

EDEN Annual Conference 2009 – Innovation in Learning Communities

Report by Csaba Horváth, Corvinno Technology Transfer Center, Hungary

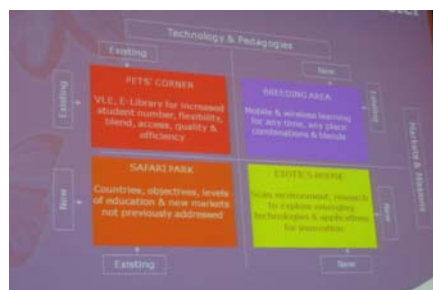
An international event organized by the European Distance and E-learning Network was held on 10-13th of June in Gdansk, Poland. The event was held in the Gdansk Music and Congress Centre for 380 participants from 42 different countries.

<http://www.eden-online.org/eden.php?menuId=410>



After the opening reception the conference was opened by a plenary session where speakers talked about current trends, challenges and possible future ways of e-learning. Nicholas H. Allen from University of Maryland University College was summarizing the challenges that they currently face in the United States of America. They held their first online course in 1994 in spite of this US education is falling back. By a prediction US population is going to increase from 296 million in 2005 to 438 million by 2050 therefore online education is getting more and more important.

On the Media Zoo Tour: Innovation and Practice Symposium, after a short introduction of the main ideas by Matthew Wheeler from Beyond Research Alliance of University of Leicester, participants in five people groups were focusing on two main questions “How to empower innovation within a huge diversity of different learning situations and settings?” and “How to use existing and emergent technologies to create new value for learning?”. The workshop used an innovative presentation format called Pecha Kucha of question introduction for group discussion.



E-learning was split into groups by new and existing Technologies & Pedagogies and Markets & Missions. E-learning Manager can be labelled into “Safari Park” where New Markets & Missions meet Existing Technology & Pedagogy. The main conclusion, agreed by all participants, of the workshop was that we have to care all kind of emerging technologies, because one can not be the answer for every challenge.

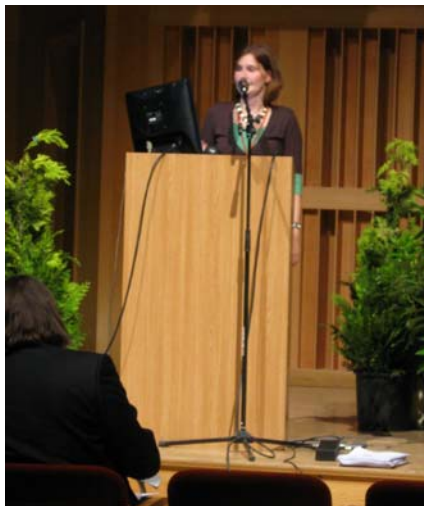


In the E-learning Management and Teacher Training postsession Karin Wahlberg-Orving, Britt Englund and Ulla Andersson from Mid Sweden University were introducing a pedagogical model for student success. Their main goal is to improve the number of students in their region who enter into higher education by developing systematically Distance Education (DE). Part of the model is dealing teacher training so they can achieve Professional teachers who can organize

for flexible learning. This is partly common to the main idea of E-learning Manager. The project currently in its beginning state but experiences could be discussed after their project reaches its teacher training simulation and facilitation phase based on emerging e-learning technologies.

Morten Flate Paulsen from NKI distance Education was sharing their Social Innovations in Online Learning. They have more than 110 000 enrolments in online courses since 1987. Their individual planning system and progress report for students seemed very useful. A learning partner finding system was also implemented that help students to get in contact other learners so they can cooperate and see their studies from different point of views. The most interesting new feature of their e-learning system was the possibility of creating student and teacher profiles. Creators can choose who can see their presentations (closed, limited, open, and global). 36 percent of the total students use presentations mostly as an online CV. It is important for the sector that students become visible by the help of presentations and for the institution the biggest advantage that these profiles provides keywords for the search engines, however some risks also needed to take into account. These ideas could be used for ELM to enhance the features of the e-learning system.

Inventive e-Learning Methodology: Competence Development and Assessment



Julia Kramer from the German WHL Graduate School of Business and Economics was presenting E-portfolios as Tools to Assess Generic Competences in Distance Learning study Courses. Portfolios are increasingly used since the 1990-ies and they were examining assessment portfolios that demonstrate learners' competencies for defined subject areas. Generic competencies (that can be splitted into categories like social/communicative, personal and activity-orientated competencies) are required by the labour market, therefore they need to be integrated into the assessment especially for e-learning, where this is not an easy task. They implemented assessment e-portfolios for one of their master courses at WHL. Their portfolios were built up of three elements: different tasks (individual and cooperative), learning diary (optional) and 2 Online-Charts (obligatory) for feedback and online chat. These assessment portfolios should meet quality standards like objectivity, reliability and validity. Therefore it is crucial to define the assessment criteria in advance and also a frame for the weighting of different competencies needs to be defined.

Teixeira Antonio Moriera from the Universidade Alberta was presenting The case of E-folio which was created for their online undergraduate course at their university. Their currently used pedagogical model is based on student centered learning, flexibility, interaction and digital inclusion. As part of the digital inclusion they are promoting a fully virtual learning environment. Their research is focusing on two main

New Pedagogical Model

Main Types of Assessment Tools used in Undergraduate Courses:

E-Folio
Short digital document elaborated by the student and published online to be visualized by the teacher, and should clearly demonstrate that the student acquired or developed a given competence

P-folio
Set of questions defined by the teacher, or other forms, such as the presentation of a project or a report, according to the competences to be developed by the students

assessment tools: e-folios, which are short digital documents clearly demonstrating that the student acquired a given competence and p-folios which are teacher defined competencies that the student should develop. They were analyzing a pool of 35 e-folios that represented seven different scientific areas (education, languages, culture, literature, natural sciences, economy, and documental sciences). They found that problem solving was the most valued competence of all.



Mark Endean from The Open University of UK and Bai Bin from Beijing Normal University of China introduced their joined project on the Inter-cultural comparison of Staff Perceptions on Quality in Online Distance Learning. People with different social and cultural backgrounds have different views on what constitutes quality and it is essential for online education. They are working on to find conceptions and perceptions of quality in online education and critical factors in the two countries. Mr. Endean introduced the online education in the UK and a quality framework. Mr. Bin introduced the online education in China and they showed contrasted quality regimes. These comparisons were based on 42 interviews taken in the UK and China.

In the UK quality is kind of a “fitness for purpose” and the critical factors are curriculum design, student support, assessment and effective interaction. In China quality is partly “fitness for purpose” and it is also “value added”. Critical factors are curriculum content and course design, student support, learning processes, assessment and feedback, and staff development. In the next stage of the research they are trying to explore the reasons of these differences and examine if they can be reconciled in common frameworks and benchmarks that recognize the different social contexts within which the institutions are operating.