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Editorial: Learning and interculturality

The year 2008 has been declared as the European year of Intercultural Dialogue. One of our authors pertinently outlines: "This is but one sign of the growing awareness of the need to reflect on the multicultural dimensions of our society and work actively at overcoming the gaps and fear that often exist between people of different cultures". Therefore, eLearning Papers wants to contribute to the reflection on this theme. Above all we want to emphasise the importance that ICT have in the process and the added value that e-learning can offer.

The concept of interculturality gives us an idea of diversity and acknowledges that we live in societies that are more complex than ever, where it is necessary to facilitate a "meeting point" for cultures. In this respect, educational processes need to recognise these cornerstones in learning designs that promote interculturality: the need to provide space for dialogue, negotiation and respect towards minorities.

Without a doubt, intercultural education from the point of view of ICT and e-learning represents a great challenge and a commitment for governments and public/ private organisations. The challenge is about committing to design enriched and potential learning environments that are adapted both to information society and to new types of arising intercultural citizenship.

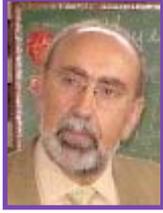
Articles in this issue address the challenge of interculturality in lifelong learning. Researchers from the University of Murcia write about how the appropriate use of ICT in educational contexts allows maintaining the cultural characteristics of a community. Claire Bélisle describes in her article how cultural embeddedness applies to learning theories as much as teaching models. Chiara Pozzi, from the University of Milano, shows us an e-learning project for teachers carried out in Kenya. The article describes the national and local context as well as how culture mediates between the individual and the technology. Mokhtar Ben Henda illustrates in his article e-learning standardisation initiatives and procedures, as well as their outcomes and perspectives.

Besides the intercultural theme, we include two other articles. The first one, written by Sandra Schaffert and Guntram Geser, describes current open educational resource initiatives. The issue comes to its end with Nicolò A. Piave's article on rapid e-learning used as an informal education tool.

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“ We pretend to analyze how the appropriate use of ICT in educational contexts allows to maintain the cultural characteristics of a community, while helping at the same time to promote a better knowledge and acceptance of other cultures.”

Keywords

multiculturalism, ICT,
pedagogy, school,
immigration, acculturation,
adaptation

Full text

[http://www.elearningeuropa.info/
files/media/media14902.pdf](http://www.elearningeuropa.info/files/media/media14902.pdf)

Migrations and the Net: new virtual spaces to build a cultural identity

This paper presents some of the reflections, projects and results around the topics of multiculturalism and migration attained by the Educational Technology Research Group at the University of Murcia, some of them integrated in the Interuniversity Cooperation programmes promoted by the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (AECI). We pretend to analyze how the appropriate use of ICT in educational contexts allows to maintain the cultural characteristics of a community, while helping at the same time to promote a better knowledge and acceptance of other cultures.

Spanish current young immigrants (most of them first or second generation) are suffering different types of acculturation as a result of various factors, which are conditioning their lifestyle and relationship models within the host culture. Among these factors, the descendant acculturation and assimilation are two significant barriers towards achieving a society with a real and sustainable model of multicultural co-existence.

School is a very intense communicative environment for children, and in the primary stages it is the most significant space of interaction both to acquire the culture of the host society or for losing the original one, as well as for disseminating, understanding and accepting both.

We are living in a technological world which presents great opportunities to establish networks of communication and open our minds to relationships with other people and cultures. Our projects seek to provide answers through technology to all the challenges posed by the current realities of migration, using as a basis one of the most important elements in the adaptation of humans to their environment: education.



Claire Bélisle

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“ In multicultural and multilingual societies, the implicit pedagogical assumptions of e-learning environments need to be made explicit. ”

Keywords

learning theories, interculturality, teaching models, practices, modelling

Full text

<http://www.elearningeuropa.info/files/media/media14903.pdf>

E-learning and intercultural dimensions of learning theories and teaching models

It will be argued in this article that developing intercultural awareness in students can be facilitated by e-learning environments. When choosing to address learning goals within an e-learning environment, authors and educators need to become aware of hidden dimensions in their pedagogical activity. Cultural embeddedness applies to learning theories as much as teaching models. Reflecting on these dimensions and taking them into account in designing specific environments should result in facilitated intercultural learning and teaching.

In multicultural and multilingual societies, the implicit pedagogical assumptions of e-learning environments need to be made explicit. Two different cultural dimensions of educational practices are more specifically concerned: the pedagogical culture and the values, beliefs, attitudes, theories and models involved; and the digital culture and the emerging transformations related to knowledge and pedagogical modelling.

The development of intercultural abilities, already present in language education, can lead the way to an enhanced experience of learning and teaching. Students and teachers can be empowered as much as they develop a new culture of education, based on intercultural competences, critical thinking, awareness and self-regulated practices.



Chiara Pozzi

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“ We start with an overview of the national and local context and go on to consider how culture mediates between the individual and technology. ”

Keywords

digital divide, Africa, e-learning, Kenya, globalisation, teachers, multicultural, training, penetration, developing countries

Full text

<http://www.elearningeuropa.info/files/media/media14905.pdf>

Distance training of teachers in a rural area in Kenya

Globalisation has intensified and delocalised social relations at a worldwide level; it has connected “distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa. Local transformation is as much a part of globalisation as the lateral extension of social connections across time and space.” (Giddens, 1990)

The revolutionary changes that have occurred in information technology and the ensuing phenomenon of the digital divide are important aspects of this process. In this study, we analyse the digital divide by looking at it from a peripheral perspective, compared to the developed world, where this revolution has started. Africa and Kenya thus become the changing local context from which we observe the penetration of new technologies as part of the globalisation process.

