

# Digital Adult Education – A Key to Global Development?

Anja Thöne (Editor)

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info@dvv-international.de / www.dvv-international.de

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**Responsible:** Christoph Jost

**Editor:** Anja Thöne

**Managing Editor:** Gisela Waschek

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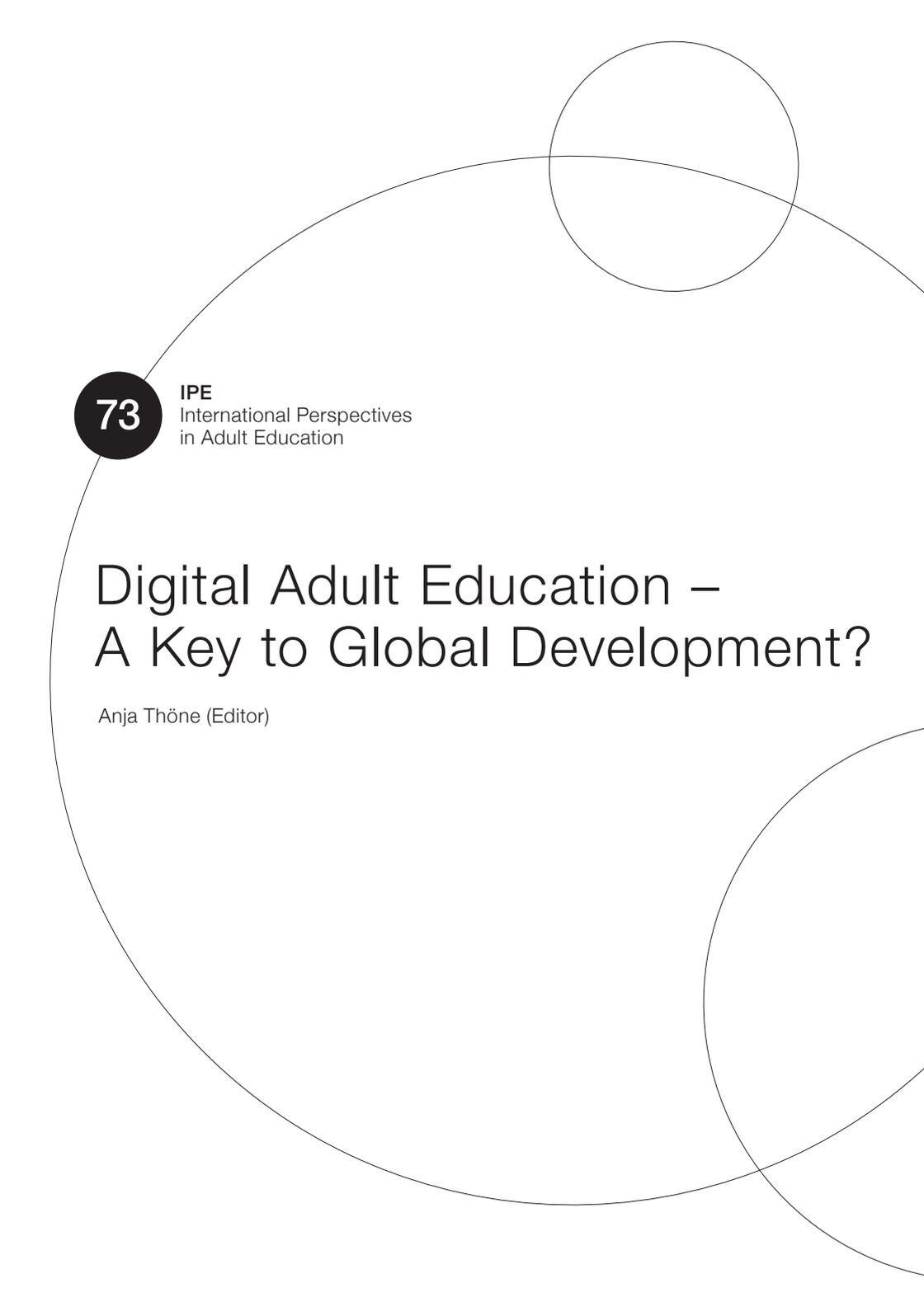
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**IPE**  
International Perspectives  
in Adult Education

# Digital Adult Education – A Key to Global Development?

Anja Thöne (Editor)



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# Editorial

In the course of life, people change. So does the world around people, and so does learning. How has learning changed through the ever stronger presence of digital technology? In the past decade, the number of Internet users in the world increased from 1 billion to 3.5 billion. What is the role of information and communication technologies in adult education worldwide? What challenges and opportunities emerge for adult education institutions, teachers and learners? What methodological and structural changes does digital learning pull along with it?

The title of this publication: *Digital Adult Education* – published by DVV International, the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association – creates a new term, pitching the thesis that there already is a “digital adult education” and that this is a key for development. This edition, from the series *International Perspectives in Adult Education* (IPE), opens a space for academics, organisations and practitioners of adult education and development cooperation to report on portions of their work and their approaches. The contributions of the authors shine a spotlight on projects, concepts and experiences flowing from four continents.

Cross-topic articles contributions give an introduction to the development of digital learning in adult education and address issues of development cooperation. The European Association for the Education of Adults (EAEA) reports on the establishment of a Europe-wide eLearning offer for trainers in non-formal education. The contribution of the SEAMEO Regional Centre in Lifelong Learning presents a way of establishing an online learning resources system in Asia. Using Germany as an example, the already quasi-historical context of the development of formats and methods of digital learning in adult education in recent decades is investigated. How the VHS, the largest adult education centres in Germany, deal with the “digital turn” in adult education, and how teachers and learners – as “real people” – take up digitisation in their educational process, is also shown by a contribution from Germany. That digital learning can significantly contribute to sustainable development and improvement of living conditions is described in the article provided by the Academy for International Cooperation (AIZ) with its *Global Campus 21* (GC21), which was launched

by the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) on behalf of the German Government.

Examples from the worldwide work of DVV International show the actual concrete use of digital learning in development cooperation. Authors report on projects in Macedonia, Kosovo, Morocco, Georgia and Latin America. All the contributions have in common the question of the social role of the connection between adult education and digital media. How can digital media help to reduce educational disadvantage and facilitate access to education?

The publication shows that adult educators and academics around the world are successfully working on a changing culture of lifelong learning in the digital world. A sincere thanks to all the authors for sharing their experiences with us in order to make this edition possible.

**Anja Thöne**

DVV International

Institute for International Cooperation of the  
German Adult Education Association (DVV)



Matthias Rohs/Mario Ganz

# Digital Media and Adult Education and Learning

*Digital media are an integral part of adult education and learning. But adult education still has to deal with the accusation of not reacting adequately to current existing challenges connected to digital media. What role does digital media play for adult education? What societal task does adult education have in connection with digital media? This article delves into the current status of digital media for teaching and learning and retraces the discussion on digital media within the field of adult education, using Germany as an example.*

## Learning with Digital Media

Given the extensive presence of digital media within all areas of life and the long history of the examination of technical support of learning, the legitimate question seems to be whether or not there is still a need for a fundamental exploration of the relation between digital media and adult education. Already after the initial eLearning boom between 1995 and 2005 – which wasn't able to fulfil expectations to its full extent – the end of eLearning was quickly predicted: “Will E-Learning die?” (Ebner & Schiefner 2008). At the same time what was largely disregarded was that learning with digital media is subject to a permanent process of change through the means of technological and societal development as well as through notions of learning theories. Thereby, not only the technological appearance but also the understanding of learning with digital media changed (Table 1).

Table 1: Historical Context of eLearning development (Kidd, 2010, p. 48)

Era	Focus	Educational Characteristics
1975 – 1985	Programming Drill & Practice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behaviourist approaches to learning and instruction</li> <li>• Programming to build tools and solve problems</li> <li>• Local user-computer interaction</li> </ul>
1983 – 1990	Computer-Based Training  Multimedia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of older CALmodels with interactive multimedia courseware</li> <li>• Passive learner models dominant; constructivist influences begin to appear in educational software design and use</li> </ul>
1990 – 1995	Web-Based Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internet-based content delivery; active learner models developed</li> <li>• Constructivist perspectives common; Limited end-user-interaction</li> </ul>
1995 – 2005	eLearning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Internet-based flexible courseware delivery</li> <li>• Increased interactivity</li> <li>• Online multimedia courseware</li> <li>• Distributed constructivist and cognitivist models common</li> <li>• Social networking</li> <li>• Remote user-user interactions</li> </ul>

The focus shifted into the World Wide Web with the increasing dissemination of the Internet, which becomes clear by taking a closer look at the terminology: Terms evolved from Computer-Aided Instruction (CAI), Computer-Assisted Instruction (CAI), Computer-Based Instruction (CBI), or Computer-Based Training to Web-Based Training.

In particular, the development of Web 2.0 changed the possibilities and the ideas of learning with digital media. Learning increasingly takes place via social media, utilising the exchange with others through the web. Related to this, George Siemens developed his idea of a new learning theory: Connectivism (Siemens 2005).

“Connectivism is the integration of principles explored by chaos, network, and complexity and self-organization theories. Learning is a process that occurs within nebulous environments of shifting core elements – not entirely under the control of the individual. Learning (defined as actionable knowledge) can reside outside of ourselves (within an organization or a database), is focused on connecting specialized information sets, and the connections that enable us to learn more are more important than our current state of knowing.” (ibid.)

eLearning is understood as “training delivered on a digital device such as a smart phone or a laptop computer that is designed to support individual learning or organizational performance goals (...) includes asynchronous forms of e-learning designed for self-study as well as synchronous instructor-led e-learning” (Clark & Mayer, 2011: 7), and then broadens itself increasingly, beginning with offering learning-materials and tasks, running of online courses, the provision of learning architectures, up to forms of learning guidance such as eCoaching and eMentoring, the diagnosis of learning dispositions and acquired competences (eAssessment), a stronger bond of formal and informal learning as well as an increasing saturation of all learning opportunities (virtual and real) (Kerres 2016).

Besides the strengthening of social aspects, the learner moves into the focus of attention. The understanding of eLearning was and partly still is influenced by teaching and didactics which are centred around teaching (eTeaching), which is only gradually converting towards a stronger focus on learning which is based on a constructivist learning theory. (Arnold, 2006). There are exemplary practices for this development: ePortfolios, supporting competence development and recognition as well as Personal Learning Environments (PLE) as a counter-model of institutionally controlled learning environments.

The development towards a higher individualisation and personalisation of learning is supported by the means of new technological possibilities of data analysis (data mining), semantic technologies and artificial intelligence. Those technologies offer the possibility to increase the individualisation of learning processes by collecting data about the learner which is then analysed towards achieving an optimised steering of the learning (Educational Data Mining, Learning Analytics). On this basis it is possible to design adaptive learning environments which adapt to individual learning dispositions.

Probably, in the future, computers will increasingly act as individual mobile learning coaches who will support learning by autonomously searching for information on the Internet (Erbenbeck & Sauter 2013). Therefore learning will become more autonomous from concrete offers and learning settings and can be described as mobile-assisted seamless learning (MSL) (Wong & Looi 2011).

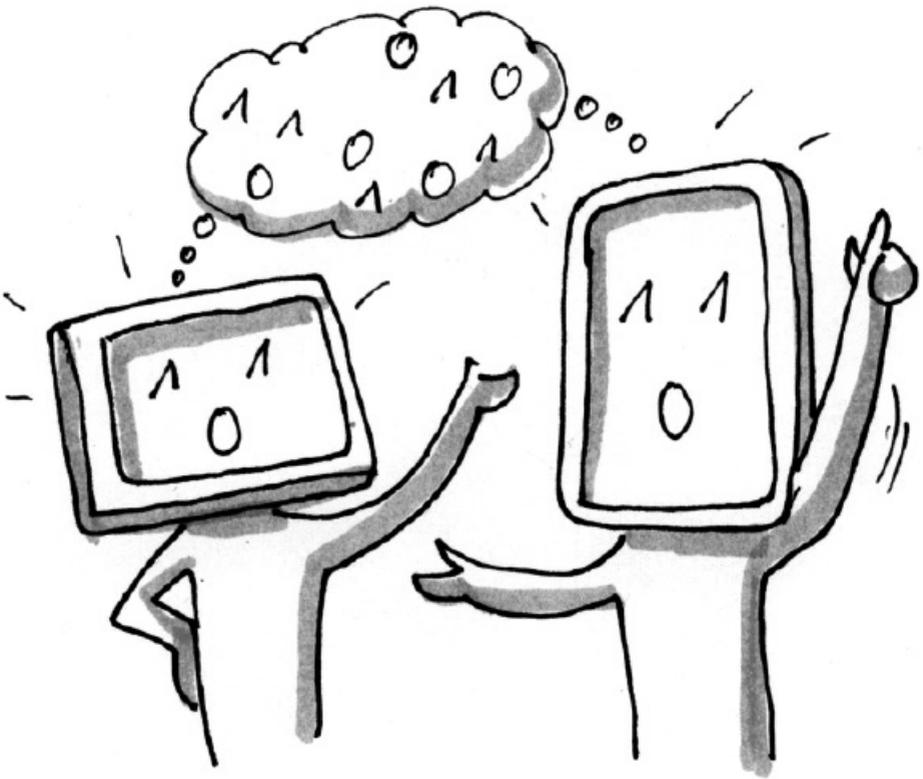
A further important development in the area of teaching and learning with digital media can be found in the support for Open Educational Resources (OER). Although there are a large number of competing definitions of OER, there is a common baseline understanding: "Educational materials which use a Creative Commons license or which exist in the public domain and are free of copyright restrictions are open educational resources." (Wiley, Bliss, & McEwen 2014: 781).

OER primarily support the usage of digital media within an educational institution because legal questions are mostly the subject of discussions. Furthermore it also deals with the question of free access to education (Open Education). Beside those fundamental developments, a series of further technological innovations (emerging technologies) exist which have an impact on learning with digital media, such as eBooks, augmented reality or immersive simulations, which will not be discussed further here. An overview can be found, e.g. in Spector et al. (2014). The implementation of those recent trends remains in its early stages. In kindergartens, schools, universities and within adult education, the status of the implementation of digital media to support learning is still developed quite disparately, but in general it is far behind the actual state of research, which is only realised in single pilot projects. Along with the basic dissemination of digital media (especially in the global context), financial resources (e.g. government aid), infrastructural frame conditions (e.g. broadband Internet connection), political support and the cultural attitude towards technological innovations (e.g. positive attitude in Japan) are also influential factors.

Therefore, general statements on the status of digital media within adult education are difficult to make, which is why the following remarks are primarily oriented on the situation in Germany.

## **Digital Media and Adult Education**

The debate in Germany on the role of digital media in adult education started in the 1980s. Against the background of the increasing relevance of computers in vocational contexts as well in private areas, this development was not able to be ignored any longer. For the field of vocational further education and training the central aspects had always been to



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deliver knowledge and satisfy the needs of the users. The aim of general further education was to empower people and to identify the possibilities and risks of these technologies. This included a close interconnection with basic information technology education (*germ.* Informationstechnische Grundbildung). Both fields were therefore only distinguished by the idea that there should be basic information technology education for everyone, which has to be expanded according to vocational needs (Faulstich & Faulstich-Wieland, 1988; Petsch & Tietgens 1989).

At that time adult education that had experience in the use of media already existed; it was focused on television (BTX, TV language courses) as well as audio cassettes or AV-systems in a self-learning-centre (*germ.* Selbstlernzentren) (Jüchter 1979). Digital media was primarily used for language education, but offers did not quite fulfil the (media) didactical expectations because they were simple Drill and Practice Programmes (Echtermeyer 1986). The literature on the usage of digital media in adult education and learning basically reflects controversial positions which are less rational and were widely discussed in an emotional way in the past (Hüther & Terlinden, 1986) and approached the topic sceptically (Meueler 2001). Further discussions took place in a field with a lot of tension between practice, software, research and politics which may have led to the insight that the “politically forced claim to establish learning environments for individuals was barely possible” (Tietgens 1998: 12) and only recent technological and theoretical developments may have arrived at a stage where teaching and learning is able to face the complexity of those learning environments. But utilising digital media for (adult) education is probably still dealing with the dilemma of the fast development cycle of digital media and the barely tangible resulting potentials, as Wittpoth (1998) already postulated. Lately there are also attitudes within adult education – on the level of the practitioners – towards lessening or ignoring the use of digital media, although it is no longer possible to imagine adult education without digital media.

