saw an opportunity to generate income through their language diplomas, recognized by various governments across the world.

It is well known that sitting the exams has a significant fee which has to be paid by the candidate. This fee is paid to the educational institute that holds the exam.

In terms of money, this fee brings billions of turn over for the benefit of the universities or institutions that hold the exams.

Private language schools immediately recognized the business opportunity to collaborate with well known universities and take franchise of the exams. Private language schools are mid-size businesses which stand primarily to make money for the owner, and also to bring language education to its students-customers.

So far, the success of the private language school market in terms of demand, social acceptance and financial trends has been examined

In economics it is well understood that if a market exists, there are parts of the society that financially benefit from the turnover that the market brings. It is also known that government policies implemented have an impact on specific social group. Through their policy, Governments choose the group of people which will get support out of their policies.

For example, the private foreign language schools offer job opportunities to unemployed by the government teachers. Many of them, if not employed by the public schools would either

had to depend, for a short period of time, on unemployment benefits, or change their carrier aspect to jobs where they could be employed immediately.

So, for this group of people private language schools becomes a good alternative solution to their carrier quest, while saves money for the government. Moreover, since private language schools stand as Llc companies (Limited liability or solo entrepreneurships) they are imposed with taxes and this is a contribution to the national economy.

In general, the turnover for the services of private schools reaches the amount of 1 billion Euros every year. These services are taxed with 19%, not to mention the corporations' tax on income.

It looks like both parties, corporate-private schools, and the government as well benefit from the existence of the above mentioned market. But the money comes out of the pocket of the civilians who pay taxes for public education and on the same time they pay additional money for complementary, by side education for their children.

3.4 Technological aspects of P.E.S.T Analysis in the Case Study

What has not been examined so far is the impact that technological evolution, especially of the recent years, had on the private English school market.

The birth of internet primarily, and the everyday use of high-tech devices, (such as i-pods, playstations, lap-tops etc.) has significantly increased the demand for the use of English language. If one would imagine himself in an environment where it is needed to use e-mails, to understand specific software necessary for his job, or just install a new device that he have bought, he would realize that the lack of English knowledge would literally make the person close to handicapped on serving himself on what others believe as common things.

Thus, technology, by no doubt, has shifted people's demand to learn the English language, and of course in the case this has been an additional factor that pushes people even closer to private English schools. A new market fraction for the business, one might say!

Up to this point, a thorough examination has been made why the private English Schools are still a successful market by bringing a political, economical, social and technological analysis on the issue.

However changes don't only bring positive effects, but also have side-effects. a *S.W.O.T.* Analysis will tell what these effects are.

4.1 What is a SWOT Analysis??

Ansoff has referred to the analysts of strengths and weaknesses of organizations following the formulations of objectives and to threats and opportunities in process of strategic change.

This can be developed into what is known as *S.W.O.T.* analysis, which focuses on the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats facing organisations. (Laurie J. Mullins, 1993).

SWOT ANALYSIS



- **Strengths** are those aspects of the organisation which it can build upon, for example through the pursuit of diversification. By searching out opportunities which match its strengths the organisation can optimise the effects of synergy.
- **Weaknesses** are those deficiencies in the present skills and resources of the organisation which need to be corrected and action taken to minimize their effect on the organisation.
- **Opportunities** usually arise from the nature of environmental change. The organisation needs to be sensitive to the problems of business strategy and responsive to change in, for example, products, markets or technology.
- **Threats** are the converse of opportunities and refer to external developments which are likely to endanger the operations of the organisation, for example the introduction of a radically new product by competitors. Organisations need to be responsive to changes that have already occurred and to plan for anticipated significant changes in the environment and be prepared to meet them.

4.2 Strengths and Opportunities in the Case Study

To begin with, the advantages that the website in general has brought to the business must be presented. Every year, especially during September, when it's the enrollment period for private English Schools, a great amount of money is spent on consumable leaflets advertising the benefits for joining any private English school.

Most owners of such business tend to use such old fashion means for attracting customers.

The fact that the above business sector is run by women that have no previous experience in marketing or business economics but mainly in teaching, should be pointed out.

Therefore, it is often noticed that young teachers enter the business, lacking of any kind of business skills. In the same way, they need further guidance to promote or advertise their services.

Another obstacle that business owners face is the lack of any Information Technology skills. As technology evolves and covers more sectors and fields of business, I.T. illiterate school owners come towards a major disadvantage for their business. Few of them choose not to go along with new technologies interacting with education, and decide to keep the traditional character of the business where books are not mixed with computers and blackboards are not substituted by interactive boards. It is shown that when people don't have knowledge on technology they become technophobic. For those who choose to adapt to the changing environment and even invest in it, they face the question where to invest and how much money should be spent? Thus, they often become victims of traders who promise to help them modernize their business.

