E-learning for Societal Needs

University of Silesia in Katowice,
Faculty of Ethnology and Sciences
of Education in Cieszyn

E-learning for Societal Needs

Monograph

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INTRODUCTION

E-learning, which today is no longer considered as a fashionable modern trend, but as an effective, modern form, method, technology of teaching and learning proves its utility not only in tertiary education but also at lower levels of education – in secondary and basic schools.

Currently, we can see how actively develop also social media. Social media includes web- and mobile-based technologies which are used to turn communication into interactive dialogue among organizations, communities, and individuals (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_media). There are more than 30 definition of category "social media" (http://heidicohen.com/social-media-definition/). For example, Andreas Kaplan and Michael Haenlein define social media as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content." I.e. Social Media are social software which mediate human communication. When the technologies are in place, social media is ubiquitously accessible, and enabled by scalable communication techniques. In the year 2012, social media became one of the most powerful sources for news updates through platforms like Twitter and Facebook. Social media technologies take on many different forms including magazines, Internet forums, weblogs, social blogs, microblogging, wikis, social networks, podcasts, photographs or pictures, video", others. "Social media is a collection of online platforms and tools that people use to share content, profiles, opinions, insights, experiences, perspectives and media itself, facilitating conversations and interactions online between groups of people" (Doreen Moran). "Social media is digital content and interaction that is created by and between people. (Sam Decker – Mass Relevance).

Social media as well as other Internet Technology, in particularly e-learning, has great potential to overcome physical barriers. It could improve access to learning for people with disabilities. Over 320 respondents across Europe gave their views about accessibility to e-learning for people with disabilities. Most were extremely positive about the potential benefits and opportunities for learners with disabilities opened up by technology, but few know how to increase accessibility or about international best practice (http://www.trainingvillage.gr). At the same time, the research activity, first of all in area the e-learning and e-mentoring, which should be adapted to people with disabilities and dependence should be run more intensively, globally and comprehensively.

However, there are still a lot of questions that have not been answered yet. The papers of the authors included in the monograph are an attempt at providing such answers. The aspects and problems discussed in the materials of the include the following:

- E-learning and social media for the disabled; the use of Internet technology and social media for people with limited abilities and special needs – theoretical and practical aspects of their use;
- The place and role of distance learning and Social media in the education systems in Visegrad group countries and other European countries;
- Teachers' and learners' competences in distance learning and computer science;
- Efficient use of e-learning in improving the level of students' key competences;
- Pedagogical and methodical aspects of Cloud Computing;
- Distance learning of humanities as well as science and mathematics – a differentiated approach;
- Distance learning and Lifelong Learning; Use of E-learning in the Training of Professionals in the Knowledge Society
- Psychological, social, ethical, cultural and legal aspects of distance learning;
- Appropriate, efficient methods, forms and techniques in distance learning;
- Quality tools in E-learning and criteria for evaluation of distance courses;
- Educational Strategies to Enhance Learners' Motivation in E-Learning, etc.

The monograph includes the best pieces of work, prepared and presented by the authors from seven European countries and from more than twenty universities during the academic conference entitled "*Theoretical and Practical Aspects of Distance Learning",* subtitled*: "E-learning for Societal Needs",* which was held on 15-16.10.2012 at the Faculty of Ethnology and Sciences of Education in Cieszyn, University of Silesia in Katowice, Poland.

The speakers were from the Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra (Slovak Republic), University of Twente (Netherland), University of Ostrava (Czech Republic), Jagiellonian University (Poland), Warsaw University (Poland), University of Silesia in Katowice (Poland), National Defence University (Poland), Silesian University in Opava (Czech Republic), Church Pedagogical Institute in Graz (Austria), University of Defence in Brno (Czech Republic), Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin (Poland), Lublin University of Technology (Poland), Kazimierz Wielki University in Bydgoszcz (Poland), Czestochowa University of Technology (Poland), Cracow Pedagogical University (Poland), Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University (Ukraine), Russian State Vocational Pedagogical University in Yekaterinburg (Russia), Center for Innovatics, Nowy Sacz Business School – National-Louis University (Poland), State Higher Vocational School in Krosno (Poland), Cardinal Stefan Wyszynski University (Poland), University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Warsaw (Poland), Dniprodzerzhinsk State Technical University (Ukraine), Academy of Social Science in Slupsk (Poland), Poznan University of Medical Sciences (Poland), University of Žilina (Slovak Republic), Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, Mieszko I College of Education and Administration in Poznan (Poland), Jesuit University of Philosophy and Education "Ignatianum" in Cracow (Poland).

Among the authors are well-known scholars, young researchers, academic lecturers with many-years' training and experience in the field of e-learning, PhD students, the creators of distance courses, multimedia teaching materials, web-sites and educational sites.

I am convinced that the monograph will be an interesting and valuable publication, describing the theoretical, methodological and practical issues in the field of the use of e-learning for societal needs, offering proposals of solutions to some important problems and showing the road to further work in this field, allowing for exchange of experiences of scholars from various universities of many European countries.

Publishing this monograph is a good example of expansion and strengthening of international cooperation. I am very grateful for valuable remarks and suggestions which contributed to the quality of the publication. Here I would like to thank especially Professor Robert Mrózek for his editorial recommendations, Andrzej Szczurek, MA and Ryszard Kalamarz for assistance in the edition and proofreading of this publication. Also I say 'thank you' to the authors for the preparation and permission to publish their articles. I wish all readers a pleasant reading. Thank you.

Eugenia Smyrnova-Trybulska