Research in adult education deals, among other things, with the following topics in the area of digital media (von Hippel, 2009: 687):

- a) Use of digital media in learning and teaching processes (media didactics)
- b) Use of digital media on the organisational level (e.g. knowledge management; public relations, administration)
- c) Digital media as content/subject of educational offers (e.g. media competence, technical competence)

This brings up questions about the professionalism of adult educators and questions about media competence and media use by adults. From the 1980s to today adult education has been described as lagging far behind (Faulstich & Faulstich-Wieland, 1988: 146; Jörissen 2013). In particular, the area of informal learning, which is increasingly influenced by digital media, has been widely disregarded due to the still dominant focus on the area of institutionalised, non-formal learning (Nolda 2011). Because of this, the impression is that this topic was closed after an initial wave of examination during the first decade of this century. Irrespective of this, the technological basis and the possibilities for the use of digital media are undergoing constant development. They have a deep impact on learning and also on the provider of education. However, this is not solely about the media equipment of institutions, it is also about new formats to be offered (e.g. blended and distance learning) and how to deal with the increasingly blurred boundaries of learning in combination with non-formal and informal learning.

On the political side, there is a clear focus on the area of media education for children and adolescents, which increases the complexity of the situation. Right now, differences, which are primarily determined by the socio-economic status of the individual and will therefore be quite constant over her/his lifetime, are manifesting themselves. Due to this, the basic conditions are being established for a future affinity toward or against education. People with a low socio-economic status generally seem to tend towards a low engagement in further education activities. Christensen et al. (2013) have shown this is especially true for MOOCs (Massive Open Online courses), which are definitely part of adult education. Therefore differences in the use of media and the media competence of adults (Sawchuk 2003; Treumann, Baacke, Haacke, Hugger, & Vollbrecht 2002) become apparent. This has an impact on participation in society and the possibility for the further development of competences. In order to face those challenges, stronger efforts have to be made in the professionalisation of further education staff and management of further education organisations. Digital media also often play a minor role in the latest competence descriptions within the respective field. One striking example is the German qualifications framework, which doesn't even mention the term media (DQR 2011). Digital media are by now an integral part of adult education and are actually used in a huge variety of learning situations but have still to be recognised by institutions and should, on the one hand, be an integral part of policy making at the political level and, on the other hand, of programme planning in order to enable faster development of research about digital media in adult education and to increase the value of media competence. Erpenbeck & Sauter (2016) even named their latest

book *Stoppt die Kompetenzkatastrophe!* (Stop the Competence Catastrophe!) and draw a positive picture of the potentials of competence development through digital media.

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Christoph Köck

# Expanded Learning Environments – the Digital Turn and Adult Education

*The “digital turn” has also reached adult education and its organisations in Germany. The linking of digital and analog learning environments, in this process of change, stands for an educational concept which is referred to as Expanded Learning Environments (ELEs). The changes related to this will challenge adult education organisations in the coming years and at the same time open up opportunities and options to make learning conform to needs.*

## Introduction

Digitalisation – this is the most prominent current term when it comes to describing social change. We encounter the “digital turn” in all fields in our world: in the economy, in trade, in industrial production, in the security industry, in public administration, in medicine, in agriculture, in transport, in the culture and music industry, and – not least – in education. All of these areas will be faced, in the coming years, with fundamental changes in their organisational structures or are already in the middle of this process of change. And in all of them there has been a recognition of the need to develop “digital strategies” in order to be prepared for the future.

At the political level, strategies are being developed: The European Commission is working energetically on the “Digital Agenda for Europe” (<https://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/smart-living>) and the German government adopted the “Digital Agenda for Germany” in August 2014 ([https://www.digitale-agenda.de/Webs/DA/DE/Home/home\\_node.html](https://www.digitale-agenda.de/Webs/DA/DE/Home/home_node.html)).

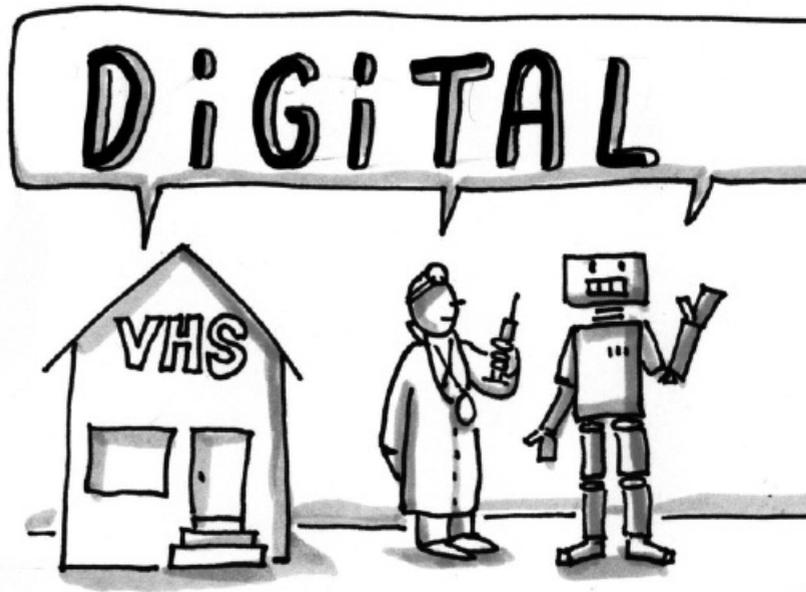
In the Agenda the German Government describes the potentials and challenges for our society, which is increasingly interconnected through the Internet. The Agenda describes a bundle of activities that have the aim of making digitisation actively useful for the improvement of our living environments. This is where the institutions of adult and continuing education are of particular importance. Their task is seen as the transfer of knowledge into digitised areas of life, as well as in the critical debate about their content in the context of political education. Further education is also thought of as destined for a central role in the process of the redesigning of learning in a digitally networked society.

The Volkshochschule (VHS), the largest providers of non-formal education in Germany with approximately 900 adult education centres nationwide, have long been active co-designers of the digitisation process in society. Since the 1980s, adult education centres have enabled the participation of broad sectors of the population in “computer knowledge”. This first digitisation phase was primarily about communicating and learning how to deal with digital technology and to be able to competently apply software programmes adequately in professional and private life. As well, the first digital learning content was already being used in the 1990s by adult education centres, for example, in language teaching. The most common medium at that time was the CD-ROM.

Today it’s about much more. With digital, Internet-based tools, we link nearly all of our living environments together. Even adult learning is more visibly tied into in these networks.

## Expanded Learning Environments

In the context of discussions about the digitisation of education, terms like “digital learning”, “online learning” or “eLearning” are often mentioned. All of these terms lead, to a certain extent, in the wrong direction, because they suggest that learning can actually work digitally or virtually. However, this is not the case. In order to learn one needs – as much today as in the past – a physical human presence and a socio-spatial environment. Even if we learn at home with the support of Internet videos, the place of learning has relevance. And the learning community on the net is not, after all, made up of virtual people, but of “real people” who come together in a different way than in a classroom at an adult education centre. We now know, from numerous experiences, that the Internet and its knowledge modules is particularly valuable when it serves as a reference point for learning in the present. Most learners continue to require course managers, learning coaches or a peer group in order to introduce and be able to use knowledge in educational processes.



Learning works well when analog and virtual structures are interwoven with each other. A good example is the mobile phone when seen as a learning apparatus. With a mobile phone we can significantly enhance our analog methods of knowledge attainment and social networking. For example, this works very well with language apps that we carry with us as “constant companions”. Or the difficult to ignore question and answer communities that can immediately help one to attain very specific information directly. A mobile phone is thus not decoupled from analog learning, but an intrinsic part of an ELE.

ELEs are the core concept of an educational approach that focuses on the linking of analog and virtual learning models and learning practices. The basic idea is based on the concept that learning, with the support of the Internet, opens the predominantly closed classical teaching culture, and does this to the benefit of learners by spatially enhancing content and expanding the social sphere. This concept was developed in 2013 by an initiative group of the German adult education centres ([www.erweitertelernenwelten.de](http://www.erweitertelernenwelten.de)).



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The expansion of learning environments can be described at several levels:

### **1. Increase in places of learning**

In the classical teaching culture, the closed space greatly defines the learning setting (school building, classroom, training room). In contrast to that, the World Wide Web offers the possibility of making learning sites of all the places where a good network connection is available (WLAN, WiFi). This can be in classrooms (as before), but in addition also one's own workplace, living room, cafés, youth clubs, retirement homes or even so-called "co-learning spaces". The latter are decentralised learning places in which learning communities meet in order to get connected to the web from there. This expansion is supported and promoted through the use of mobile devices (tablets, smartphones) that enable cable-free access to the world of knowledge.

### **2. Extension of learning times**

Must we always all learn the same thing at the same time? Today in almost all areas of education, analog teaching works according to this basic collective synchronous pattern. Even in adult education, the synchronous "course" with lessons that contain specified content is still the most common education model. Only a few asynchronous learning modules are allowed in this model, for example, the individual reworking of the curriculum as a "homework".

The ELEs model combines the synchronous "simultaneous" learning of analog learning settings with web-based, asynchronous teaching blocks. Online educational games, video tutorials, audio files or recorded learning dialogs can equalise learning time (and content) and make it more flexible. A specific didactic variant are the so-called "Flipped Classrooms". Here, the communication of instrumental knowledge by teachers – still a core task of analog teaching – is presented in short video clips. The content is provided to students over the net. The appropriation of the learning content is customised to their own life and their own learning preferences (i.e. at home or at work and potentially at any time of day). Exchanges over learning content with other learners is conveyed through chats or learning forums. Thus the learners come prepared into the analog synchronous "lesson". This doesn't primarily serve the transfer of knowledge but opens up the possibility of deepening the intake of the substance, for example, by learning in small moderated groups.

### 3. Expansion of the learning content and learning pathways

In the analog-oriented teaching culture, coordinated, logical, causally structured curricula influence the learning process. Catalogs with learning goals define which learning paths are to be trodden together with which content. Regardless of previous knowledge and a possible learning pace, it is difficult to manage individual learning progress well in this learning setting. Insufficiently challenged or overburdened learners are a common result of such settings.

In the ELEs concept there is an attempt – where it makes sense – to break this fixation. Individual learning preferences are made into flexible implementable learning contents from the World Wide Web. One example is IT workshops: Experience from the adult education centres illustrates that participants call for ever shorter concepts which are tailored to their needs, because they consider only part of the learning objectives of a long course as relevant for themselves. The many and varied learning modules of the net provide a sound basis which enables the individualisation of the learning path. Video learning channels prove themselves as well suited, of which there is – in good quality – a barely indexable amount (as on the platforms Youtube or Myvideo). Publishers also see this trend and are increasingly providing learners with virtual learning modules on their platforms.

Learners can connect to a large pool of knowledge with digital technologies and digital archives (repositories). Appertaining to this in a particular way are the ever more extensive knowledge assets which are available through open, freely accessible websites (Open Access). A good example from the daily life of the adult education centre are the various and high quality learning modules of the DVV platform “ich-will-deutsch-lernen.de”, which already meets the requirements of “adaptive learning”<sup>1</sup>. This means that the learning platform is technically able to automatically recognise the individual strengths and weaknesses of learners, evaluate them and bring the learning under control. (See: <https://www.iwdl.de/cms/lernen/start.html>)

The concept of “Open Educational Resources” goes even further. It works on the principle of the 5 *R-activities* by David Wiley (German, 5 *V-Freiheiten* by Jörg Lohrer: <http://www.opencontent.org/definition/>) Here,

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<sup>1/</sup> The learning portal [ich-will-deutsch-lernen.de](http://www.iwdl.de) ([iwdl.de](http://www.iwdl.de)) is the first to set the framework curriculum for integration courses in a digital learning environment. It is supplementary learning material for integration courses and other German language courses and can also be used as a pure self-learning programme. The portal was developed by the German Adult Education Association e.V. (DVV), funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF).

learning on the net is provided with a license which allows the teaching materials to be freely stored/reproduced, used, processed, mixed and distributed. In this way, an adaption of learning materials to individual learning pathways is well-supported.

#### **4. Extension of the roles of learning involved**

Expanded Learning Environments invite learners more than ever to take on the role of the knowledge producer, the input-giver and the learning-designer. In this model learners act like “part-givers” who can control a part of their learning pathway themselves: they can find and create learning modules on the net and in the analog world, implement them in group work, independently develop course topics and tasks and take responsibility for their personal learning progress. To take these roles requires active practice and experimentation. In this model “teachers” act like a learning companion. Conveying specific knowledge is not made obsolete through this, rather it is a prerequisite for the role of learning companion.

Suitable examples of such a learning setting are the “cMoocs” (connectivity-Massive Open Online Courses). These are hosted online workshops that – from a predefined catalog of topics – are filled to varying degrees with content by the part-givers. The participation and networking of learners is an integral part of cMoocs. And this networking not only functions virtually but parallel to analog learning environments: Two large adult education centres (Hamburg and Bremen in cooperation on campus with the Lübeck University) successfully carried out a cMooc about “digital identity” in Germany in 2015. This six-week online event was accompanied by 33 so-called “Mooc-bars”, class lectures, which were distributed regionally throughout Germany and organised by the local adult education centres. (<https://mooin.oncampus.de/mod/page/view.php?id=2210>)

#### **5. Global<sup>2</sup> networking of learners**

The Moocs example makes it clear that in the future the production of knowledge will be increasingly less tied to a specific place. Extended learning settings promote the socio-spatial networks of learners: from the classroom outwards, in language learning one can get in touch with native speakers from around the world with the help of video chats. With Google Maps, we can see how it really looks at specific locations of those whose language we are learning. In regional history workshops, we can invite local experts and simultaneously tap into the arsenals of the global online

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2/ <http://www.globusetlocuseng.org/>

culture databases (e.g. stored in the *Europeana*, there are now nearly 50 million virtualised cultural and historical documents, books, works of art, audios and videos – [www.europeana.eu/portal/](http://www.europeana.eu/portal/)). Through web-based networking, like-minded people find specific common learning interests (for example in “exotic” languages or special cultural crafts) and can thus cooperatively develop their skills further. Such networking can work at the local, regional as well as at the global level (“Glocality of learning”). Ideally, analog virtual learning communities arise that are immensely influenced by social learning.

### **Added value for organisations**

The added value of the use of ELEs in adult education is mainly in the flexible organisational and pedagogical design of learning processes. For the institutions, new possibilities are opened up for accessibility, resource development and networking. The concept is in principle to be thought of as target group independent. Nevertheless, needs are able to be specified, for example, for people living in rural, sparsely populated regions, who live geographically far away from an adult education centre. Even for learners whose everyday life is extremely time-compressed and flexible, the concept of ELEs is particularly accommodating.

The path for public adult education institutions into the digital age is most likely to be entered through systematic deployment and transfer work. The conditions for success in introducing ELEs includes

- the educational goals and their implementation
- the target groups in focus or the learning communities
- the technical infrastructure (hardware and software, learning management system, selection of the Internet tools)
- the legal framework the organisation has to take into account (copyright, licensing, liability issues, etc.)
- the networking with other institutions/organisations
- the business models
- the professionalism within the organisation (qualification of employees and teaching staff)

However, it may also be a bit cumbersome at the beginning of such a process to approach the new field of work too systematically. Curiosity and a positive attitude are often created through experimentation with the thing itself.

Adult educators, regardless of whether they work in education management or in the classroom, today have, in the majority, a certain professional distance to learning with the Internet. Many new network phenomena that are treated as “natural” outside the educational world are regarded sceptically and often trigger “wait and see” attitudes. And yet today it is obviously more and more important to deal professionally with a form of “technology-based education”. The basis for all actions can therefore only be to review the educational objectives to ensure that the objectives are to be implemented appropriately with an extended learning setting for learners in a mainly analog learning environment.

# Success and Challenges of the Free Online Peer Learning Platform “European eTraining for Adult Educators”

*EAEA's in-service training for younger adult education staff was extended online through the new project AE-PRO. The three-year project European Adult Education (Young) Professionals Learning Platform (AE-PRO) provides a comprehensive training course for adult education staff that brings together European developments on the field of adult education, peer learning about each other's systems and European mobility. The project aims at providing online training on adult education and European decision making. AE-PRO is a first in its field and it stems from partners' needs. The training provides new insights into adult education in various countries and the world of the EU institutions. It also offers a framework for networking on a European level.*

## How it all started

How can you do capacity building for your members if they are in 44 countries in Europe? That was the key question for the European Association for the Education of Adults. The EAEA has a large membership (137) but a small secretariat (currently 5 people in Brussels and one in Helsinki).