In many occasions, all they do is just run away with a few thousand of Euros more in their pockets as they have deceived their ignorant customers.

So, many of the owners have realized that out-door leaflet advertising has small impact on the business, it is costly and nowadays it has become quite obsolete.

Instead, the purchase of a website gives a sense of freshness in the business, with an amount of money that is worth paying for. A website is still conceived by the majority of the business people as a means of complementary advertising. This is why it is still noticed that websites provide general information about the school, such as rank of classes, different language studies, and contact numbers.

Very few school owners have taken the next step, which is the use of e-learning application. The reasons for this could be the fact that such service suppliers are rare to find in the market, or because the cost of training the teaching staff is costly enough to pay back the investment.

The fact that older teachers in Greece are still not comfortable with the use of computers and internet should not be forgotten. To expand website applications to on-line web libraries where registered users can access massive and extend language information, still has a long way to go. But even the limited use of websites for commercial reasons has a positive cost effect.

Young students these days have the tendency to search on line (or “google” stuff, as it is called) for all kind of information they might be interested in. Definitely, a well designed and attractive website should be appealing to potential customers, or at least brings up to date the prestige or image of the school to the students-customers.

Websites tend to replace other means of advertising, except media advertising, since they can cover all potential customers that have access to the internet. Websites are easily reached by youngsters and furthermore, others can be diverted to collect school’s information, by just giving the URL name.

Thus, nowadays it is not necessary to print leaflets to show school premises on pictures or explain the school’s objectives. Websites are in position to provide basic information. E-mails, newsletters, “contact us” functions have made it easier for potential customers to have access in information and keep their anonymity status.

In the past, parents would enter a private school in order to make a market survey or to examine the school they would register their child and had to confront annoying for them secretary’s demands, such us customer’s contact number, home address etc.

The key points of the strengths that the website brings are next quoted:

1. It is a cost effective advertising.
2. Improves the school’s business image.
3. Makes it easier for potential customers to reach.
4. Basic website functions and information are convenient for the users and in this way they save time consumed by school members dealing with customers general questions.
5. It follows the technological trends of the times.

4.3 Weaknesses and Threats in the Case Study

However, any attempt to go over from one condition to another has also side-effects.

Even the introduction of a new business approach, such as the use of websites by private English schools has a weak side.

A major disadvantage is that the introduction of websites brings is the lack of human interaction. To make things easier to understand, an example where a customer receives information having a dialog with a school representative, and then a case where a potential customer receives that information by the website must be given.

In both cases the potential customers will get what they asked for. But, websites - no matter how attractive and well presenting might be - they will never be able to replace an actual person who interacts with the customer, identifies his needs and engages him psychologically or rationally in choosing his/her school services. In small societies like the neighborhood, where personal relationships are regarded as very important, knowing the potential customer gives a competitive advantage to win him/her.

Such an advantage could be lost if the potential customer chooses to be informed by the website and not visit the actual school.

In cases where mainly parents decide on their child's English school, websites could be a weakness for the business.

Typical 40 year-old parents are not yet familiar with the use of internet. There is still a big majority of people that find the use of internet difficult and try to avoid using it.

Unfortunately, the cost of a well designed multi-functional website for this target group will mean very little. It should be bared in mind that on average 25% of the population today in Greece has an internet connection; and possibly these percentages are high amongst the students, however adults like workers, farmers or public employees that are not involved in their carrier with I.T. issues have very low penetration in internet use.

The fact that, in general, internet penetration is amongst the lowest in the E.U.15 has raised serious concern about the success of internet business in Greece generally. Many companies have delayed their internet business plans in Greece just because ADSL connectivity had been very limited in the near past.

However, the last few years price war on internet connections has brought more competitive prices for the benefit of consumers.

Key points for weaknesses are:

1. Possibility that the school representatives might miss direct contact with the potential customer.
2. Internet penetration among parents age customer is low.
3. In general, internet connectivity in Greece is the lowest of the E.U. 15 (member states).

The possible threats to the business must be viewed by making a change that was not there in the past. The term “threats” basically concerns the action that possibly the rivals undertake as the business has exposed itself to unknown paths, or better to paths that it has no previous experience. If the forming of a business strategy is the same as playing chess, then it is easily understood that every move determines if you are close to win or lose the game.

When all markets have sufficient number of suppliers to cover the demand then this is called a “perfectly competitive market”. In perfectly competitive markets, competitors “spy” or else said, carefully monitor what other competitors do. When the market has a certain size, meaning it cannot get significantly bigger in a certain time period, competitors are strangling to preserve the market shares that will make them survive the competition or increase their share to the extend they are able to do so.

