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eLearning Papers



eLearning Papers is a digital publication on e-learning of **elearningeuropa.info**, a portal created by the European Commission to promote the use of ICT in education and training.

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Editorial: eLearning Papers publication launched

In 2002, the elearningeuropa.info portal was launched as a European Commission initiative to support education and training through all kinds of multimedia and technological tools. Since then, the portal has encouraged the use of high quality educational contents and dialogue and cooperation for the use of new technologies in the educational field.

A lot has happened since then, and new requirements and challenges have emerged in the areas of education and technology. Having promoted discussion among e-learning practitioners in Europe and gathered a large repository of e-learning contents, we are now launching a digital publication entitled **eLearning Papers**, a exclusive platform providing articles, interviews and good practices related to e-learning.

With **eLearning Papers**, we intend to reinforce the visibility of the articles and, through a more rigorous editorial process, provide readers with more structured and quality texts. As such, we aim to add a new dimension to the exchange of information on e-learning in Europe and stimulate research. The scope of the publication reflects the four community areas of the elearningeuropa.info portal: schools, higher education, training and work, and learning and society.

eLearning Papers, published every two months, provides all those interested with an opportunity to have their texts published throughout Europe. We will continue to publish articles, interviews and good practices provided by the readers of the portal themselves. Each article has an executive summary that is available in 19 European languages, providing the readers with more material in their own language and therefore making the information more accessible in general. The articles are available in full in their original language.

In this first edition, you will find a number of articles, each providing an individual outlook on e-learning in Europe:

- Ian Roffe talks about new e-language tools for lesser-used European languages;
- Researchers of the “mGBL - mobile game-based learning” project write about how the project has carried out research into the use of mobile devices among young adults with different levels of education and culture;
- Sharon Monti, Félix San Vicente and Vanio Preti discuss language learning and teaching experience in the context of e-learning.
- Jean Johnson and Jonny Dyer point out how user-generated content plays an important role in defining new pedagogical approaches to learning. And finally,
- Tapio Varis outlines a need for common European virtual education across national borders.

We hope that you will find this initiative inspiring and useful. Researchers and e-learning practitioners on every level are invited to submit their work. Please do not hesitate to send in your suggestions and ideas as to how to improve this publication. Enjoy the first edition.

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“ The project aims to develop a platform that can be used to efficiently design and develop games for m-learning and m-guidance, seeking to support decision-making in critical situations and user choice in transition moments. ”

Keywords

m-learning, m-guidance, m-games

Full text

<http://www.elearningeuropa.info/files/media/media10911.pdf>

mGBL - mobile Game-Based Learning: perspectives and usage in learning and career guidance topics

mGBL - mobile Game Based Learning is a research project with the aim of improving the effectiveness and efficiency of learning and guidance in the target group of young people through the development of innovative learning and guidance models based on mobile games. The project, which began on 1 October 2005, is a STREP (Specific Targeted Research Project), funded for three years by European Community through the 6th Framework Programme, addressing the Strategic Objective of “Strengthening the Integration of the ICT Research Effort in an Enlarged Europe”, a frontier research area of the Priority Thematic Area of IST.

The project idea is based on the fact that mobile devices are currently increasingly widespread, and mobile phones in particular represent what young adults, with different levels of education and culture, have in common. Moreover, several research projects have shown the potential of game-based learning, and the project seeks to further exploit that potential by means of the pervasiveness of mobile technologies, by developing a new paradigm of m-learning usage and interaction with regard to the classic e-learning models.

The project aims to develop a platform that can be used to efficiently design and develop games for m-learning and m-guidance, seeking to support decision-making in critical situations and user choice in transition moments. Moreover, based on that platform, two game prototypes will also be developed during the project, and their contents will be based on e-health, e-commerce and e-guidance.

In particular, mGBL addresses a two-fold need in the EU: the need to support decision-making in critical situations, not only in a cognitive but also in an emotional manner and, as a consequence, the need to build on cutting-edge work in the new field of m-learning.

The project is based on a bottom-up approach, which means that end users of the mobile games and experts have been directly involved from the very beginning through specific interviews and focus groups carried out in the three fields of analysis: e-guidance, e-health and e-commerce.

In terms of future work, beyond technological implementation, particular efforts will be directed towards user trials and evaluation and validation processes in order to keep the focus on user needs. Furthermore, dissemination activities will aim to establish a community of practice to facilitate knowledge transfer within the m-learning community and to enable the use of project results for further research in the field of game-based m-learning.