Built on the success of ICAE's IALLA, the advocacy course for young adult educators, EAEA had started to offer the Younger Staff Training within the framework of the Grundtvig In-service trainings. In the first few years we had between 15 and 20 participants who would learn about European institutions, adult education at the European level and, always the favourite, "adult education in my country", peer learning sessions in which the participants would present their own organisation's and country's approach to adult learning. With the participants of these trainings, we built the younger staff network, which has remained – loosely – in contact. Nevertheless, with our resources, EAEA can only do one training per year. Many of the learners also participate with the help of European funding, first Grundtvig, and now Erasmus+. With many countries ineligible for such funding, the question arises: how could more participants from outside of the EU benefit from the training?

Based on this, the idea for our online peer learning platform was born. We applied for a Grundtvig multilateral project with the following partners:

- EAEA (European organisation based in Brussels)
- RIO/FOLAC (Sweden)
- KVS (Finland)
- NIACE (UK)
- AES (Serbia)
- VHS Landesverband Saarland (Germany)
- DAEA (Denmark)
- KERIGMA (Portugal)
- ICAE (International organisation based in Uruguay)

We wanted to:

- Provide a comprehensive training course for (younger) adult education staff that brings together European developments, peer learning about each other's systems and organisations and European mobility;
- Provide online training about European developments in adult education and learning;

- Provide online training about national developments in adult education;
- Create an online peer learning platform;
- Establish a network of trainers and experts;
- Extend the EAEA younger staff network;
- Provide a portfolio for the acquired competences to complement national certification;
- Introduce a mobility charter for organisations hosting mobile staff.

Our main challenges were: How can we provide learning that reflects ONLINE the non-formal methodologies of adult education? Would we be able to stimulate the lively and inspiring exchange between learners that we had achieved in the face-to-face trainings? And also, of course, how would we react to a new medium of teaching and learning?

### **Planning and starting the training**

Throughout the first year of the project we developed the course and learning platform. Under the guidance of our experienced partner Learning and Work Institute (aka NIACE), we had a Moodle platform developed. Some of the funniest moments we had at a partner meeting was to try to create a common vocabulary around the words “session”, “course”, “module” and “webinar” to make sure that we speak about the same things. We discussed in length how the course would be organised and which sessions would take place. In late 2014, we started to promote the course.

In the application, we had stated our targets:

- We aim to reach 50 participants (younger) adult education staff), who will take the whole course; but very probably expect more;
- We also aim to reach at least an additional minimum of 100 participants who will take the opportunity to choose single courses (dip in and out);
- We aim to reach at least 100 adult education organisations and experts, who are involved in the learning sessions, trainings and the mobility platform;
- We see the potential of eventually reaching hundreds of adult educators in the long-term.

We have easily reached these numbers, and even exceeded the expectations: in the first month after the registrations to the course had been opened, a whopping 1000 people registered on the platform!

The course was planned to last from April to December 2015. The first course took place with around 150 people from all around Europe (including non-EU countries) participating in the introduction to the platform. We explained the concept of the course: divided in 5 categories, only the first one, on European developments in adult education, was compulsory for everyone. After completing it, the participants had to take two other sessions, choosing between the following categories:

- Adult education practice in Europe;
- Adult education policies;
- Pedagogical approaches/Non-formal education methods;
- Working with specific target groups<sup>1</sup>.

Each session was hosted by one of the partner organisations – most of them had been participants of the Younger Staff Training earlier on.

### **Our dear participants!**

We were extremely enthusiastic – but our learners were even more enthusiastic than us! We explained that there would be group work and that they had to form teams. Within the next few hours after the webinar, participants already started to form their groups, and once more than 10 groups were formed, one of the participants took the initiative to create a list of the groups to see who was still looking for a group and who could fit into incomplete groups (which had to be multinational).

The second course started and we still had over 100 participants. We gradually learned how our work could be improved. When a representative of the European Commission took part in the webinar, we discovered that we had insufficient technical material, as we had to switch headphones each time another person would talk. The next step was to buy material that made us look professional: several earplugs instead of headsets and a conference microphone. We had already taken care of the rest: being in a quiet room, using several computers. We soon created a list of recommendations for the next sessions to take place.

Most online learning courses face a high drop-out rate – for this training, the sessions continued and the number of participants did not drop down much. We were thrilled to see that a community of learners

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<sup>1/</sup> Complete list of courses to be found in the annex

was really being created through the Facebook page we had initiated. We encouraged participants to share news about the state of adult education in their countries, information about conferences or trainings they would organise and that other participants could join, etc.

When the next category of courses started, the number of participants dropped, but no more than to the extent we could have expected considering they were optional courses. Participants continued to seem very interested and active. Over the summer, it became a bit difficult to have many learners online during the webinars. These were uploaded online and participants could watch them later on. After some weeks, we saw that the number of learners who would watch the sessions at a later stage meant that we still had many course followers. We could conclude that the schedule was sometimes an issue for the participants, but that the interest was high.

### **Challenges of the training**

There was one person responsible for the project in general, one person responsible for the overall communication of the course and one person for the technical issues on the platform and during webinars. The rest of the partners were responsible for one to two sessions only. In terms of content, this worked great, as many perspectives and experiences on adult education could be shared with the participants. In terms of preparation, this was a bigger challenge, as each partner came in as a freshman and did not know very well which rules to follow. Some speakers cancelled at the last-minute, which caused misunderstandings in terms of the session schedule. We had announced the schedule in a number of places, and some of these places could only be accessed by certain persons (with admin rights) which sometimes made changing schedules a challenge in terms of disseminating information. Time differences came to be an issue once or twice, as not all partners were in the same time zone – not to mention all course participants. Most of the technical practicalities were mastered by our technician responsible who soon earned the title of the “technical ninja”, considering the difficulties he or we were facing and the expertise needed, that no one else had. Soon the need for another “technical ninja” was felt and a small internal training was organised.



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## Validating the course

In the meantime, we had to decide how we would validate the participation in the courses. We had decided to use open badges<sup>2</sup> as we felt that attending only one or two sessions was not enough to get a real certificate but was worth getting recognition as it was a learning process. For what we called the “whole course”, which consisted of all sessions on European developments and one session in each of the other categories, we had planned to give a certificate.

Towards the end of the course, participants started to ask to receive certificates for each session they had attended or a certificate presenting in detail which sessions they had attended. We had not decided yet what exact form the certificate would take and could not answer that question clearly. It slowly but surely became a bigger issue, also as the course finished and we discovered that preparing the certificate was a very big technical challenge. In terms of lessons learnt, we immediately decided to do it differently next time, as this, beyond all expectations, appeared to be extremely complicated (footnote: Kevin’s Excel formula).

## The 2016 training

The next training started mid-March 2016. We have changed its formula: we have restricted our ambitions and agreed on a shorter training. We have kept the idea of one webinar per week, during the daytime, as we believe that this training provides great opportunities for the staff to develop its competences and that it should be supported by their employers. We have found a red thread for the whole course: our latest publication, “Manifesto for Adult Learning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”, a document presenting how adult education can contribute to solutions for most current European political issues:

- Active citizenship, democracy and participation;
- Life skills for individuals;
- Social cohesion, equity and equality;
- Employment and digitalisation;
- Migration and demographic change;
- Sustainability.

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2/ Open badges: <http://openbadges.org/>

While we have kept some elements, such as the successful group work “adult education in my country”, we have also made important changes. The training now includes a portfolio that participants will have to create and complete during the course in order to show what they have achieved and what they have learned. Another change concerns the certificates, which this time will be created in collaboration with the learners. Also, while we will continue to use the same Facebook group, we will pay more attention to regularly inform participants about our work updates, to motivate them by nice messages and to follow-up on their progress during the course.

We hope that the new course will have as much success as the first one, and that it will lead the way to a regular course that would take place every year and become sustainable. We have been approached by other organisations that would like to host some of their own courses on our learning platform or participate in our training. We are currently in discussions with them to see how to make it happen. If it works, it will most probably mean that we can transform a beautiful three-year project, during which we had the most amazing experience, and the best feedback from participants, into a long-lasting free online course for the adult education community.

## **Annex**

Complete list of courses

### **Part I: Compulsory courses**

- Adult Education at a European Level
- Welcome to AE-PRO!
- Introduction to adult education at a European level
- Civil society and lifelong learning
- Exploring existing arguments to argue in favour of adult education
- Final session and evaluation

## **Part II: Optional courses**

*4 modules which learners may choose at least 2 sessions from each*

- Adult education practice in Europe
- Adult Learners' Week: a festival of learning!
- Adult education centres in Europe: schools that empower – 3 faces of Folk High Schools in Sweden
- Methodology of Recognition and Validation of Competences in Portugal
- Adult education centres in Saarland, Germany: education for all

### **2. Adult Education policies**

- Democracy and adult education in Portugal
- Impacts of adult education and validation in Portugal
- Folkbildning: a publicly financed civil society structure in adult education
- Capacity building on a global level – its importance, the challenges, and key experiences with special attention to IALLA
- What it is to be a National Coordinator for the European Agenda for Adult Learning
- Mid-life career review
- Adult education and partnership working
- Global tendencies in adult education

### **3. Pedagogical approaches/Non-formal education methods**

- The Competence Game – a way to become aware of prior learning?
- Integration: German as a second language and second language acquisition
- Adult education as empowerment tool: democracy as participation – doing democracy!
- Community Learning Champions (CLCs) National Support Programme
- English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- Webinars: sharing good practice in adult education across Europe

### **4. Working with specific target groups**

- Situational barriers and learning abilities of functionally illiterate individuals participating in programmes of elementary adult education in Serbia
- Applied theatre methods and adult education: legislative theatre in prison
- Key elements on how to make adult education work for the group furthest away from education

## eLearning – Halfway Through

*Do eLearning and development cooperation (DC) go together at all? Is there a need for them? If so, what are the special technological and infrastructural challenges and limits to the use of eLearning in DC? Is a special methodology and didactic required? How must intercultural aspects be taken into account? Are there continental or regional differences? In what subjects and in which teaching and learning contexts can and should eLearning be used?*

*Digital Learning, the term which is increasingly replacing eLearning, contributes significantly to sustainable development and improvement of living conditions of people around the world. The Academy for International Cooperation (AIZ) with its Global Campus 21 (GC21) offers various eLearning courses varying from professional expertise, managerial skills and leadership experience e.g. education and gender or ICT and eLearning skills. The GC21 is launched by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) on behalf of the German Government.*

## Introduction

In 2011, prior to the emergence of *L3T – Lehrbuch für Lernen und Lehren mit Technologien* (Textbook for Teaching and Learning with Technology)<sup>1</sup> some reviewers and authors carried on an intensive discussion on the subject of eLearning and development cooperation.

Do eLearning and development cooperation (DC) go together at all? Is there a need for them? If so, what are the special technological and infrastructural challenges and limits to the use of eLearning in DC? Is a special methodology and didactic required? There were even many more questions, especially from colleagues outside development cooperation. In the end, a separate chapter was devoted to the subject in the first publication of the textbook, which unfortunately fell victim to a renewal of the discussion and was eliminated from the new edition of L3T in 2013.

Even then, this discussion was unnecessary. Open and Distance Learning (ODL) in all its aspects and in particular in the use of the respective telecommunication technologies of their time for learning and teaching has been a part of Capacity Development<sup>2</sup> offers for decades, especially of Human Capacity Development<sup>3</sup>.

At the beginning of the new millennium the earlier DC institutions like the German Foundation for International Development (DSE) and the Carl Duisberg Gesellschaft eV (CDG) – a nonprofit organisation to promote international training and personnel development, based in Germany – saw the increasing spread of the Internet as an opportunity to build these technologies and in particular the new communication and collaboration methods and possibilities for their global qualification programmes and alumni activities.

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1/ <http://l3t.eu/homepage/> "L3T stands for Textbook for Teaching and Learning with Technology. The textbook was created through volunteer work by the editors. Only with the help of their sponsors was it possible to keep the innovative project alive permanently and to provide the free long term availability of the chapters as PDF files. In addition, the sponsorship enabled the allocation of cheap print editions of the textbook for authors and project participants."

"The publication offers students and teachers a clear introduction to the subject of eLearning. The 59 chapters of the textbook were written by 140 renowned technical professionals from German-speaking countries. The authors came from different disciplines, thus ensuring an interdisciplinary reference work on the subject of technology-enhanced learning and teaching, which previously did not exist in this form. It supports classes, seminars, lectures and courses in the field of technology-enhanced learning. The contents are cross-discipline and accommodate different learning levels as well as pre-existing knowledge and expertise."

2/ <http://www.lencd.org/>

3/ <https://www.giz.de/expertise/html/17455.html>

It quickly became clear that eLearning and DC not only go well together, there is even a very great demand for eLearning in developing countries: on the one hand for technology-supported learning opportunities and on the other hand – and especially – for eLearning as a method to increase the spectrum of technology-supported learning opportunities and educational formats for educational institutions of all kinds.

The DSE and CDG initiative resulted in the introduction of the *Global Campus 21*<sup>®</sup> (GC21) in the year 2000, the learning and collaboration platform of today's Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH. Today, not only are the eLearning courses intensively in demand – 15 years ago it initiated the first global blended learning offers entitled *Capacity Development for eLearning*, which still have an unbroken demand from educational institutions for the sustainable building of their own eLearning capacities. These offers of *Capacity Development for eLearning* were and are used by the Academy for International Cooperation (AIZ) which is implemented by GIZ on behalf of the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

## Capacity Development for eLearning

The development and introduction of *Global Campus 21*<sup>®</sup> caused an intensive examination of issues of organisational integration of eLearning in their own organisation. Similarly, questions were asked about the organisational implementation of such a platform and the integration of eLearning in the context of existing curricula as well as a necessary content and teaching methodology (re-orientation and in particular the sustainable management of eLearning and virtual collaboration as long-term challenge. These are questions to which not only the GIZ and its predecessor organisations were seeking answers, but increasingly educational institutions from around the world, who sent participants to GC21 courses.

Many educational institutions quickly saw the benefits of eLearning. On the one hand, the use of technology assisted learning allowed for reaching participants in remote areas or island states, on the other hand it allowed large target groups to be qualified promptly and fundamentally, which would not have been achieved with traditional presence learning offers. Thus a blended learning programme on *Capacity Development for e-Learning*<sup>4</sup> was created, oriented to the requirements of other educational

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4/ <https://www.giz.de/akademie/de/downloads/giz2013-en-aiz-capacity-development-elearning.pdf>

institutions and developed in cooperation with them. Today the contents – continually updated and expanded – include the topics:

- eLearning Basics (eLearning in a Nutshell)
- eLearning Strategy and Management
- Curriculum Development (eLearning Integration)
- Content Development
- Didactical and Methodological Design
- eLearning Technology
- Virtual Collaboration / Tutoring of Virtual Communities

## **Methodological Approach**

Whether it's dealing with the certified blended learning course (*eLDI – eLearning Development and Implementation* or *IDeL – Implementacion y Desarrollo del eLearning* which is the Spanish-language version) which takes around eight to nine months and is in cooperation with the German Furtwangen University (HFU), or whether it's one of the up-to-four-months courses like *elip – eLearning in Practice* and *eAST – eApplication Skills Training* (special version for Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus), the qualifications follow an important methodological and didactic rationale (see Reinmann, G. & Mandl, H.; 2004).

According to them, adult education is sustainable if:

- it is oriented on a clearly stated problem to be solved
- organised in a social and cooperative manner
- uses all the senses
- self-determined and oriented by the learners and accepted by them
- cognitively oriented, so it involves the peripheral working and living conditions of the learners

Thus arose the methodological approach in which all participants agree on an individual coordinated learning project with the tutor – respectively, with other participants – and on which a clear definition of the problem is based. This defining of the problem is integrated into the qualification training and worked on, based on the progressive learning modules and objectives. It may, for example, have to do with the design of a new learning management approach for an educational institution, on the revision of an existing curriculum, the development of a specific eLearning offer, or the introduction of a technological platform. The decisive factor is a clear

conception of the problem. At the same time, during the course of the training, each participant develops her/his own eLearning module.

The participants are either organised in institutional learning groups or cross-peer learning groups. Everyone can learn from everyone else and all benefit from shared experience.

The content of the qualification and the expertise introduced by the participants speak to different types of learning: visual, aural, read-write and kinaesthetic oriented<sup>5</sup>, and engage head, heart and hands alike.

Tutors especially support “learning how to learn”. For success it is crucial that prior to qualification, the supervisors of the participants are brought on board, that there is a commitment by the respective managers that participants get appropriate learning hours for their training “on the job”, that their qualification training is integrated into the organisational development of the educational institution and that the issues the participants are working on are part of the problem solving for the educational institution.