Competitors will monitor every move that one makes, and decide upon his reaction. The ultimate objective of the reaction taken is for the rivals to improve their position towards competition. A reaction to a change, is either adopting the change after some time, or keeping a “wait and see attitude” for some time and then decide.

The main concern for the school that uses extensively its website to promote its services, is the fact that the competitors can also access it and have knowledge of what is happening in the business.

Furthermore, every attempt to adopt new changes includes a certain degree of risk, or in short terms, the first attempt might even fail.

Another concern will be the lack of previous experience. Due to the fact that the use of

E-learning includes various teachers; it cannot be taken for granted that all staff is familiar or understands correctly how the system and the organization should work.

Usually, it takes time for people to gain the experience, and so during this period mistakes are made.

Another question mark is the market response. Many innovative attempts for its time have failed just because the market was not mature enough to accept new things. When people are asked to pay for something which they don't fully understand, they become very reluctant to say yes. If an adult is advised to spend money on his language education on-line, and yet, he has never in the past used internet, it is very difficult to have him convinced that the whole process will bring results for him. People show confidence in things they have experience in, and tend to neglect techniques or ideas that they have never heard of in the past.

Key points for threats are:

1. The competitors can also access on the website and have knowledge of what is happening in the business.
2. The lack of previous experience on E-learning of the personnel may cause mistakes or wrong confrontation of certain issues.
3. The possible reluctance of the market to accept something new.

However, if it is admitted that eventually one day, innovative mechanisms or modern working tools, will certainly dominate the particular business field that is being examined, then it's easy to realize that it is a decision that has to be taken sooner or later.

When markets change, managers have to adopt the change, if not they will soon run out of business. There are many examples in which companies providing services failed to use new technologies, and gradually lost either part of their market share, or went out of business.

A good example could be the airlines-flights market. The use of e-booking flights has significantly helped the rising company B to increase market share. The well known company A which used to dominate the market, failed to adopt the internet part of the business into the actual business, or showed poor reflexes in identifying the opportunities.

Currently, company B makes more than 50% of its booking on-line and has the greatest market share, while company A has dropped to the second position, still experimenting with on-line booking flights.

4.4 The Competitive Advantage in the Case Study

At this point, a special reference must be made to what is called a competitive advantage. In general business they are striving to get that element or characteristics that will differentiate them from competition.

Usually, technological changes are a good way to offer that competitive advantage at the beginning before other rivals start copying or adopting as well these changes.

The benefit for market pioneers is that they can offer a more attractive service to their customers that other rivals don't, and increase their market share.

Another benefit that pioneer business enjoys is customer's loyalty. Provided that the application of differentiated services brings customer satisfaction, makes it hard for that customer to turn to competitors.

Getting to the market that is being examined - the private English schools - , it is easy to identify the diversified possibilities that the website brings.

Above all, it should be underscored that a unique opportunity is now open to the school's management, to apply e-learning through the website.

At present, few English schools make real use of e-learning in their business. Seizing this opportunity will bring the English School on the forefront and thus, differentiate from what other English schools currently offer to their customers.

E-learning, if applied in a productive and efficient way will increase the business turnover significantly, as a new market segment is created. This means that working adults who had been out of schools' target group, due to the fact that it was not convenient for them to physically join classes, will now have the opportunity to attend to classes through the application of e-learning.

On early stage it is expected that few will decide to join the new application, but when it will start gaining customer's confidence that their money is worth paying, the application of e-learning will pass to the stage of maturity. If e-learning is promoted carefully and customers start receiving the promised outcome, which is the improvement of their language skills, they have no reason to change school. Happy customers as well as dissatisfied customers have the tendency to pass over the information of satisfaction or dissatisfaction of the services received

to others as well. It is very important then, that the beginning of such attempt is carried out successfully, in other case winning customers' confidence will be a costly and time consuming process.

- The main key point which derives from the opportunity analysis is the potential competitive advantage that e-learning application will offer to the business.

A reference should be made to the way that the evolution of Internet could bring added value to a successful internet business.

For example, when a site becomes popular at least for the domestic market e.g. a Greek educational portal that has big traffic for its continent of use, then one might argue that the site could be used for commercial reasons as well. "Google ads" is a tool that uses popular websites, to place advertisings, and so generate income for those who host the ads.

Perhaps this is an issue that one might deal with in the future, under the condition that the website has not lost viewer's interest.

In all cases, the advantages admittedly surpass the drawbacks that the construction of the web site poses on the Foreign Languages Teaching Centre and provides a competitive advantage to the organization in relation to its rivals.

Either ways, in order for a corporation/company to survive in a demanding and competitive environment such as today's, it is necessary to keep pace with the technological advances and new methods evolving in each field concerned.

The existence of a website for a Foreign Languages Teaching Centre is definitely one of these...

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And on the World Wide Web:

<http://www.joomla.org/about-joomla.html>