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“ Each course is
complemented by an
accurate analysis of the
collected quantitative and
qualitative data, which
constitute an extremely
valuable source of
information for the
improvement of forthcoming
e-learning projects. ”

Keywords

Language teaching, learning
management systems,
learning object, evaluation,
assessment, tracking

Full text

[http://www.elearningeuropa.info/
files/media/media11005.pdf](http://www.elearningeuropa.info/files/media/media11005.pdf)

Characteristics and Capacity of e-learning platforms for learning languages (Summer 2006)

This article illustrates the e-learning language learning and teaching experience that took place during the academic year 2005-2006 at the CLIRO Linguistic Centre (University of Bologna). This study arises from a previous analysis of the characteristics and the potential of different e-learning platforms (LMS), through which our research team has been focusing on the specific needs of language learning courses (Monti, FSV, Preti, 2006).

After defining the essential features of an LMS appropriate for language learning courses (including, among others, the communicative/collaborative approach, the flexibility of the tools used, and the usability and interoperability with other e-learning management systems), a few *blended* learning courses were planned and carried out, in order to set up the experimentation phase. This had a two-fold objective: on the one hand, to test the selected tools, the content developed in *learning object* format (SCORM standard), and the methodological approach chosen; on the other hand, to constantly monitor the evolution of the technologies used, evaluating potential and new functionalities, in order to experiment with innovative methodologies and techniques for language teaching and learning. The gathering of feedback and relevant data concerning the practical experience is made possible thanks to the numerous tools for monitoring, tracking and evaluating both the course project management (*evaluation*) and the student learning process and achievements (*assessment*). Each course is complemented by an accurate analysis of the collected quantitative and qualitative data (tracking data, student outcomes, comments and suggestions gathered through questionnaires, etc.), which constitute an extremely valuable source of information for the improvement of forthcoming e-learning projects.

In short, the main goal of this study was to obtain useful data and establish criteria for the efficient use of new technologies in language learning that can guarantee the quality of the e-learning projects tested at the CLIRO Linguistic Centre. After proving the efficacy of the approach, it will be possible to outline internal guidelines and practical suggestions for the project management of e-learning courses that can be applied to different languages (process reuse), constantly bearing in mind the peculiarities of each language and the specific needs of each level of learning, as indicated by the Common European Framework.



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“ Political awareness of project staff is necessary to gather a degree of political support in order to facilitate cooperation between the project partners and government organisations.”

Keywords

E-learning, Interreg,
language tools, transnational
co-operation.

Full text

<http://www.elearningeuropa.info/files/media/media11003.pdf>

E-learning Development and Exchange: practical lessons from developing e-language tools for support in lesser-used European languages

When e-learning is extensively available, competition is inevitable and niches are important for providers prepared to supply to small groups. With a large number of different languages in use across the EU, language programmes are inevitably an important feature of European e-learning provision. Sustaining e-learning activities in relation to lesser-used European languages led to the identification of new e-tools as services to support learning. Development requires resource investigation, however, and the influences and interactions of EU policies and programmes at a regional level are very significant. Through an informal matching process, a joint initiative to develop online language tools for Welsh and Irish was formed. The context, regional influences, difficulties and solutions are described below.

The application area is unusual in that it affects database applications applied to languages, but seven general project development lessons are transferable and highlighted. Networking across initiatives offers multiple ways of developing e-learning and, on a regional basis, there is sufficient information to enable a suitable fit to be made with relevant initiatives. Political awareness of project staff is necessary to gather a degree of political support in order to facilitate cooperation between the project partners and government organisations. Transnational team-building should embrace different levels of staff to enable them to communicate easily about problem; therefore, the interface needs to be designed so that it can be updated easily in response to user needs. Marketing promotion can be effective in various forms, such as maintaining and updating a fresh and attractive website that will attract enquiries and international registrations from the Internet; holding special promotional events that are planned to coincide with course development milestones; and arranging a “drip-feed” of local news stories to stimulate interest and maintain the flow of registrations. Monitoring of the website provides a quick, precise and accurate indication of the effect of marketing promotion. Finally, evaluation is one of the most important tasks and needs to be scheduled from day one of the initiative. Emphasis is placed on capturing as much developmental information as possible, including the unexpected and planned outcomes. Features for evaluation included social and cultural needs, the learning support environment, and management. Effective evaluation can generate findings and, together with suitable dissemination, these are important tools for sustaining an innovation dynamic.