The challenge for such a methodical approach is the intensive guidance required from tutors and experts. Here content is not just delivered didactically in the classic way, rather, personal and shared learning arrangements as well as self-learning are found and adapted, which means that the skills development of the participants is specifically supported. More about this later.

## **Multipliers Welcome**

From the beginning, the AIZ pursued a three-pronged approach with *Capacity Development for eLearning*:

- Knowledge of what is at stake. Not all participants have to be experts in all subjects. However, all should be informed on all subjects and acquire a basic understanding. Only so will future technicians understand the content developers and future eLearning managers their operational staff, who implement the courses.
- Able to be applied. The participants should become experts in their central topics and then share their expertise in the long-term with others in the relevant forums (peer learning).
- Multiplying. Some people have the ability to qualify others. Both individual participants as well as all educational institutions are welcome as multipliers. The contents of *Capacity Development for eLearning* are freely available and should be used including the methodological approach of

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<sup>5/</sup> see e.g.: <http://vark-learn.com/>

third parties for the qualification of other educational institutions. Even if this results in business for third parties, it is welcome, provided substantive and methodological development – according to the rules of open content – are fed into the community.

So this is how, in recent years, regional networks such as the EDUC@L network in Latin America<sup>6</sup> emerged, whose almost 30 partners – from Argentina to Mexico – pursue the development and implementation of the Spanish-language qualifications to *Capacity Development for eLearning* (*Desarrollo de Capacidades en el eLearning*) as a registered association.

In Mongolia, the Philippines, Georgia, Armenia, Ethiopia and Namibia – to name just a few examples – national networks were established that independently provide courses on *Capacity Development for eLearning*, partly translated into their national languages.

Worldwide there is a loose “community of practice” of a good hundred national, regional and international partner institutions which currently exchange information about Quality in eLearning in particular and develop common standards.

## Quality Assurance

The quality of eLearning is a topic that has garnered increasing attention in recent years. It is usually concerned with two aspects (see Ehlers, U. et al.; 2005 / Ehlers, U.; 2015.):

- eLearning as a process, that is as an integral part of the entire process of an educational institution, but also as an independent process for different eLearning applications and formats, all the way through to integration in policy guidelines for the application of technology in learning and teaching in all forms of education.
- eLearning as a product, i.e. methodical didactic high quality eLearning formats like classical web-based training (WBT) and blended learning offers, as well as new approaches, like MOOCs (massive open online course) and increasingly emergent mobile learning solutions.

The above-described basic approach to *Capacity Development for eLearning* has been linked with an eLearning quality assurance endeavour since 2009 – *Open ECB-Check*,<sup>7</sup> which was jointly developed by interna-

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<sup>6/</sup> <http://educ-al.org/>

<sup>7/</sup> <http://www.ecb-check.net/>

tional organisations under the auspices of the GIZ. Among the more than 30 partners are, among others, the United Nations University (UNU-EHS), which currently organises the Secretariat of *Open ECB-Check*, the International Training Centre of the ILO (ITC ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the World Bank (WB LLI), the Commonwealth of Learning as well as numerous individual educational institutions.

*Open ECB-Check* is an internationally recognised quality assurance endeavour with which educational institutions can evaluate and certify eLearning both as a process and as individual eLearning products. By means of a self-evaluation process, combined with a peer review process by accredited specialists, the quality of eLearning offerings are evaluated based on more than 65 criteria (s. Ehlers, U. ; 2010). *Open ECB-Check* is available for all interested parties. Even if an educational institution does not want itself or its eLearning Products to be certified, it may carry out a self-evaluation as a benchmark through the freely available toolbox.

The quality criteria of *Open ECB-Check* already build the basis for various national policies on ICT in education. Thus, for example, Namibia and Kenya, Armenia and Georgia, Mongolia, the Philippines and Vietnam have developed and in part adopted guidelines for ICT in education established on the basic and excellence criteria of *Open ECB-Check*.

All around *Open ECB-Check*, a vibrant community has developed, in which, increasingly, quality assurance for new learning formats is discussed. The question of new and innovative learning formats and their quality was also a topic dedicated to a massive open online course (MOOC), which started in February 2016. Central to the project is, on the one hand, an expansion of the online community, however in particular it is about how the quality assurance initiative *Open ECB-Check* can integrate criteria for new learning formats such as mobile learning, the gamification of learning<sup>8</sup> or MOOCs. The platform *quality4digitalllearning.org* is the nucleus for a global “community of practice” and openly provides the resources for *Capacity Development for eLearning*.

## The Other Half of the Way

Change comes from the people. To initiate processes of change and to configure them at the institutional and societal level requires the learning of individuals. Institutions, organisations and networks in which these individuals act should be taken into account equally in the context of learning processes. Only then can the individual learning process contribute to

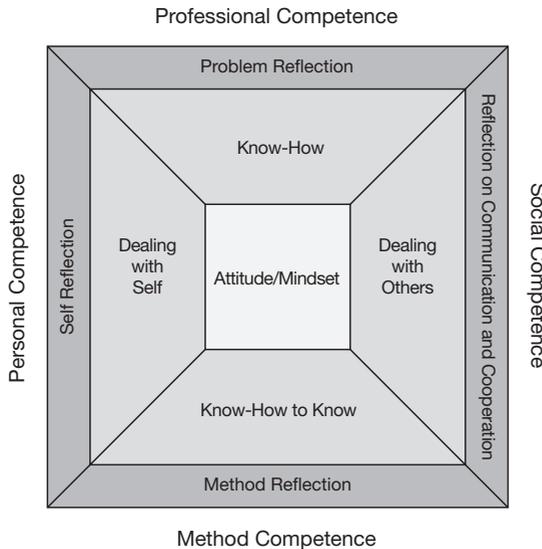
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<sup>8/</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gamification\\_of\\_learning](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gamification_of_learning)

change. Therefore learners are not qualified just as individuals, but as actors for the institutions in which they are to make changes. This understanding is at the heart of the AIZ learning provision, whether in digital or presence form. And this understanding is the other half of the successful implementation of eLearning capacity in educational institutions.

The introduction of eLearning does not mean the set-up of a technological platform to introduce new methods and formats and to make content didactic for virtual application. It means a process of change for the institution per se, in which eLearning is seen as an integral element in the entire training programme.

The AIZ *Capacity Development for eLearning* is – like all its learning offers – focused on multifaceted skill development, which integrates technical, methodological, social and personal aspects. The effective use of these skills will, however, only be achieved through an attitude which is fundamentally located at the core of international competence.



The attitude is the central guiding factor that comes into play especially when people are confronted with new contexts and challenges. In this respect the AIZ aspires to contribute to the development of a particular attitude in learners through the qualification programmes. The didactic design of the AIZ learning offers is based on an enabling didactic approach.

eLearning is just one of a variety of ways to support skills development. It follows the same educational requirements that are made with

other, non-digital, learning formats. The focus is always on the question of how learning opportunities are designed to enable sustainable learning. The AIZ follows didactic principles which will be considered in the design of learning opportunities, regardless of the format of the respective qualification. (see Krewer, B. & Uhlmann, A.; 2015)

## Good Practice

There are more than enough examples of good practice. In the past 15 years more than 1,200 participants from more than 100 educational institutions of all kinds have been trained. Below, two examples:

In Latin America, in 2015 in the Andean region, the blended learning course *eLearning Development and Implementation* (cited above) was implemented as part of a regional decentralisation project of the GIZ<sup>9</sup>. In the background was, firstly, a great need for training which had arisen due to the modernisation and decentralisation processes in local public administration. Simultaneously, the existing training offer was concentrated on the big cities because decentralised presence courses are complicated and expensive. Existing training opportunities often had deficits from the didactic point of view.

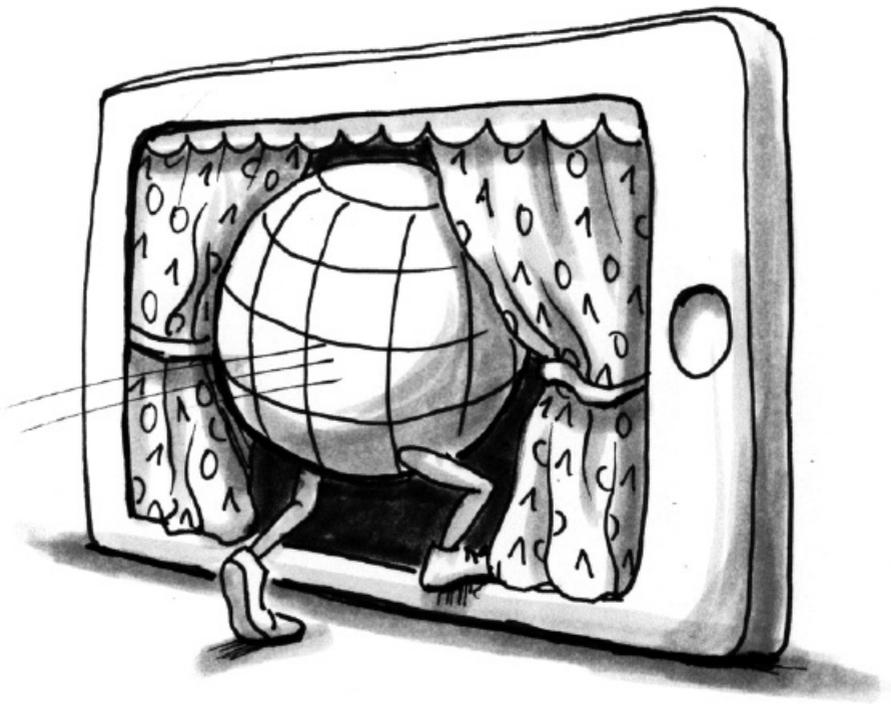
A special feature of the course was that, in addition to the course content of *eLearning Development and Implementation*, technical content was also exchanged from the research area *Decentralised governance and administration*. There were 31 participants from 16 institutions based in Bolivia, Ecuador or Peru, including academic directors, heads of departments for capacity building and faculty members. The participants quickly developed learning modules which should be included in the training offers of their institution. The institutions were advised, at the same time, to set up and/or optimise their learning platforms so that the qualification of individuals could be directly integrated with organisational consulting.

The exchanges between the participants themselves supported the development of cooperation, for example like the development of joint training opportunities.

In Indonesia, since 2014, together with the projects FORCLIME II (Forest and Climate Change) of the German Development Cooperation and its the partner organisation Centre for Forestry Education and Training (CFET) support the integration of their own eLearning resources in their educational offers. CFET is responsible for the complete qualification of forest workers in

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<sup>9/</sup> CADESAN, Fortalecimiento de Capacidades para la Descentralización en los Países Andinos



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Indonesia and on top of that for the awareness-raising of the population regarding the sustainable management of forests. The goal is to contribute in the long term to reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions through a mainstreaming of knowledge about climate change and forest protection and thus to promote the preservation of forests as a basic livelihood resource of the local population.

eLearning expands the range of CFET training courses and enables a significantly higher number of participants to be reached. CFET want to be able to school more than 40,000 people engaged in forestry in the next five years. Because of the distances involved, the long journeys and the associated expenditure, the introduction of eLearning as a complementary training opportunity has a number of advantages. More participants can be reached with technical training content while simultaneously reducing travel expenses. Through the use of computer-based training methods, the basic media skills of the participants will also be strengthened.

Since the partnership began, more than 800 new employees with various backgrounds and areas of responsibility have already been qualified, who in turn are used as multipliers for the training of forestry personnel and the local population.

The first eLearning modules were completed by CEFT at the beginning of March 2015 and presented on an open learning platform<sup>10</sup>.

## Lessons Learnt

Digital Learning, the term which is increasingly replacing eLearning, contributes significantly to sustainable development and improvement of living conditions of people around the world. Many educational institutions and, above all, many educational policy makers worldwide have recognised this and are investing in building eLearning capacities in educational institutions of all kinds in their countries.

In recent years many countries have also developed ICT policy guidelines to ensure access to quality information and communication services for their citizens. Some countries have already integrated ICT policies in their policy guidelines with a clear orientation toward education (among others Namibia, Tanzania, Ghana, Rwanda, India and Cambodia, to name just a few) to give the relevance and effectiveness of Digital Learning appropriate weight.

New media offer the technological and methodological potential to make learning and cooperation in all forms (formal and non-formal) and at all levels (primary to tertiary and lifelong) as well as vocational training

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<sup>10</sup>/<http://pusdiklathut.org/> – e-Learning Pusdiklat Kehutanan

and professional training more efficient and effective. In this way they will heavily influence policy areas and cross-sector education, information and work systems and thus the societies in those countries.

It is therefore an important task for international cooperation to support partners worldwide in order to build sustainable and effective skills for digital learning, to network them across regions and to bring them into dialogue (up-scaling, knowledge sharing) with key global players. International demand for Digital Learning and increasing connectivity and access to the Internet in developing countries allow for new formats in the implementation of eLearning in education. Innovative approaches like MOOCs (massive open online course) and mobile learning and the development of new methods (e.g. gamified learning) open new avenues for the Digital Learning landscape.

The *Global Campus 21*<sup>®</sup> of GIZ has lots of information for the development of eLearning resources, among other things, handbooks on good practice in Central Asia and Latin America. Educational institutions that want to build eLearning skills themselves can direct their questions to the partners listed in the web-resource section or directly to the Academy for International Cooperation of the GIZ.

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# Towards an ASEAN Regional Online Learning Resources System: Addressing the Various Needs of Community Learning Centres

*ASEAN is moving towards integration by 2025 in order to realise its aspiration of having “one vision, one community, one identity”. Along with hope for opportunities, there are challenges of human resources and social inequalities for which lifelong learning has emerged as an effective solution. However, due to vast differences in social and economic backgrounds, ASEAN member states have very diverse needs in lifelong learning, varying from “obtaining basic and necessary knowledge and skills” to “adding value towards bringing about better employability and better income for workers”. Addressing such a wide range of learners’ needs is very problematic, considering the shortage of quality adult educators, quality programmes and ineffective optimisation of resources. This article suggests a way of establishing an online learning resources system that serves to host and deliver learning contents for the regional community learning centres, so far the most popular lifelong learning provider in the region.*

## ASEAN, SEAMEO and SEAMEO CELLL

Established in 1967, ASEAN, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, aims at promoting economic growth, social progress, cultural development, peace and stability in the region. At present, ASEAN consists of 10 members<sup>1</sup> and covers a land area of 4.43 million square kilometres, 3 percent of the world's total land area. The combined population of all ASEAN nations is 622 million people, (about 8.8% of the world population) and the combined GDP is 2573 billion USD, slightly bigger than the size of the economy of France (ASEAN Secretariat 2015).

SEAMEO, the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation, established in 1965, is an international and intergovernmental organisation, serving to promote regional cooperation in education, science and culture. To help achieve this mission, SEAMEO has developed 21 regional centres of excellence located across 8 from the 11 member countries<sup>2</sup>. These centres are very focused in their expertise as each offers research and programmes in one theme of one key area (education, science, or culture). Their work is directed at addressing both regional and country-specific issues by means of data dissemination, consultation and service provision.

Apart from the 11 member countries, SEAMEO has eight non-ASEAN countries (Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Spain and the United Kingdom) acting as Associate Members as well as 4 organisations acting as Affiliate Members (The British Council, The International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE), the University of Tsukuba and the China Education Association for International Exchange (CEAIE).

SEAMEO CELLL, the SEAMEO Regional Centre for Lifelong Learning, is the youngest member among the 21 SEAMEO regional centres. SEAMEO CELLL was officially established in 2013, aiming at catering for the regional needs in promoting lifelong learning, providing opportunities for cooperation in the field of lifelong learning among SEAMEO member countries and associate member countries, and helping strengthen the relationships as well as increase mutual understanding between educational researchers, practitioners, and policy makers of the region, in a spirit of mutual respect and partnership. SEAMEO CELLL is located in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam.

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1/ The ten ASEAN member nations are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

2/ SEAMEO member countries are all ASEAN member countries (10) plus Timor-Leste. Three SEAMEO member countries that do not have a SEAMEO regional centre are Cambodia, Lao PDR and Timor-Leste.

## The context of lifelong learning in ASEAN

Within ASEAN, there is a great diversity that is best described as “unmatched by any other grouping in the world. Indeed, its economic, political, cultural and linguistic diversity is greater than even that of the European Union” (Menon 2012:01). This diversity is displayed in huge gaps between member countries in GDP per capita (56,287 USD for Singapore versus 1,105 USD for Cambodia), population (252 million for Indonesia versus 0.4 million for Brunei), adult literacy rate (97.2% for Brunei versus 79% for Lao PDR), infant mortality rate (1.8 per 1000 live births for Singapore versus 48.9 for Lao PDR) and Internet subscribers (82 per 100 inhabitants for Singapore versus 04 per 100 for Myanmar) to mention just a few (ASEAN Secretariat 2015). Vast disparities also exist within each country, especially in income between different groups in society.

