
Editorial

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Biographical notes: Piet Kommers is an Associate Professor at the University of Twente at the Department of Media, Communication and Organisation. He chairs the IADIS conferences, e-society conference and web-based communities conference in particular. In his work for UNESCO, he brings forward the blend between the nature and the culture of learning. He distinguishes the 'new' media as catalytic to communication and awareness. In his view, learning gradually embeds in every aspect of life pertaining to the delicate question if learning can be orchestrated essentially. Similarly, we may question if communication can be 'arranged' as we ought to believe at the dawn of the social web.

Eugenia Smyrnova-Trybulska is an Associate Professor at the University of Silesia (Poland), Head of Department of Humanistic Education and Auxiliary Sciences of Pedagogy, Faculty of Ethnology and Sciences of Education in Cieszyn, University of Silesia, Katowice. She is a coordinator of the Faculty Distance Learning Platform (<http://el.us.edu.pl/weinoe>). She chairs the 'Theoretical and Practical Aspects of Distance Learning' conference (www.dlcc.us.edu.pl). Also, she is the coordinator and researcher for several scientific and educational projects, particularly IRNet project (www.irnet.us.edu.pl). She is the author of more than 150 scientific papers and monographs in the field of e-learning methodology, ICT in education, multimedia, teacher training in ICT, and so forth.

Margriet Simmerling is a Peer Consultant/Senior Manager for R&D projects in e-society and web-based communities. She participated in the advisory board for the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs and is active as a Reviewer for the European Commission. She designs and moderates e-learning modules and workshops' e-learning modules and workshops in the domain of education technology and psychology at the PhD level.

New educational strategies in the contemporary digital environment

The rapid development of telecommunications and information technology and the changes in the education system being brought about by this development are influencing universities, schools and other educational institutions not only to continuously improve their skills and tools but also to further improve their educational offering. The best way to enhance the image of universities and individual departments is to adequately build their own information space, which, thanks to technological advances, can take different forms. The expansion of information technology is comparable to the invention of writing. However, after more than half a century, after building the first computer, and after 10 years of the expansion of communication networks, there has not been a significant breakthrough in education attributable to new technologies. To analyse this problem, the authors of this article systematised the concepts associated with educational strategies in contemporary information and communication environment, focused on young people training for professional activities in the era of high technology and telecommunications. The authors, one of the articles included to this special issue, also proposed the model containing information and communication environment components, its main groups of stakeholders and new strategic university aims.

According to one of the definitions of the term 'strategy', given by Oxford dictionaries, a strategy is a plan of action designed to achieve a long-term or overall aim (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, 2015). Macmillan dictionary defines a strategy as a plan or method for achieving something, especially over a long period of time (Macmillan Dictionary, 2015). Thus, a strategy is a general rule, according to which the actions, leading to a goal, are taken with regard to the circumstances and actions of others. To define a strategy means to develop a range of objectives, a conceptual framework for the process of achieving them, the model of feedback in the process of maintenance and support students. Conditions of formation and implementation of educational policies are the specific goals, teaching experience, educational experience of students and specific learning environment. This idea is based on the fact that as the main concepts of educational interaction are considered educational resources, educational communication and educational management (Noskova, 2007).

Features that ensure the individualisation of educational activity in cyberspace contribute to the integration of the individual educational needs of the information and are based on abilities and interest of each learner (Johnson and Sherlock, 2014).

The empowerment of self-realisation and creative subjects in educational and professional activities should be noted. Opportunities to identify and support initiatives are manifested in a networked learning environment. Students, future graduates and young professionals will receive additional opportunities to express themselves and to show their achievements and ideas. Network projects, competitions, scientific and

educational communities are an integral part of modern educational and professional environment, an important means of formation of competitiveness for graduates (Vieth and Kommers, 2014).

The Special Issue “New educational strategies in the contemporary digital environment” includes articles, prepared by authors from five European countries. Several articles consider the International research network project, IRNet, and analyse the strategies of the universities participating in the IRNet project from the point of view of ICT application and development of information educational environment.

The authors are first of all authority scholars, young researchers, academic lecturers with training and experience in the field of ICT and e-learning for many years, coordinators of distance learning platform, tutors and PhD students.

Eugenia Smyrnova-Trybulska, Tatiana Noskova, Olga Yakovleva, Tatiana Pavlova, Nataliia Morze focus on the following conceptual aspects: new educational strategies in the contemporary digital environment on the basis of a study in the framework of the international project IRNet - International Research Network. In particular, the article ‘New educational strategies in the contemporary digital environment’ describes some of the results of a survey for students and academic teachers conducted within the framework of the project. During the study common and specific categories of university informational educational strategies were examined as well as teachers’ personal attitude to different educational strategies. The article contains data, describing the situation at universities in area in Poland, Russia and Ukraine.

The article “Challenges and prospects in development of e-learning system for IT students” elaborated by Kateryna Yalova, Valerii Zavgorodnii, Maryna Romanyukha, Lyudmyla Sorokina from Dniprodzerzhinsk State Technical University (DSTU), Ukraine. The purpose of presenting in the article research is to determine the IT competence, willingness and readiness of students to use distance learning system to fulfil their learning goals. To implement the objectives of the study, we used the results of a students’ survey conducted to determine the opinion on the use of information technology as a means to improve the learning process. The authors of this article concentrated our efforts on a target group of IT students, whose IT background knowledge enables them to easily master new software tools and technologies. In this article, the creation, implementation and operation of a distance learning system in DSTU is discussed. Also general requirements for distance learning system and administrative actions that should precede the process of its implementation are stated.