In Africa, the situation concerning the digital divide, the social gap in the access and use of information technologies and, in particular, the delay in the implementation of the infrastructure required to ensure their availability and use, is inadequate. However, it should be noticed that the globalisation process is contributing to a progressive penetration of new technologies in the African continent. But the population should not only be able to use them - they should also be able to promote, manage and regulate them. This is important because ICT carry major consequences on both social practices and local culture.

This article illustrates a pilot e-learning project for teachers carried out in the Gwasssi district, a rural area in Kenya. We start with an overview of the national and local context and go on to consider how culture mediates between the individual and technology. Finally, the paper looks into the local situation and illustrates the context and the strategic issues in which the project stakeholders are working on now.



Mokhtar Ben
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“ Many projects, collaborations and initiatives are striving to find out the appropriate solutions to reduce and bridge the e-gaps in education through standards definition and implementation. ”

Keywords

e-learning standards,
linguistic diversity,
multicultural education,
competencies, AUF, SCORM

Full text

<http://www.elearningeuropa.info/files/media/media14906.pdf>

SCORM specifications for an emerging world: The linguistic diversity at work

With a world wide spreading of e-learning models, techniques and solutions, new challenges of the digital divide are imposing to the emerging countries the need to subscribe to this inevitable global educational process. Many projects, collaborations and initiatives are striving to find out the appropriate solutions to reduce and bridge the e-gaps in education through standards definition and implementation.

E-learning pioneers like the aviation and the military industries were first to set up specifications to harmonize and structure interoperable collaborative systems to exchange content resources and educational procedures through Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). Many specifications and de jure standards appeared to harmonize the e-learning world context: the Global Learning Consortium developed the Instructional Management Systems (IMS) and the US Department of Defense (DoD) was behind the wide spreading of the Sharable Content Object Reference Model (SCORM). Basically serving Anglo-Saxon communities, these initiatives have progressively gained concern of cultural and academic international structures aware that the cultural and linguistic diversities are to be reinforced through education. The Agency of French Speaking Universities (AUF) is one of the international bodies subscribed to this international e-learning standardization movement as a relay connector for its partner languages and cultures. One of the major initiatives that the AUF has undertaken in this respect is the assistance to produce standardized educational resources for trainers and learners within the scope of its French speaking partnership areas based on local linguistic and cultural specifications.

This paper illustrates the procedures, outcomes and perspectives of such initiatives related to the AUF experience with SCORM specifications as a leading model in the realm of international e-learning standards.



**Dr. Sandra
Schaffert**



**Dr. Guntram
Geser**

Salzburg Research
Forschungsgesellschaft

“ Collaborative creation and sharing among learning communities of OER is regarded as an important catalyst of such educational innovations. ”

Keywords

Open Educational Resources, Open Content, Open Source, educational policy, roadmap, tutorials, collaborative creation

Full text

<http://www.elearningeuropa.info/files/media/media14907.pdf>

Open Educational Resources and Practices

In the last few years, Open Educational Resources (OER) have gained much attention. From January 2006 to December 2007 the Open e-Learning Content Observatory Services (OLCOS), a project co-funded by the European Commission under the eLearning Programme, explored how OER can make a difference in teaching and learning. The project aimed at promoting OER through different activities and products such as a European OER roadmap and OER tutorials. In this paper we present some results of the roadmap which provides an overview of the OER landscape and describes possible pathways towards a higher level of production, sharing and usage of OER. Moreover, the roadmap provides recommendations on required measures and actions to support decision making at the level of educational policy and institutions.

The roadmap emphasises that the knowledge society demands competencies and skills that require innovative educational practices based on open sharing and the evaluation of ideas, fostering creativity and teamwork among the learners. Collaborative creation and sharing among learning communities of OER is regarded as an important catalyst of such educational innovations.

The OLCOS project also developed free online tutorials for practitioners. The objective of these tutorials is supporting students and teachers in the creation, re-use and sharing of OER. To promote hands-on work, the tutorials advise on questions such as the following: How to search for OER? Which materials may be re-used and modified? How to produce and license own OER? The tutorials will be accessible and, potentially, will evolve beyond the end of the OLCOS project, because they are published on an open and successful Wiki based platform (Wikieducator.org) and can be updated by anybody.



Nicolò A.
Piave

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“ Rapid e-learning is able to answer the need of creating synchronized digital contents and blending different kinds of materials into one format compatible with common VLEs. ”

Keywords

Informal learning, rapid e-learning, content, strategies

Full text

<http://www.elearningeuropa.info/files/media/media14908.pdf>

Rapid e-learning, as an informal educational tool for advanced students

This article deals with the possibility of introducing rapid e-learning software, usually used by teachers and content producers, into a hybrid learning paradigm and informal educational tool. The advantage of using this kind of software in virtual classrooms represents the birth of two different but correlated free resources markets among the classic Virtual Learning Environment (VLE): one with simple resources, useful to be combined among them in order to create more complex digital contents, and another one made up of several complex resources coming from previous internal resources markets or, alternatively, directly from the Web. The access to these internal markets could promote new modalities of e-Learning among students and increase the consciousness of media education in their approach to contents.

Rapid e-learning is able to answer the need of creating synchronized digital contents and blending different kinds of materials into one format compatible with common VLEs. Therefore, if used as Web 2.0-like tools, rapid e-learning software can grant the e-learner autonomy to produce self-made contents and the possibility to use a tool which helps e-learners to re-interpret and share more complex resources implying a higher level of understanding and re-building. To do this it is necessary to partially modify Salmon's model, in such a way that the e-learning path is compatible with an informal approach based on the use of rapid e-learning tools, provided that students will discuss the results of their self-production within classical VLE.