Despite disparities in land area, population, economic backgrounds and culture, ASEAN is moving towards the ASEAN Community, which is comprised of three pillars: Political-Security Community, Economic Community and Socio-Cultural Community, under the motto of “one vision, one identity, one community”, as stated in ASEAN Vision 2020: “We envision the entire Southeast Asia to be, by 2020, an ASEAN community conscious of its ties of history, aware of its cultural heritage and bound by a common regional identity” (ASEAN, 1997). On 31 December 2015, the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) started to be implemented based on 4 pillars: a common market and production base, a competitive economic region, equitable economic development, and integration into the global economy.

Together with the clear opportunities that the AEC will bring about, there are great challenges ASEAN countries have to cope with at various degrees depending on the socio-economic development level of each country. Two of the most obvious challenges arising from the implementation of the AEC are a lack of skilled labour force and social inequalities among different groups in most countries. The ILO reported that “labour shortfalls and skills shortages in Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam were posing increasing problems for employers” (ILO 2014:14) and one of its senior economists has rightly commented that “The AEC will create opportunities, but risks leaving some behind and aggravating inequalities. We find for example, that some new jobs growth could be in sectors that are prone to be informal and vulnerable, women will gain less from new jobs than men, and the demand for high-skilled workers will increase faster, potentially creating wage inequality between skilled and unskilled workers” (Dasgupta 2014).

Lifelong learning for all is seen as an effective approach to tackle these challenges as the focus is on the learners, who can adapt and reinvent themselves, and the mechanism of the system allows the mobilisation of all resources in society. The more lifelong learning opportunities are provided and made accessible to the adult population in the region, especially to the vulnerable and disadvantaged, the better inequality would be reduced. Having fully realised the role of lifelong learning in addressing the issues of skills shortage and social inequalities, ASEAN has emphasised joint efforts “to develop human resources through closer cooperation in education and lifelong learning” in the ASEAN Charter 2007. The role of the education sector, especially lifelong learning, in the socio-cultural pillar of ASEAN integration was further reiterated at the 15th ASEAN Summit in 2009.

Nevertheless, lifelong learning may mean very different things in different ASEAN countries in terms of concepts, focuses, purposes, and target groups. From the perspective of focus/objectives, lifelong learning programmes in the region can be categorised into three groups:

- literacy and basic skills,
- income-generation and job skills; and
- quality workforce development.

While the objective of lifelong learning in Thailand, for example, is primarily for the target groups to “obtain basic and necessary knowledge and skills which can be used as a tool for enhancing their occupations” (Sumalee 2013:24), lifelong learning in Singapore is defined as “the means to an end, and that end is to add value. The ability to add value will bring about better employability and better income for workers” (Teo Chee Hean 2010). Such a difference in objectives has led to different focuses in lifelong learning programmes and providers: At one end, countries with higher income per capita in ASEAN such as Singapore, Brunei and Malaysia focus on technical skills, mindset, attitudes, people management, problem analysis, communication skills for lifelong employability through specialised agencies (e.g. Institute for Adult Learning in Singapore); at the other end, the other ASEAN countries focus their lifelong learning programmes on basic education, literacy, skills development and vocational training, income-generation skills, entrepreneurship, community development, and civics and practical knowledge. In all of these countries, there are community learning centres (CLCs) functioning as the lifelong learning providers at grassroots level.

## **The community learning centre as a lifelong learning provider at grassroots level**

CLCs were started in 1998 by UNESCO within the framework of Asia-Pacific Programmes of Education for All (APPEAL) as an effective community-based non-formal education mechanism. Despite some variations in organisational structures and sources of funding, basically CLCs in ASEAN countries are the local educational institutions outside the formal education system, set up to serve local people's learning needs and managed by local people.

The main functions of CLCs are to provide:

- education and training;
- community information and resource services;
- community development activities; and
- co-ordination and networking.

With the exception of Singapore, Brunei and Malaysia, as mentioned previously, today CLCs exist in all ASEAN countries providing lifelong learning opportunities to local communities. Target groups of CLCs in these countries are children and youth, adults and the elderly, and the marginalised and disadvantaged individuals. A quick look at CLC-specific programmes shows that the learning needs are diverse, but all are of a practical nature, and can be grouped into four categories (UNESCO 2008:4-5):

- Literacy and equivalency programmes;
- Income generation/vocational skills: handicraft; growing chemical-free vegetables; producing household items; tourism promotion; raising traditional chicken; community enterprises;
- Practical knowledge and skills: reproductive health and family planning; training focused on change of occupations; health, hygiene and counselling; maternity protection and health for children; computer skills; first-aid skills; and
- Civics and community development knowledge: current law and policy; drug prevention and combating crime; welfare development; community forest management; women's rights; awareness raising and empowerment to protect civil rights; preservation of cultural and historical sites.

## **Addressing the diverse learning needs of CLCs: the pros and cons of MOOCs (Massive Online Open Courses)**

With 25,000 CLCs serving a population of almost 600 million people in the seven ASEAN countries, it is not very difficult to see that the supply is far below the demand. But the issues lie not only in the number of CLCs in relation to the target population: Insufficient funding leads to a general lack of resources, especially in terms of quality programmes and qualified teaching capacity. For example, survey data of Vietnam CLCs in 2010 show that none of the CLC facilitators have any training in adult education, only 22.7% of them are local incumbent or retired teachers from local schools, and up to 77.3% are volunteers from sectors such as agriculture, health and political organisations (Thai 2011: 93). The programme reach is another issue: While the programmes are suitable to the local people's needs and interest, it is difficult to attract them due to the availability of time and venues. Finally, lack of coordination aggravates the poor optimisation of resources: While the funding and resources of each CLC are extremely limited and the learning needs are diverse, there are a lot of themes in common as seen in the categories above, but so far there has been very little effort, if any, to coordinate the work of designing and delivering learning content for CLCs, both at national and regional levels. In the context of ASEAN integration, this lack of coordination needs addressing to fully achieve the benefits that a resource-sharing community is supposed to bring about.

With the development of MOOCs in recent years, interest has been raised over the question of whether MOOCs can be an effective solution to most, if not all, of the issues mentioned above.

In terms of reach and optimisation of resources, MOOCs have very clear benefits: In theory, a MOOC can be attended by as many as hundreds of thousands of people from all ASEAN countries at the same time without requiring expensive investment in hardware. People can access learning content as they prefer, with either computers or mobile devices, from virtually everywhere. The open nature of the learning content (or at least low tuition) make MOOCs very relevant to the ASEAN CLC context considering the size of the budget of these institutions and the target groups they serve. More importantly, MOOCs allow the efficient utilisation of CLC resources within a country and across ASEAN countries by coordinating effort in designing quality programmes and sharing them with whoever the programmes are of interest to. This also helps networking CLCs and facilitates interaction among learners across the CLCs nationwide and region-wide.



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However, there are issues to consider if MOOCs are to be developed for ASEAN CLCs:

- So far most MOOCs have been developed by prestigious universities such as Harvard, Stanford and MIT, and very little insight has been gained in non-academic contexts. CLC programmes are offered mostly through short sessions to target groups with mixed knowledge backgrounds; therefore, the highly structured content and organisation of a “course” (as in MOOC) may not be relevant.
- MOOCs have been known to have a high drop-out rate. If this is the case for learners with some academic background, the situation may be worse when they are implemented for CLCs where the learning environment is highly non-formal and informal.
- MOOCs require ICT [Information and Communication Technology] skills so that the learners can participate and interact efficiently with others, while ICT skills themselves are content to be taught in current CLC programmes.
- Although most users will need only a computer or a mobile device to take part in a MOOC, the platform stability and affordability may pose a big challenge to the management. Not only reliable and powerful MOOC-compatible hardware and software is required but the system will also need well-trained staff.
- Successful participation in an online environment requires more than computer skills. Self-direction, collaboration, a sense of community, ethical awareness and practice, and the right attitude, among other things, may be necessary for the MOOC learners before any massive online learning programmes can be implemented.

### **Towards an online shared learning resources system**

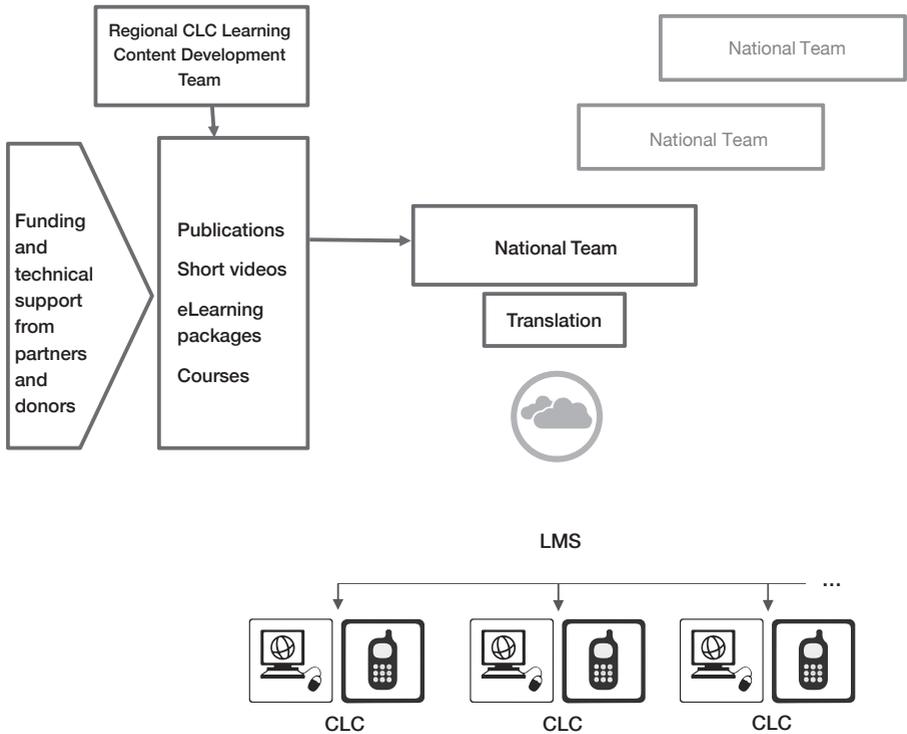
In view of both the pros and cons of possible MOOCs developed for ASEAN CLCs, the following recommendations are suggested:

- A shared CLC learning resources system is necessary at regional level to optimise resources in terms of production cost saving and quality assurance. To meet the most common demands of the region as well as the specific demands of certain localities, learning contents are to be designed in the combination of a top-down and a bottom-up process. At the country level, a national committee is required to select (or filter) relevant content and do translation into the local language or into English from the local language. At regional level, SEAMEO CELLL will

work in collaboration with SEAMEO SEAMOLEC (The SEAMEO Regional Open Learning Centre, based in Indonesia) and other partners and stakeholders to develop content and provide a technical platform for implementation.

- Under the framework of a regional project “Developing a post-2015 ASEAN Lifelong Learning Agenda” funded by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning, based in Hamburg, SEAMEO CELLL is proposing the establishment of a MOOC-based learning system serving to host and deliver learning content for the ASEAN CLCs. The Centre is exploring reliable and flexible platforms to build up and deliver content for the CLCs in the region.
- The online mode of content delivery is to be strongly promoted as it can best optimise resources and therefore is more economical in the long run, but will not completely replace existing face-to-face instruction in most CLCs. In parallel with the promotion of massive online open learning, effective measures should be taken to bridge the digital divide in each country and across countries in terms of hardware, connection bandwidth, and ICT skills of the management staff and local people.
- Cost of designing a regional CLC repository of materials and operational hardware can be mobilised from international and regional projects such as the one funded by the UNESCO Institute for Lifelong Learning mentioned above, national budgets, and funding from interested stakeholders. It is necessary to mention that although the local CLC target groups generally cannot afford high tuition, a nominal fee should be charged to raise the level of motivation. Apart from a national and local budget, which is very modest in most of the cases, funding may be sought from interested stakeholders either in the form of money donation or in-kind contribution. An example of this is the Intel Easy Steps Program, which aims at helping “participants acquire basic computer skills that are locally appropriate, and that support multiple hardware and software solutions. Intel provides the content free of charge to governments and NGOs, who manage local implementation.” ([http://www.it-blocks.com/Easy\\_Steps.aspx](http://www.it-blocks.com/Easy_Steps.aspx))

A simplified suggested model of organising and operating this regional online learning resources system is given below:



*Suggested simplified model of a regional online learning resources system for CLCs*

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# Virtual REPEM: Women's Empowerment through Digital Education – an Example from Latin America

*The Latin American network “Red de Educación Popular entre Mujeres” (REPEM) established in 1981, composed of a membership of 180 women’s organisations, has the goal to support women of all ages to improve their life situations through popular education. The article describes the implementation of a programme on learning about how to use Internet technology with a gender perspective (Formación en TIC con Perspectiva de Género) that REPEM designed and implemented in four countries in 2014 and 2015. The article is based on the documentation of the programme and summarizes some of the reflections generated during implementation. It also tries to capture the impact of enabling women from vulnerable groups to learn how to use these technologies.*

The Latin American women's network *Red de Educación Popular entre Mujeres* (REPEM [www.repem.org](http://www.repem.org)) has been active since 1981 in all Latin American countries and the Caribbean. Approximately 180 women's organisations have joined forces in order to put the issue of education for women and girls at the centre of discussion and to formulate it as a political demand. The objective of the network is the support of women in all areas of society. REPEM has set four content priorities which are dealt with in trans-national working groups:

1. education, gender and citizen participation;
2. education, gender and economy;
3. education and democratisation of information, including access to Internet and communication technology (ICT);
4. institutional strengthening of women's organisations.

DVV International, the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (DVV), has been working with REPEM since 1997, focusing especially on gender and economy. REPEM has consultative status as a non-governmental organisation at the United Nations. With the support of DVV International, the network brings the interests of Latin American women into many international processes. In 2015, this concerned in particular the debates on the development of the new Agenda 2030, the successor agenda of Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals. The network also issues two publications (*la red va* and *la red viene*) and documentation about their practical project work once a year. The publications are aimed generally at trainers who conduct trainings and seminars with women from different countries. They also include information on various topics for the target groups at the local level, such as domestic violence or environmental awareness.

All of the REPEM network project work aims to strongly anchor gender equality in all matters and especially in ones relating to the economy for the benefit of women through non-formal education. The concrete project work is done with and for women and is always and consistently based – also in their cooperation with men – on the principles of gender equality. This means that women and men should have equal opportunities to participate in learning and training opportunities and be able to change their life situation.

With the *Formación en TIC con Perspectiva de Género* (training in Internet and communication technologies with a gender focus), which was implemented in the period from 2013 to 2015 in Ecuador, Colombia, El Salvador and Uruguay, and funded by DVV International in Colombia and Ecuador, REPEM created, for at least 80 women and rural leaders, a basic

offering (digital literacy), so that they could get access to good quality information. A first pilot phase was started in 2013 in Colombia, with 75 women in four course centres (*Infocentros*), in coordination with the Colombian Association of NGOs for electronic communications (COLNODO). The centres were equipped with learning materials and computers. A second pilot phase was carried out in Uruguay, El Salvador and Ecuador in 2014 and 2015.

The following article summarises some of the findings from this programme. It is based on the documentation: *REPEM VIRTUAL Nuevos Caminos de Educacion Popular Feminista con Tecnologias de Informacion y Comunicacion-TIC* (Virtual REPEM – New avenues for feminist popular education with Internet technology).

### **The social context – discrimination against women despite development**

Latin America is a continent with growing social inequalities despite visible economic growth in some countries. In many countries, in the last 10-15 years, a certain economic recovery took place. However, prosperity did not have an equally beneficial effect on everyone. Women, especially from indigenous groups and living in rural areas, in all Latin American countries, continue to be in a position of disadvantage, and they find themselves largely pushed to the margins of society. In 1995, in the Action Plan of the World Conference on Women, there was already the recognition that the use of Internet technologies is equally as important for learning as other options. Women's access to these technologies was therefore considered to be particularly effective in terms of a positive change in their daily life, because the use of the Internet should open up greater access to education, information, employment and ways of political participation for all women.