This article “Web-based assessment and language teachers - from Moodle to Webclass” is authored by Mariusz Marczak, Jarosław Krajka, Wojciech Malec and Polish researchers. This article deals with the concept of electronic language assessment delivered in the e-learning mode and with the way web-based assessment is perceived by novice language teachers. After a brief outline of the history of computer-assisted language testing, the discussion of its tools and procedures as well as strong and weak points follows together with the reflection on teacher competence as online test authors. The second part of the article reports upon a study into student teachers’ perceptions of electronic assessment with a special focus on such aspects as strengths and weaknesses, priorities for use and perceived obstacles.

This article “E-learning as a backbone for e-government in Czech Republic in 2015” is prepared by Czech author from Silesian University in Karvina, Roman Šperka. The article introduces e-learning support for the eGovernment implementation in public administration services in Czech Republic in 2015. There are many contemporary

approaches in studying the public administration courses in Czech universities. One of them, and maybe the most successful, is the e-learning in the form of learning management system. E-learning enables students and employees to study online courses with many advantages. The nature of public administration (eGovernment) naturally calls for an online form of study. First, the article describes the eGovernment state in 2015, and Czech POINT platform and the requirements, which should modern learning platform fulfill to satisfy potential users of eGovernment services. Second, the article outlines the advantages and the disadvantages of e-learning. Finally, it suggests a vision, advantages and a solution for a successful education portal serving to public administration employees, students and citizens.

This article "Evaluation of teaching design in synchronous virtual classrooms" is prepared by Spanish researchers from Extremadura University. In the article, Prudencia Gutiérrez Esteban, Rocío Yuste Tosina, Juan Arias Masa, Sixto Cubo Delgado and Laura Alonso Díaz describe a research study performed to assess teaching designs and methodologies used in a course of the University Lecturer Training Plan at the University of Extremadura (Spain) called "virtual learning environments" in synchronous virtual classrooms (SVCs). Training was given in three editions in different university campuses. The participants, 40 lecturers at UEx, belonged to different subject areas, and so different responses from such a heterogeneous group is broad. Data collection were performed using the focus group technique, with which SVCs were evaluated for use in both teaching and research. The main findings point to the need to reduce both connection time and the number of tools used, the importance of the use of free software and a positive assessment of the possibilities and advantages of SVCs for teaching and for data collection in qualitative research.

In the article "Individualisation and personalisation of education - modern trend of eLearning," the Czech researchers Kateřina Kostolányová and Jana Šarmanová stressed that the need for lifelong learning has been a topical issue for several decades. Requirements on teachers, who - according to specialists - should represent an 'educational guide' - are gradually being transformed. The role of teachers is shifting from the initial directive position to them being 'closer to students'. Therefore, it is logical that modern methods of education are important more than ever. Recently, one of the modern methods of education has been personalised and individualised with respect to a student's needs, style and requirements. Streamlining of the education process through individualisation of education ought to be visible on two levels: students' gain of new information ought to be faster; knowledge and skills ought to be acquired in a more natural way (personally tailored for each student).

Barbara Dębska, Agnieszka Kubacka from Poland, in the article titled "Classification algorithms in the personalisation of educational portals" noted that education by the e-learning method is becoming more and more popular nowadays and a rapid development of information technologies makes traditional, static websites used for online education being replaced by interactive, intelligent portals. In spite of rapid advances in informatics, there is still no software which would meet the needs of all learners. Some personalisation features characterise the e-Student portal, which is addressed to the students of the Informatics Department at a Stanisław Pigoń Higher Vocational State School in Krosno. This article presents the structure of the portal and also describes how to use it for the personalised online education system.

In the manuscript titled "The influence of sensory perceptions and blended learning on the increase and persistency of the level of knowledge," the Polish authors Dominika

Goltz-Wasiucionek and Agnieszka Wierzbicka indicate that for almost 20 years Polish universities have been introducing more and more classes based on educational platforms. Such classes are conducted in different forms, as fully distance (e-learning), joining traditional meeting with online learning (blended learning) or as supporting traditional process of education, by, for example, placing exercises on the platform, test that allow self-evaluation. The richness of materials available within the World Wide Web network encourages teachers to create a flow of educational process on the base of different multimedia and reaching for methods and forms of classes not previously used. Especially interesting is in such a situation the use of blended learning which is considered the most effective form of distance learning mainly because that it allows keeping direct interpersonal relationships during classes, individualisation of the learning process and taking into account learners' different sensory perceptions. The article presents some research results conducted among students learning English in a blended learning form. The authors will try to answer the question whether classes conducted in this form sensory perceptions and blended learning influence the increase and persistency of the level of knowledge.

The authors of this article would like to thank all the reviewers for their wonderful contribution to improve the quality of the articles in this Special Issue. Also, the authors would like to thank the authors for the preparation and permission to publish their articles. The authors wish all readers a pleasant reading.

Thank you.

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