

Bologna and the Challenges of e-Learning and Distance Education

View of Professional Higher Education Institutions



European Association of Institutions in
Higher Education



What is Eurashe?

- EURASHE = European Association of Institutions in Higher Education,
- Members are National Associations of Colleges and Polytechnics, and Individual Institutions,
- EURASHE reflects the interest of **Professional Higher Education in Europe**,
- EURASHE gives advice to the European Commission, DEC and the Bologna Follow-up Group,
- EURASHE is represented on the Board of the Bologna Follow-up Group.



Point of view of PHE on e-learning and distance learning in view of Bologna

- Not one point of view!
- Difference between countries with long tradition of distance learning and others,
- Specific challenges for Professional Higher education.

Situation in distance /e-learning in PHE

- In most countries e-learning is used to support traditional learning, blended learning,
- In some countries with long tradition of distance learning switch is made from distance learning to e-learning (RF, UK, NO),
- Some countries have developed virtual universities, polytechnics etc. (SF, TR)
- In a small number of countries ODL/e-learning is not fully recognised yet.



Trends in e-learning in PHE

- E-learning platforms are used virtually everywhere,
- Steep rise in the number of students at virtual polytechnics, colleges etc.,
- E-learning in combination with work-based learning,
- Web-based support of work-placements: e-mentoring



Advantages of e-learning in PHE

- Students can work and study at the same time, important for working/ mature students, students on work placements,
- Students can work more independently, are in charge of their own learning processes,
- Students can work together independent of time or space,
- Possibilities for Project-based learning.

Challenges for e-learning in PHE

(1) Lecturers

- Adapt courses to the specific needs of PHE,
- Lecturers must be trained to write web-based courses,
- Courses must be flexible (easily removed, adapted etc.)
- Training to assess e-learning is needed.

Challenges for e-learning in PHE (2)

Students

- Getting familiar with the experience of learning virtually or e-based,
- An increased focus on personal responsibility for participating can be difficult for students,
- Students can have a negative experience of the reduced possibilities for socialising,
- Increased risks of drop-out.



Challenges for e-learning in PHE

(3) Technical:

- An IT system that is stable
- Students must have a functioning web-connection/web access
- Compatibility of systems , platforms,
- Standards.

Challenges for e-learning in PHE(4)

- Systematic approach of problems concerning e-Learning,
- Maintain quality and specificity of PHE,
- Funding.

How can these challenges be met?

- Creation of production groups that produce web-based courses for polytechnic/college students ,
- In-service training courses for lecturers who want to work with these web-based courses,
- Support, mentoring for students,
- Strategic alliances with industry and world of work,
- International co-operation.



Examples of good practice (1) : SF

- In the Virtual Polytechnic of Finland the polytechnics have produced web-based study modules and courses worth 375 credits (ECTS) from 2001 to 2003 ; in 2003 it was already the equivalent of one Finnish polytechnic,
- The Virtual Polytechnic is a co-operation organization of all Finnish polytechnics (450 polytechnic teachers participate in production groups that produce web-based courses),
- Strategic decision of Finnish Ministry of Education.

Examples of good practice (2) : EE

- In 2002 Estonia started the TigerUniversity programme; it is carried out by EITSA (the Estonian Information Technology Foundation),
- The consortium consists of several HEI's, the Ministry of Education and Research and the Estonian Information Technology Foundation,
- In 2004 there were already 284 e-study courses statewide on offer,
- First stage of the programme is training the teachers.

Some reflections along the lines of the working groups of this conference



European Association of Institutions in
Higher Education



Lifelong learning and mainstream education

- “second chance” students and mature students mostly turn to PHE (majority of ODL-students in countries like UK,RF)
- students may return to refresh their knowledge, upgrade their skills and sustain their employability,
- PHE must find ways to meet their specific needs.

Quality assurance and the emerging qualification frameworks for the EHEA

- Inclusion of TSC into the qualification frameworks; 4 MIO students in Bologna countries,
- Alternative ways of learning (e-learning, AP(E)L but also flexible transition from one level to another must be taken into account,
- Quality assurance/accreditation are the key factors to make this possible.



Berlin Communiqué invited the Follow-up Group *'to explore whether and how shorter higher education may be linked to the first cycle of a qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area'*

Virtual and physical mobility

- Possibilities to prepare physical mobility,
- ERASMUS students have advantages due to the flexibility of distant learning,
- E-mentoring during work placements in other countries,
- Virtual mobility of students or lecturers for joint programmes,
- Collaboration between students working on joint projects, business games etc.



Opening up higher education to the larger society

- Strategic alliances with the world of work (more than the corporate world) are essential for PHE,
- Widening the access to higher education for groups that are so far underrepresented in their participation; this means adapting courses to the specific needs of these groups,
- Opening access to students from TSC, sub-degree education.



Acknowledgements

Virtual Polytechnic of Finland, Development unit - SF,

Niels Brock - DK,

Haute Ecole Galilée – B,

KATHO – B,

Talinn College of Engineering - EE,

SSVS/CASPHE, Prague - CZ

Higher Polytechnic School, Belgrade – Serbia

<http://www.eurashe.be/>

magda.kirsch@khleuven.be

magda.kirsch@educonsult.be



European Association of Institutions in
Higher Education