Many of the feminist organisations in Latin America, who founded the REPEM network in 1981, take the Beijing Action Plan – which 191 states committed to implement – as the basis for their work. They also recognise that despite the government action agreed to in the Action Plan, 20 years later, the classic concepts of economic growth have not automatically improved the quality of life of all groups. For this reason, many women's organisations criticise this growth concept and search for alternatives. A new model or paradigm that is known as *Buen Vivir* (good living) has continuously evolved in recent years in Latin America (emanating from Bolivia and Ecuador, where it was enshrined in their constitutions) and focuses on the exploitation of man and nature and tries to show alternatives for development.

## Digital Education for marginalised women

Against the background of this debate about a new development model, in 2013 REPEM implemented three virtual courses that have the goal of strengthening the role of women in rural communities in terms of *Buen Vivir*. Between 2013 and 2015 courses with a total of 250 women were carried out in four pilot countries on the subjects: “Feminist, social and solidarity economy”, “Rural women and climate change” and “Education, gender and citizenship”. The new approach was to combine the learning of Internet information and communication technologies with the topic of gender justice. In this context, equality is presented as a key issue in sustainable development, because thus gender inequality is discussed in terms of access to resources and opportunities, and how that makes it difficult to achieve the objectives in the communities.

Digital education is already offered by many organisations in various Latin American countries as a standardised learning opportunity, however, little to rarely for those target groups that affiliates of REPEM work with at the local level. In some Latin American countries, especially in the small towns, new government-funded “Information Centres” have been set up, available to the public for the use of the Internet and where courses are also given for learning how to use a computer. The threshold for indigenous women to visit these centres is however very high. Many women do not have the self-confidence to believe that they can learn how to use the equipment and the technology. Generally, there are still too few gender-specific data sources in order to get an accurate picture of how great the needs of women are to familiarise themselves with the new technology. From the experience of the project which has been carried out it may, however, be concluded that disadvantaged groups – to which Latin American indigenous populations and especially women with low levels of general education belong – need special support in order to cope with the technology. When the initial inhibitions are overcome, they are particularly fond of this form of learning and information gathering.

When the author visited a women’s group which had participated in one of the courses in Colombia in 2015, each participant reported their learning process and how access to information that they could obtain from the Internet had opened up a new world for them.

The right to digital education is anchored in the right to information literacy. That is why, in 2005, a High Level Colloquium held by UNESCO, the International Association of Library Associations (IFLA) and the National Forum for Information Literacy in Alexandria in Egypt took place. The final declaration of the colloquium came to the conclusion: “Information Literacy lies at the core of lifelong learning. It empowers people in all walks



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of life to seek, evaluate, use and create information effectively to achieve their personal, social, occupational and educational goals. It is a basic human right in a digital world and promotes social inclusion of all nations.” (Alexandria Proclamation on Information Literacy and Lifelong Learning see [www.portal.unesco.org](http://www.portal.unesco.org)).

## The Pilot projects

The project *Training in communication technologies with a gender focus* took place in selected pilot countries over a period of three months. These were selected by REPEM after a competition among affiliates as those who had the best resources available and appeared suitable to also make an evaluation of the pilot phase. At the end of the pilot phase a total of 250 women from rural and urban areas participated in the computer training courses.

In Colombia, the organisation *Colombian Association of NGOs for electronic communications (COLNODO)* was revealed as a suitable partner for the implementation of the pilot phase. Ten teachers were selected by the organisation and went through a training course. Subsequently criteria were identified with the trainers for the selection of participants and the best locations to hold the courses. As a result, 48 women from various local groups took part in the course. By using the commercial *Easy Steps* software, the participants were able to use a pre-prepared software which allows for simultaneous use of a computer and the Internet in order to learn and implement these new capabilities directly.

In Ecuador, the pilot project was entitled EDUCAME digital (EDUCATE ME digitally) which was embedded in a comprehensive state programme under the name *Ciudadanas 2.0 Digital Education for equality*. The pilot project was agreed between REPEM and the government of the province of Pichincha. The project was implemented by the non-profit organisation *Mujeres Transformando* in three areas:

1. Development of the process method in connection with the establishment of the website *Ciudadanas 2.0*.
2. Conducting two seminars for the training of trainers for the information centres in the Pedro Vicente canton and for the ten information centres of the provincial government in Conocoto.
3. Revision of the contents of the curricula of the information centres. The site, which also serves the training of trainers, contains information about Internet technology and gender, the knowledge society, politics, sexuality, etc.

A total of 40 women between the ages of 18 and 55 took part in the course in two groups on two days in the week and completed them successfully.

### **Regional virtual course on “Feminist, social and solidarity economy practices” (Diplomado Virtual Economía Feministas, Social y Solidaria)**

Based on the realisation that classical economics does not consider the work of women in subsistence and in the household as invisible labour, REPEM developed a virtual course on feminist, social and solidarity economy practices.

Objectives of the course are:

- to create awareness about economic processes with the consideration of specific feminist categories.
- to offer conceptual and methodological tools to analyse androcentric perspectives and apply a feminist perspective to the understanding of economic phenomena.
- to offer spaces for reflection to allow for new ideas with regard to the social perspectives of the economy.
- to stimulate reflection about the priorities of local development and ensure appropriate strategies for community work.

### **Methodology**

The course was set to run for 120 total hours, including 10 hours of conferences, 42 hours of individual work, 10 hours of introduction to the platform, 20 hours of forums and chats, 38 hours accompanied by a tutor. A virtual presentation was prepared by each lecturer and inserted in the documents of each session. In addition, a chat for questions was established and a discussion forum for each module. With the support of tutors, the participants developed a project proposal for its organisation. The Moodle platform was used for the technical tasks.

The participants were selected on the basis that they would participate actively in an organisation. This should also serve for the sustainability and transfer of the knowledge gained. In the course trials, 48 women and two men participated. 39 of them completed the course successfully. The remaining nine did not participate in the examination. The course gave participants the opportunity to recognise that the economy is important in order to achieve equality in the social sector and between men and women.

## **Regional virtual course on “Women in rural areas and climate change” (Diplomado Virtual Mujer Rural y Cambio climático)**

The environment and sustainable development are also important key components in the work of the network. REPEM made it its goal to establish awareness of environmental protection in all of its areas of work. As the UN envisages, environmental protection should be part of all the activities in economic and social development. If the environment is not protected, there can be no development, therefore the concept of *Buen Vivir* introduces a basic premise for REPEM that states that sustainable development should be a development designed to satisfy current needs without jeopardising the abilities of future generations.

The virtual diploma course on “Women in rural areas and climate change” covered the following topics with four modules:

1. Agriculture in the family and the impact of climate change on women and the indigenous rural population.
2. Theoretical framework for the understanding of gender issues and climate change.
3. Global strategies against climate change, international conventions, rights of women and indigenous peoples.
4. Public policy, climate change and development in Latin America, the role of civil society and sustainable development.

Each module was headed by a woman with specialist knowledge relevant to the subject and accompanied by virtual tutors.

This course had substantially the same structure as the course about feminist social and solidarity economy practices, with a focus on necessary changes with regard to the impact of climate change on the environment. The course should also create reflection and discussion opportunities in order to develop activities complementary to those of the state from the perspective of civil society. As part of the training the participants had to work on their own project proposals. The course was used by 50 women, 27 of them received a diploma.

## **Regional virtual course on “Education, gender and citizenship”**

The goal of this virtual course was to place in the hands of the participants concepts, materials and tools that qualify them at the individual and collective level to understand and to recognise the actions and projects

for social development. They should also be capable of questioning the objectives and projects that they develop in their organisations with regard to the human right to education for women and to develop projects for informal education in their communities.

The pilot course was conducted in Uruguay in 2013 by the organisation *Colectiva Mujeres* with 35 Afro-Uruguayan participants in two groups. The organisation is a member, at the national level, of the National Commission of Women for Democracy, Equality and Citizen Participation. The participants were domestic workers who had never had access to a computer. Workshops and joint project work was carried out because the women had no experience with computers. The workshops were conducted once a week in the afternoon, from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. in the centres established in the country by the Ministry of Culture and Education. Courses lasted seven weeks and connected computer use with topics that were relevant to this target group such as the rights of women, and the obligations of the state towards women, particularly Afro-Uruguayan laws that impact domestic workers, laws regarding health and reproduction, laws regarding the termination of unwanted pregnancies, affirmative laws for the Afro-Uruguayan population, civil rights, and the rights of Uruguayan women with African roots.

### **Taking stock: Challenges and Opportunities of digital education**

The REPEM programme for training in information and communication technologies with a gender perspective which was piloted from 2013 to 2015 in several countries, had significant results and effects on three levels.

1. For the actual target group – consisting of young adult women, most of whom had no previous computer or Internet experience – access was made easier, thereby enabling them to have new learning experiences and fun in dealing with communication and information technology services. Many women lost their fear of using these technologies. In the evaluations on the impact of the courses, the women stress that they have strengthened their individual and organisational abilities as well as the ability to reflect on their work and to talk to other women about it. The courses have also helped to develop learning programmes in their local environment. Participants confirmed the need for further regional courses as well. They had learned new skills, both technical and practical and at the conceptual level, which they found helpful in the strengthening of their own organisations. This means that the programme made an important contribution in terms of capacity

building at the level of the individual as well as for their organisational abilities.

2. For the trainers, the implementation of workshops facilitated the testing of the teaching of dealing with new technologies. The highly motivated participants were also a new experience for them. The fear of losing at the computer or doing something wrong with the computer was often mentioned.
3. For REPEM, the women's network, the programme has contributed to establishing a new profile. By providing a good quality range of digital education whose content is oriented to the core issues of the organisation, REPEM succeeded in advancing on new paths without abandoning the political perspective of adult education and lobbying for equality. It was not only important for REPEM to convey the technical skills but to combine the technical skills with content that deals with improving the situation of women.

The methods implemented allowed an increase in the achievement target by more than 100% (126 participants instead of 60). In the courses for Communications and Information Technology, 223 people participated, 150 had been expected. The training of teachers also exceeded the expected number of participants (287 in nine countries instead of 120 in six countries).

Overall, the REPEM project experience was, despite some technical difficulties, very positive. The processes and experiences were extensively documented in a brochure (REPEM, Colombia, November 2014: *Virtual REPEM Nuevos Caminos de Educación Popular Feminista con Tecnologías de Información y Comunicación TIC*).

In order to continue the work processes begun, REPEM has developed a strategy that consists of one person from the newly elected (in 2015) board being responsible for the programme follow-up in one region of Latin America. In the network's own magazine, *la red va*, updates on the implementation in the different countries and regions are kept current.

The cooperation with REPEM, with the coordinator, with individual members and member organisations, was designed by the DVV International Regional Office for Central America, headquartered in Mexico. The expertise of REPEM in gender issues has also been worthwhile for other DVV International partners, for example, when REPEM training seminars on issues of gender-sensitive project planning are carried out. Therefore the many years of support for the network and the trust which that established has created considerable added value for DVV International.

# Digitalising Lifelong Learning

*The objective of this article is to emphasise the importance and the contribution of modern technologies to learning, especially in the field of non-formal and informal learning that has the intention of enabling the learners to acquire knowledge on their own, thus fostering lifelong learning supported by digital media. It focuses on the experience gained by all the participants involved during the implementation of the project entitled “Lifelong Learning in Everybody’s Home”, by DVV International, implemented by its Project Bureau in Skopje, Macedonia. The article gives a chronological overview of the stages of the project implementation and their outcomes. It also observes the project effects in the post-project period and tries to give recommendations for the future of digitised learning.*

“Five years from now on the web for free you’ll be able to find the best lectures in the world. It will be better than any single university.”

**Bill Gates at the Technomy conference in Lake Tahoe, CA in 2010**

The potential of modern technologies to foster lifelong learning is indisputable. The Open Civic University for Lifelong Learning Joska Sveštarot – Strumica saw its first benefits back in 2005, when it introduced digital support for some of its programmes in order to help all those who wanted to attend a course but for various reasons, mostly time shortage or spatial distance, were not able to. Thus, a new experience started to manifest itself based on the use of eLearning applications, especially in the field of foreign languages, but also in some vocational training programmes with the purpose of helping the participants to learn on their own in cases where they were prevented from attending a lesson or even a whole course.

The real turning point was in 2009, when the Open Civic University was involved in the local action plan for employment, in which the focus was put on small businesses and on education, where particularly innovative ways and methods were taken into consideration, eLearning included, in regard of the fact that at that time 40% of the families in Macedonia were using the Internet, which indicated that a significant number of people were familiar with the benefits of this means of communication. So, we initiated a project for digitalised learning which would be supported by DVV International, the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (DVV). The project was named “Lifelong Learning in Everybody’s Home” and implemented by DVV International’s Project Bureau in Skopje, Macedonia.

The implementation of the project started in July 2009 with the equipment of three centres for eLearning in the facilities of the Open Civic Universities in Strumica, Ohrid and Prilep, and one on the premises of DVV International, Project Bureau Skopje. For most of the teaching and training staff it was quite a new experience, so the first stage of the project focused on training the trainers for eLearning. An expert in digitalised multimedia learning from the University of Goce Delčev in Štip was given the task of training the staff.

The training of trainers consisted mostly of the introduction of eLearning applications and their use in the process of teaching and learning. Thus, the most popular communication applications, their main features

and purposes, were thoroughly presented to the teachers and trainers. In the period from March to May 2010, five seminars were conducted during which fourteen trainers from the aforementioned centres learned how to use the web 2.0 technologies as well as additional applications that could contribute to creating a friendlier eLearning experience. The teachers and trainers were taught how to make best use of e-mail, browsers, text editing applications, presentation applications, applications for audio and video recording and editing, applications for creating lessons and tests, online communication applications such as Skype, blogging and wiki applications and social networks. Moreover, an additional list of more than 100 free eLearning applications was offered so that the trainers could find the best ones that would be most likely to fit their needs and those of the participants. They were also equipped with better computer skills related to more efficient teaching based on digital technologies. So they learned how to create various multimedia objects, how to upload them to the eLearning platform and how to use that platform.

At this stage, an eLearning platform was created with the domain name *elektronskoucenje.mk*, and there were three separate training sessions for the platform maintenance staff, which consisted of four persons skilled in IT, each responsible for one of the eLearning centres. They were taught how to cope with various problems that might occur regarding the responsiveness of the platform and its efficient working, as well as how to help and give support and instructions to the trainers and teachers.

The next stage of the project led to designing and adaptation of programmes for various courses which were provided by the aforementioned institutions. The goal of this stage was to adapt the programmes to the new eLearning environment, making it friendlier, because of the fact that this method of learning, although very efficient and cost effective, to a great extent is deficient in social interaction and is very demanding regarding the technical skills of the users. Therefore each programme had to integrate the use of web 2.0, which indicated that programmes should also incorporate acquisition of the necessary computer skills. At this stage, adaptation and designing covered the programmes for Basic English and German, Business English, Basic ICT and the course for Paramedics. The trainers and the teachers also worked on the preparation of multimedia materials based on digital technologies that should make the whole teaching and learning process more efficient and therefore more attractive. Numerous learning objects were created and uploaded to the eLearning platform, and even some of the existing course books, especially for foreign languages, were digitally redesigned and made interactive and all that was created on the basis of free applications offered on

the World Wide Web, such as Open Office, Power Presenter, or Question Tools.

The implementation of the project entered the stage of promotion and announcement, in which the project goals were presented to the public and simultaneously pilot courses were announced for Basic English and German, Business English, Basic ICT and Paramedics. Leaflets, brochures and posters were printed and distributed and announcements were broadcast on local media. In order to make the whole application process more direct, an online application form in several languages was created (<https://sites.google.com/site/rujssr/Home/za>).

The following stage of the project was dedicated to the pilot courses. The target groups consisted of the unemployed and the socially marginalised poor. The response was more than satisfactory. The groups mostly consisted of unemployed women lacking computer skills and knowledge of a foreign language. The initial stage of the training was mostly focused on acquisition of skills regarding applications used in the new technologies, such as applications for online communication, browsers and e-mail, text editing applications, social media, but also how to use the most essential computer features. Most of the participants were already familiar with most of the applications and had some basic computer skills, which made the whole introductory learning a lot easier.

In the next two months the training in all the courses was based on blended learning. There were online sessions once a week and the rest of the lectures were in the eLearning centres where the teaching and learning process was supported by digital technologies. At the next level of learning, some of the ICT course groups continued the whole training online, following it from their homes.

At the same time the courses were being enriched with digital materials that could be found on the web. The candidates also contributed with their own suggestions. Some lessons of the practical part of the Paramedic Course were recorded and were uploaded as video clips to YouTube and linked to the eLearning platform (<http://www.youtube.com/user/RuJSSr?feature=chck>). The candidates were motivated to use the online learning sources and to use the digital technologies in the process of learning.