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“ There is now a need for
common European virtual
education and a common
European degree system. ”

Keywords

Lifelong education, European
virtual education,
universities, digital content

Full text

[http://www.elearningeuropa.info/
files/media/media11006.pdf](http://www.elearningeuropa.info/files/media/media11006.pdf)

The article is originally
published at “e-Learning
Conference 2005: Towards a
Learning Society 2005”.

eLearning and higher education

Modern European university traditions during the last 500 years face major challenges in the 21st century. During the Enlightenment and the spirit of Kant, the emphasis was on the logic of human rationality. The Humboldt tradition during the 19th century promoted culture and civilisation, a holistic idea of human beings as the ultimate goal of higher education. This vision was replaced in the late 20th century by the idea of centres of excellence, which are highly specialised but rather narrow in their approach to knowledge. The idea of civilisation degenerated into techno-bureaucracy. This trend has been further intensified by the market model of a university, favouring fields of human inquiry that make money. Also, corporate universities are being promoted, especially when new models of e-learning and mobile learning can be applied.

There is now a need for common European virtual education and a common European degree system. The content of a European virtual university gateway service would be a portal to net-based or net-supported courses and programmes, information seeking, collaboration and exchange, common denominators, ownership and endorsement labels. The quality issues include transparency, benchmarking, meta-data structure, user and peer reviews, sharing of models and best practices, a sharing system and tool description, as well as user experiences.

Virtual education in Europe has mainly taken place on a national level thus far, and there is not yet a great deal of transnational collaboration. National consortia with centres of expertise have been formed in many countries (France, the Netherlands, Finland, etc.), while some single e-universities and project-based national initiatives also exist. Public-private partnerships are also developing, and there are new providers of content from corporate and media-linked sources. The issues of quality assurance and accreditation, as well as international strategic alliances, are being widely discussed.

In Finland, the following progress has been made in recent years in introducing e-learning to higher education:

- Changes in management: earlier, the management of the university gave orders to departments and faculties to make progress in applying e-learning within their work. The solution then was further training of the faculty members. Now, there are strategic services, enabling the universities to involve the departmental level. This middle-out approach involves the operative directors of departments and faculties.
- The trend is to promote cooperation between the best research and teaching universities so that material of high quality will be available to all. A European learning portal between universities is being constructed.
- Common support structures and credit systems are being developed between selected European universities which would guarantee mobility and operative infrastructures. Students of any of the participating universities would be able to participate in research-based education. Also, search engines for the courses are being developed.



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“Where the social constructs of community build confidence and self-esteem, individuals are able to take charge of their own learning and develop a sense of ownership through “community pull”.”

Keywords

Constructivist, content,
user-defined, community

Full text

<http://www.elearningeuropa.info/files/media/media11007.pdf>

This article is originally published in the conference book of the m-ICTE 2005: “Recent Research Developments in Learning Technologies” (2005) Edit. A. Méndez-Vilas & co.
<http://www.formatex.org/micte2005/book.htm>

User-defined content in a constructivist learning environment

New pedagogies are developing with the digital age which reflect collaboration, internalised thinking, reflection and iteration rather than the concept of the taught lesson; however, the Internet is still regarded by many as a convenient mechanism for delivering traditional materials online.

Whilst a “content push” model is often the norm, opportunities for participation by the learner are often reduced to multiple choice questions or a small range of community tools which fail to recognise the changing and challenging culture of learning in the 21st century. Whilst the amount of information available to individuals continues to increase dramatically, the skills needed to access and process this information are quickly outdated. Skills such as the ability to use new technologies and shape social communication and interaction using a range of multimedia tools will define success in the future.

This research argues that, in the context of online communities, user-generated content has an important part to play in defining new pedagogical approaches to learning. Where the social constructs of community build confidence and self-esteem, individuals are able to take charge of their own learning and develop a sense of ownership through “community pull”. The learning process is supported by the development of critical and independent thinking skills.

The most effective learning occurs where the learners’ interests are aroused and their pathway meets their needs. Learners benefit from community membership, where they are involved in dialogue, exchange and collaboration. Within a learning community, the learners gain more self-confidence and control. The community provides them with the sense of a learning space with its shared experience of goals, cooperation and support.

That sense of community serves to define a range of user-led and peer-generated content with common characteristics.