The trainers also experienced a completely new approach to teaching which was full of challenges. They needed to acquire knowledge and skills to be able to prepare digitalised lessons and to handle them online. All that created a completely new perspective of teaching and learning with unlimited potential.

# Lifelong Learning in Everybody's Home!



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## **Post-project period**

The experience gathered during the implementation of this project spread later on over other course programmes. The following projects also incorporated the digital component of teaching and learning. The projects for reduction of unemployment through gaining competences for vocations sought for on the labour market should be mentioned here. Consequently, two such trainings were realised, for bakers and cooks. It was a new opportunity to design curricula that also incorporated digital learning. The experience gained was used to create new digitalised supporting materials which consisted of presentations, tests and video clips recorded during the practical exercises and uploaded to the platform. The candidates themselves contributed to a great extent to the promotion of eLearning by posting clips on social networks such as Facebook.

eLearning spread to the foreign language courses for youngsters as well, who seem to welcome this method of learning. They are already well equipped with the necessary skills so that they do not see any obstacles in the use of modern technologies.

We must admit though that distance learning online is not favoured by the majority of adult learners. The feeling of isolation and helplessness when coping with problems of modern technology, while working on their own, discourages the learners and makes the whole process of learning repelling sometimes. Nevertheless, digitally supported learning is being welcomed more and more by all generations, especially in the sphere of informal learning because of the fact that the presence of knowledge on the Internet and particularly on the social networks increases on a daily basis, which involves almost all ages and all walks of life. The proliferation of friendly Android applications on mobile phones creates a whole new potential for learning.

## **eFuture of lifelong learning**

The importance of digital learning is already widely recognised. The Open Civic Universities for Lifelong Learning in Macedonia developed a five-year strategy which emphasises eLearning, digital learning and the use of modern technologies in general as one of the key future activities, as digitisation is spreading over all segments of social life bringing immense potential for acquisition of knowledge. Moreover, according to a meta-analysis

and review of literature<sup>1</sup> conducted by the U.S. Department of Education, students in online learning conditions (especially under blended instruction but even in 100 percent online schools) performed better than those receiving face-to-face instruction in technology-unassisted educational programmes, which gives a lot of hope and credit to digitised learning.

Nowadays we are witnessing the proliferation of free applications designed for learning on Android operation systems, making it accessible through mobile devices, thus erasing any limits of time and space, making it mobile and accessible from anywhere in the world.

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1/ Evaluation of Evidence-Based Practices in Online Learning: A Meta-Analysis and Review of Online Learning Studies U.S. Department of Education Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development Policy and Program Studies Service, September 2010 (<https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/tech/evidence-based-practices/finalreport.pdf>)

# Digital Learning in Kosovo and Morocco: Bridging the Gap between Integration and Migration

*DVV International launched the pilot project “Digital learning prior to migration” in September 2014. The non-profit organisation, with its partners, carries out model courses for the use of the learning platform [ich-will-deutsch-lernen.de](http://ich-will-deutsch-lernen.de) at its locations in Kosovo and Morocco. The portal was developed by the German Adult Education Association (DVV) on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and supports the language, professional and social integration of immigrants to Germany. Thanks to the support of Deutsche Telekom AG, the learning portal could be implemented internationally. The target group includes both educationally disadvantaged learners and well-educated, mostly young professionals.*

*Many people from Kosovo and Morocco want to emigrate to Germany or join their relatives who are already living in Germany. Among the emigrants are many highly qualified professionals in*

*search of improved job prospects. First of all, the pilot project creates a transition between pre-integration in the country of origin and integration in Germany and should contribute as a permanent training offer to reduce disadvantages in education. The model courses in Kosovo and Morocco are a great success and have awoken an immense further demand. DVV International conducted train-the-trainer measures in Pristina, Casablanca and Rabat in order to strengthen the capacity building of teachers, to train multipliers and anchor digital learning permanently in everyday training.*

*Below, the director of the pilot project, Anja Thöne (DVV International) and the head of the learning portal, Celia Sokolowsky (DVV) report, in two articles, the objectives, the implementation and the effect of the project.*

# Increasing Awareness for eLearning and Improving Access to Education

## Pilot project for the promotion of media and eLearning competencies

As the leading professional organisation in the field of adult education and development cooperation, DVV International, the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (DVV), provides worldwide support for the development and expansion of sustainable structures of youth and adult education. DVV International meets the challenges of the digital turn through international cooperation. With the financial support of Deutsche Telekom AG, DVV International launched the pilot project “Digital learning prior to migration” using the learning platform *ich-will-deutsch-lernen.de* in Kosovo and Morocco. Since September 2014, within the framework of the courses of the pilot project, measures for the promotion of media and eLearning skills and to reduce educational disadvantage were realised. The portal was developed by the German Adult Education Association e.V. (DVV) on behalf of the German Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF). It provides immigrants and emigrants free usable learning material for the acquisition of language, professional and social competencies. In the pilot project, the learning portal was used internationally for the first time in courses and also established, for the first time, a bridge between integration and migration.

The project was monitored scientifically by the German Institute for Adult Education – Leibniz Institute for Lifelong Learning (DIE). The research institute conducted structured interviews at the project sites in Kosovo and in Morocco as well as in Bonn and obtained data through a questionnaire for participants.

## Project objectives and actions

Although a German test is mandatory for many migrants, attainable educational opportunities in their home countries in order to improve their knowledge of German before emigration are lacking. The free and flexible offers from the learning portal eliminate this lack and help to reduce disadvantages in education. In addition to the subject matter for the acquisition of German language skills, the portal also offers content on social issues in

Germany. Both elements are key components of a successful integration process. A unique feature is the ability to learn how to read and write for the first time, in German, the second language. With this offer, the portal is also directed at the illiterate, whose access to participation in society is improved through the learning portal. In Morocco the illiteracy rate is around 30 percent, and especially women in rural areas are affected. "Because for the user it's free and easily accessible," says Susanne Lattke from DIE, "the portal can contribute to improving access to learning opportunities for disadvantaged groups."

Kosovo and Morocco are characterised by high youth unemployment, low educational opportunities and low incomes. Many people want to emigrate to Germany or join their relatives who are already living in Germany. Among the emigrants are both educationally disadvantaged people who are running from poverty in their country as well as many highly skilled professionals who are looking for better job prospects. The pilot project is intended to work on different levels: for teachers and partners in the project countries, for well-educated young professionals and for the educationally disadvantaged learners target group. "Learning," says Leonore Delija, participant in a pilot course in Pristina, "is also an economic issue. Many in Kosovo cannot afford a course, so the free online offer helps."

The focus of the project is the goal of making a lasting contribution to the project locations for the building of ICT and eLearning skills at the micro, meso and macro levels and, through digital learning, to create low-threshold access to education. Also, the question of the potential of the portal to support emigrating professionals in pre-integration will be investigated by the pilot project. A key success factor of the pilot project is the close cooperation with regional and local partners. In Kosovo, the blended learning courses are to be found, among other places, in the Vocational Training Centre in Pristina, a Ministry of Labour establishment, and at the Youth Centre in Prizren, an independent establishment funded by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports. In Morocco, the courses are conducted in partnership with the *Universités pour tous*. These adult education centres were built up with the advice and support of DVV International as well as the German VHS (adult education centres) system. The successful implementation of the pilot courses is supported by the creation of an efficient classroom infrastructure.

### **Anchoring of digital learning in everyday further education**

DIE certifies that the learning opportunities of the portal are highly attractive, especially for young, qualified emigrants. Several hundred students

registered on the portal at the Kosovo site within the first few weeks. By the end of 2015, the *ich-will-deutsch-lernen.de* portal had been used by a total of 7,000 people from Kosovo – within the framework of the pilot classes of the project in Prizren and Pristina, but also far beyond that through being spread by the pool of ten specially trained tutors.

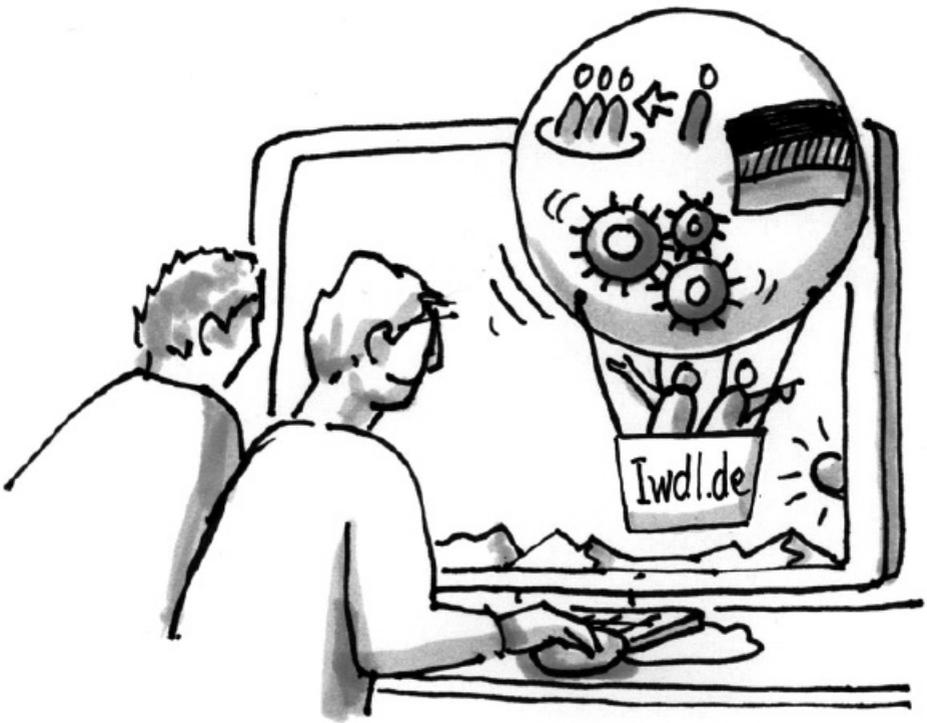
In Morocco, approximately 100 students have participated in the pilot courses to date. Many more users from Morocco registered by themselves on the portal, that is without attending a course. These are mainly students, employees of German companies or business partners of German companies, family members of Germans living abroad as well as others who are attempting to migrate to Germany. The average age of participants is 24; a large number of learners have a strong propensity to emigrate.

In addition to the ICT and eLearning skills of the course participants, the skills of teachers were strengthened. In Pristina, Casablanca and Rabat, train-the-trainer activities were held to prepare the pilot classes. They had to train teachers for the pilot courses, to train multipliers and anchor digital learning in everyday training measures.

At the macro level, DVV International was able to increase the awareness of the supportive partners in the countries of the relevance of eLearning in adult education. In Kosovo, for example, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and the Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sport, structures for the introduction of eLearning in adult education offers could be built up through the pilot project. This sustainable development which has already been introduced meets the recommendation of DIE: “As a web-based offer, the portal promotes – in addition to language learning – the media and eLearning competence of learners as well as teachers. (...) Due to high demand on the one hand as well as the high acceptance among users, it is recommended that the portal in the project countries be maintained.” (Susanne Lattke DIE). The sustainability of the pilot project is enhanced by the shared commitment of business and civil society. All stakeholders and partners of the pilot project benefit from the work and expertise loop in digital learning.

Further information about the project can also be found in: Sokolowsky, Celia: *Zuwanderung vorbereiten und Deutschlernen ermöglichen*. In: *diskurs*. Journal of the German Adult Education Association e.V. Bonn, June 2015. Thöne, Anja: *Marokko und Kosovo: Digitale Wege in der Vorintegration*. Ibid.

More information about the learning portal and the project can be found at: [www.ich-will-deutsch-lernen.de](http://www.ich-will-deutsch-lernen.de) and [www.dvv-international.de](http://www.dvv-international.de)



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# Preparing for Migration and Making Learning German Online Possible

## The learning portal *ich-will-deutsch-lernen.de*

Since August 2013, *ich-will-deutsch-lernen.de* has been the learning portal for German as a second language, which was developed by the German Adult Education Association (DVV) for the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) to support the language and social and professional integration of immigrants. In addition to general everyday language learning for beginners and intermediates (levels A1-B1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages), the portal is characterised by more learning areas for professional and occupational German language and literacy in German as a second language. With more than 11,000 exercises and versatile features, it offers the best conditions for individual and self-directed learning. In total, 120,000 users have already registered and currently around 17,000 are active on the portal and are supported by around 1500 registered tutors. The latter are mostly teachers in adult education centre courses in Germany, who guide their own study group. For learners not bound to a course, DVV also provides a group of tutors who act as contacts and facilitators for the individual learners, correct exercises, give feedback on the learning process and motivate them to continue learning. The main target group of the portal is the immigrant population that already resides in Germany where they are learning German. But the migration process begins in the countries of origin, and so it is hardly surprising that a growing group of people abroad connect to *ich-will-deutsch-lernen.de* in order to prepare for migration. The largest groups of individual learners abroad not bound to a course are in Southern and Eastern Europe, but in the Arabic-speaking world as well a growing number of people learn German through the portal.

Simple German language skills, which correspond to the A1 level of the CEFR, must be demonstrated by migrants in the context of family reunification by taking a written exam. Especially for educationally disadvantaged people, this requirement in the countries of origin sets a high hurdle, particularly since preparatory language courses are often only offered in big cities and these are correspondingly expensive. With Kosovo and Morocco, two countries were selected out of which a significant migration to Germany takes place and where strong foundations for the implementa-

tion of the pilot project have been established through the successful work of the DVV International offices.

In the fall of 2014, in Pristina, Casablanca and Rabat, multi-day teacher trainings for *ich-will-deutsch-lernen.de* took place in order to make selected teachers familiar with the functionalities and contents of the portal and develop didactic concepts for the model classes. It was found that the different local conditions suggest various course formats. Thus the proliferation of computers and Internet connections in homes favours the use of self-learning media in Kosovo. The learning abilities and motivations of the participants (e.g. previous language learning experience, specific migration intention) also influence the course planning. On one hand, successful courses in great demand were established which, after an intensive introductory phase, are exclusively accompanied on the portal online. Other courses use the portal in the classroom and at home for working on what has been taught. Courses were offered at the Vocational Educational Centre in Pristina and the Prizren Youth Centre in Kosovo as well as in Morocco at the *Universités pour tous* (adult education centres) in Rabat and Casablanca. The teachers also act as multipliers and present *ich-will-deutsch-lernen.de* to interested bodies and educational institutions. The number of learners from the pilot locations has therefore grown much more than just the number of participants in the courses; even more teachers have been added and support their learning group abroad as tutors. The consistently positive feedback and strong interest in the courses and the learning portal itself suggest that *ich-will-deutsch-lernen.de* is perceived as a useful option for language education and preparation for migration.

An app for the beginner course on the *ich-will-deutsch-lernen.de* portal was developed with the support of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research in order to provide, in particular, refugees in Germany with a first opportunity for language acquisition. The app, named “Einstieg Deutsch” (Beginner’s German), can also be used on mobile devices offline and comes complete with nine languages (among others, Arabic, Farsi, Pashto). Of course it is also available for free for other user groups with Android and iOS operating systems.

# Grannies in a Digital World

## IT learning for the Elderly: Challenges and Innovative Practices

*Today we all live in a digitalised world. In order to use this fact for the mutual development of society, all its members should have access to information technology (IT) and benefit from it. In this regard, elderly people remain one of the excluded groups. Effective support for elderly people in the modern world cannot be limited to pecuniary aid and healthcare measures. It is important to create conditions for the active involvement of elderly people in all spheres of social life which today are closely connected with information technology. Information technology, when taught correctly to elderly adults, in combination with other skills, can play an important role in bettering the quality of their lives. The article describes a DVV International IT training project for the elderly in Georgia.*

“...countries with ageing populations ... have to support older people so as to remove barriers to their full participation in society while protecting their rights and dignity”<sup>1</sup>

**UN Secretary General**

### **Grandmother Eliso’s difficult day**

73 year-old Eliso lives alone in the village of Leliani, Georgia. Her children grew up, married and live in the city. Sometimes they come to visit her and bring the grandchildren. But often grandmother Eliso feels lonely. Once, her children arranged a family council to discuss how to make their grandmother happy.

The eldest son came up with an idea: “Let’s give her a computer.”

“A computer?” Everyone was surprised. “But grandmother Eliso doesn’t know how to work on a computer. And what will she do with it?”

“She can play computer games,” said the grandson.

“Or download old songs from the Internet and interesting recipes,” added the wife of the eldest son.

“Also watch the weather forecast, and contact her sister in Greece,” said the wife of the younger son.

A week later the eldest son brought her a new computer. Frankly, grandmother Eliso had no idea what to do with this metal box. But she loved her children and did not want to upset them – she just remained silent.

“This is a processor, this is a monitor, this is a keyboard, and this is a mouse. You have to press this button and the computer will start working. Again: this button must be pressed, to make computer work,” muttered the son. “Click here and the Internet will start. You have to click the mouse. This is the mouse, remember please!” In Eliso’s house there sometimes were mice and she was used to them. And this strange mouse looked so unusual.

“Well, now you try,” said the son, and turned the computer off and on again. Grandmother Eliso hesitantly pressed the button. The word “Hello” appeared on the screen. “Hello,” answered grandmother Eliso politely. She

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1/ UN Secretary General Report to Member States on the Millennium Development Goals and new development framework “A life of dignity for all: accelerating progress towards the Millennium Development Goals and advancing the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015”, July 2013

preferred to address a stranger officially. Eliso moved the mouse back and forth. The arrow on the screen obediently began moving.

“Now click on the Internet icon,” said the son.

“I’m sorry, what?”

“Click, click on the left mouse button twice.”

But the arrow on the screen stopped dead.

“Oh, the computer froze!” said the son angrily.

“What???”

“Don’t you see that your computer froze? This happens sometimes.”

Frankly, grandmother Eliso did not see this. In her opinion the computer did not freeze, it was on the table as warm as before. Only the refrigerator had a freezer.

Her son clicked on some buttons and seemed to be unhappy. And then he said: “We have to eliminate the virus!! Oh, those hackers!!”

Grandmother did not dare to ask who hackers are. One thing was obvious: the computer had a virus. Grandma was not sure whether the virus is transmitted to man, like the flu or other illness, but felt that it is better not to ask now. So she quietly got up, leaving her son alone with the computer, went into the bedroom and lay down on the bed.

## **Ageing in Georgia**

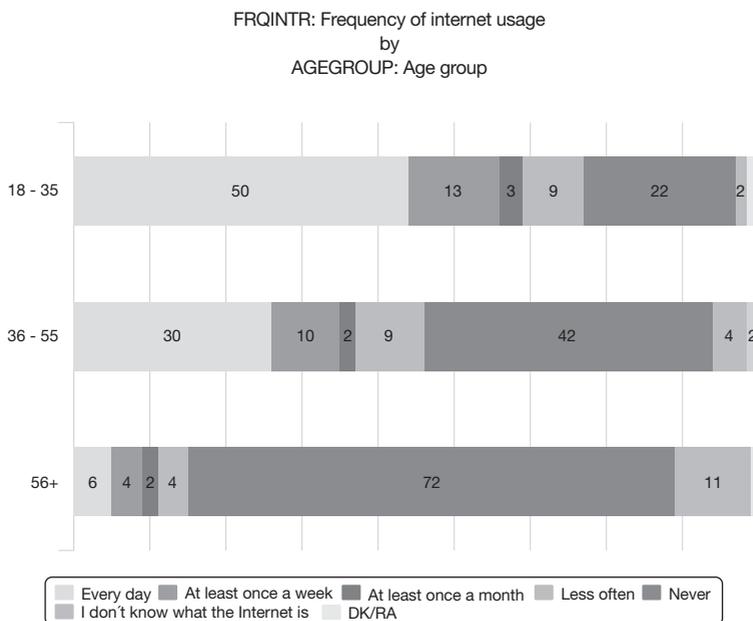
Georgia is ageing fast. With a population of 4.3 million (2010), 22% of the total population are 65 and older and 41.5% are 50 and older. According to experts’ estimation, by 2050 Georgia is expected to have 35% of its people over 65. Older people in Georgia represent one of the most vulnerable groups, although their problems and needs are not prioritised, either by the government or by civil society. With the help and assistance of community based organisations in regions of Georgia, DVV International distributed questionnaires to older people to help them to describe the situation and context they are living in. In total, 60 persons participated in the process. Commonalities in the description of their feelings are not difficult to find: the vast majority of the respondents described feelings of hopelessness and helplessness, stress and depression, unhappiness, nervousness, isolation, being a burden to the family and abandonment or neglect by the government. Old people in Georgia have all the preconditions to justify the words by Jonathan Swift: “Everybody wants to live forever, but nobody wants to grow old”, because becoming older brings them lots of challenges and leads to helplessness and vulnerability. Old people experience psychological problems as the result of bad socio-economic conditions, limited financial resources, insufficient healthcare and violation

of their rights at the everyday level. This negatively influences their health status, life-expectancy and well-being in general. Often elderly people are excluded from many important developments in society and in a way this is happening due to the lack of information which, in the modern world, is presented mainly by and through the Internet.

## Elderly in the eSociety

eLearning, eGovernment, eBanking, eShopping, etc., are developing more and more in the modern world and in the near future individual well-being and social progress in society will depend on Internet technology if all citizens have access and are ready to participate and nobody is excluded. In this regard the relevant figures in Georgia are alarming. According to available data 72% of elderly people (56 years old and above) in Georgia have never used the Internet<sup>2</sup>.

### Caucasus Barometer 2013 Georgia



<sup>2/</sup> <http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2013ge/FRQINTR-by-AGEGROUP/>

According to the stereotype which exists in our society, older people can't cope with technology. They can't hack the latest mobile phone or music player, they don't like looking at websites, they've never blogged.

Excluded from the Internet, these people have limited possibilities to get diverse information on the events happening in their country and worldwide and have to rely on local mass-media which sometimes is only one-sided and tendentious.

On the other hand, developing IT skills for older people combats the problem of unequal access to information sources, isolation and loneliness and gives them new chances for social inclusion. They get the opportunity to be updated and receive diversified information on events ongoing all over the world, to communicate with their relatives and children who have lived abroad for many years. "Older people can gain a wide range of benefits from access to and use of the Internet – from access to information and browsing interests, through to completing government and agency information forms, for shopping and banking online, to specific email exchange, or setting up blogs and wikis to share information and have discussions online<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, by developing IT skills elderly people develop their cognitive and sensory skills, not only for daily life but for their integration into the labour market: Computer and Internet use seems to contribute to older adults' wellbeing and sense of empowerment by affecting their interpersonal interactions, promoting their cognitive functioning and contributing to their experience of control and independence."<sup>4</sup>

### **Courses for elderly people at adult education centres**

People who are accustomed to older technologies often are not aware of the possibilities of new technologies and this severely limits their ability to contribute to social changes in the society and the discussion concerning them. Moreover, even the word "computer" appalls many elderly people! The story of grandma Eliso perfectly illustrates the challenges and fears old people have in relation to computer technology. The question is: How to simplify the whole process for them? How to organise the teaching process in order to involve them in the modern digital world?

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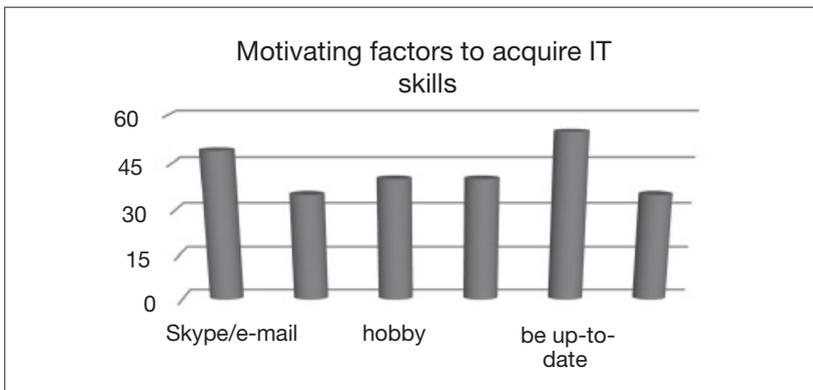
3/ Richards, S. (2006) Net benefits: older people and the Internet. Cardiff: Welsh Consumer Council.

4/ Naumanen, M. and Tukiainen, M. (2010) 'Practices in old age ICT education three contexts considered: clubs, courses and home teaching'. In Spector, J.M., Ifenthaler, D., Isaías, P., Kinshuk and D. Sampson, D. (eds.) Learning and Instruction in the Digital Age. New York: Springer.

DVV International, the Institute for International Cooperation of the German Adult Education Association (DVV), has been trying to address these questions for years. With the support of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the organisation is implementing activities for adults, including the elderly, providing them with different programmes contributing to development of new skills and abilities which enable the beneficiaries to more actively participate in the life of their respective communities. Several such initiatives represent a part of some bigger projects funded by the European Commission in support of Adult Education, LLL and elderly people. They influence traditional views and challenge negative perceptions of ageing by acknowledging the capacities of older people and the diversity of their experience.

From 2005-2015, nine adult education centres were founded by DVV International in various regions of Georgia with the overall aim to establish a system of non-formal education in the country, support lifelong learning and the constant development of all citizens despite their age. Every year more than 7000 people benefit from participation in different educational programmes, acquiring new skills, improving their social status and well-being. Approximately 35% of the beneficiaries are elderly people (from 60 to 87 years old).

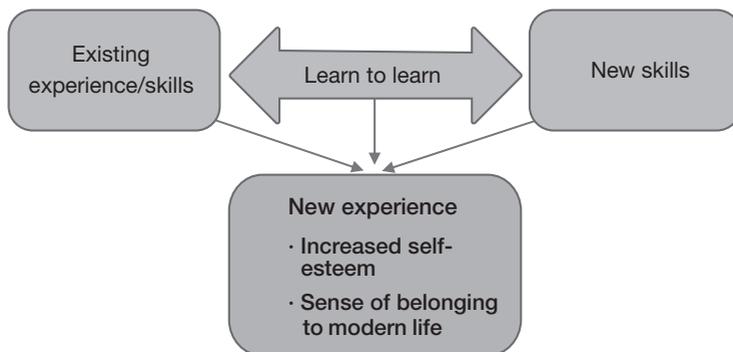
DVV International adult education centres conducted small-scale research to verify what is motivating our elderly students (60-80 years old) to attend IT courses. The results are as follows (multiple answers were allowed): communicating to children, relatives and friends via Skype and e-mail – 49%; reading news, political and economic information – 35%; searching for hobby-related information – 40%; searching for learning/job information – 40%; to be closer to modern life – 65%; searching for medical information – 35%.





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Using adult education methods and the experiences of the German adult education system, DVV International established adult education centres in Georgia and developed a special educational package for elderly people, driven by the idea that teaching only IT skills is not effective and does not fully address the needs and concerns of the beneficiaries in this age group. It is easier to convince elderly people to learn computer programmes (something which they don't know) if it goes together with handicrafts, culinary, literature, folk song programmes (something they know well), combined with teaching them how to learn and how to bridge these two. Schematically, the approach looks as follows:



Four times a week, elderly students come to adult education centres for four hours. Within this time they are offered a different combination of educational courses, e.g.: 1. culinary – computer – medical counselling; 2. handicrafts – IT – literature programme; 3. sport programme – IT – public meeting (with famous people, actors, travellers, etc. or local self-government); 4. agriculture – IT – chess classes. When the first step in IT courses is achieved and the beneficiaries can independently (or jointly, in a group) search the Internet, they are asked to find information, e.g. on new culinary recipes or the newest information in agriculture. Little by little, tasks become more difficult and complex (e.g. preparation of a presentation, finding friends of their age abroad...) but the beneficiaries feel confident to be able to fulfil them. They are not scared to “push the buttons” any more. On the contrary, they feel the thrill of a new and important experience and are eager to learn more! Many of the elderly beneficiaries regard the adult education centre as a special social community and their sense of belonging to it additionally motivates them to come and to learn.

The educational package was developed jointly by adult educators and psychologists taking into consideration the peculiarities of old age.

Groups are small (max 8-10 persons) and teachers are specially trained to correctly address the needs of the elderly beneficiaries. The ultimate goal is not simply to teach them IT skills but to facilitate their social adaptation and realisation of creative skills.

Acknowledging the reality that society has become more age-segregated, providing very little opportunity for interaction between the generations, DVV International established adult education centres in order to strive to provide a venue for regular contact and to encourage people of different generations to help each other. They purposefully bring together people of different generations in mutually beneficial activities, which give them the possibility to share their talents and resources, supporting each other in relationships that benefit both the individuals and the community. An intergenerational approach plays a crucial role in the implementation of the activities as they provide a model for balancing the knowledge of older adults in youth community education. Young people train older people in IT skills – in return older people train them in handicrafts, agriculture, folk arts, culinary skills, etc.

Another important issue is which methods to use when teaching the elderly. Educational programmes of the adult education centres use methods which are sometimes described as “edutainment”. These methods present serious educational and psychological contents in an exciting, playful and interactive way. Playing, learning and enjoying go together and create a learner friendly atmosphere, giving elderly people the opportunity to relieve stress and to feel happy to learn. One of the beneficiaries (a 76 year old woman) once told me proudly: “When I first came here to computer courses my grandchildren laughed at me. But I succeeded and even received a certificate! You know what my plans are now? I’m going to attend English classes and small business courses in agriculture. I would love to see my grandchildren’s eyes when I show them my new certificates!”

Educational packages for older adults strengthen participants’ self-esteem and sense of identity. This, in its turn, reduces the isolation of older citizens and the depressive mood which is always a source of social problems. New IT, vocational and artistic skills acquired by the participants enable them increase their social activity and their readiness to solve their own problems, using their own potential and resources.

Use of IT also brings the beneficiaries closer to public administration and vice versa. By having direct contact with local municipalities through the Internet, the elderly can ask questions, send their requests and receive answers in a relatively short time. There are examples of small advocacy initiatives developed by elderly attendees of adult education centres which were positively sold to the local municipalities through the Internet connection.

Among those who successfully attended the DVV International adult education centres' education programme for elderly adults (consisting of one or two vocational courses, IT lessons and lessons in the arts), after 6 months, the percentage of absolute computer non-users in selected locations went down from 70% to 24%.

### **The end of the old story and the beginning of a new one**

Remember grandma Eliso we mentioned in the beginning of the article? The next day she invited her neighbour and friend Manana for tea in order to tell her about the difficult day, about the mouse which doesn't run away, severe hackers and viruses that live inside the computer. But Manana did not seem scared. In her own words she is "an advanced user" (again, new words for Eliso!). Since the previous month she had been attending an educational programme of the DVV International adult education centre which includes computer courses. Now the computer is one of her friends and this friendship is quite beneficial. After listening to her friend, Eliso decided to go with her to a DVV International centre and try...!

# List of authors



**Christian Alscher** studied at the University Bonn and holds a Diploma in Geography. After starting his career at the German Rector's Conference he is now working as a technical advisor at the GIZ Academy for International Cooperation.



**Santiago Amaya** was born in Columbia. He studied Pedagogy, Musicology and Romance Philology at Cologne University. He works as a technical advisor at the GIZ Academy for International Cooperation and is an expert in the field of technical enhanced learning.



**Tania Bermann** has been the Policy Officer of the European Association for the Education of Adults since February 2014. Previously she worked in other European umbrella organisations, as President of the Erasmus Student Network and as Communication Officer of the LifeLong Learning Platform (formerly called EUCIS-LLL). She is French and Luxembourgish and studied Communication and Cultural Management in Paris, Vienna and Madrid, before graduating in European Studies from the University of Saint-Louis in Brussels.



**Stojan Dončevski** is Director of Open Civic University for Life-long Learning Joska Sveštarot – Strumica, Macedonia, institution for non-formal education. He has been involved in non-formal education since 1992, especially in the field of foreign languages. He is also the designer of the eLearning project "Lifelong Learning in Everybody's Home". Stojan Dončevski has been involved in projects based on adult education for various target groups since 1997.



**Gina Ebner** is Secretary General of the EAEA (European Association for the Education of Adults). Before that, she worked as a language teaching assistant in England, a trainer for German and English at different adult education institutes in Vienna (where she's from) and as a pedagogical manager for a vocational training institute in Austria. After moving to Brussels, she was a project manager at EUROCADRES (Council for European professional and managerial staff) until transferring to the EAEA. From 2008 to 2013 she was also President of the European Civil Society Platform on Lifelong Learning (EUCIS LLL).



**Mario Ganz**, Dipl.-Päd., studied Pedagogy with a specialisation in adult education at the University of Duisburg-Essen. He is a scientific staff member at the University of Kaiserslautern. He works in the field of European adult education and is engaged in the German distance master for adult education. His fields of work are adult education, recognition and validation of prior learning, competences and the open movement as well as digital media in education.



**Nikola Hüging** is an anthropologist, holds a Masters in Adult Education and is an expert in didactics and methodology. She works as technical advisor at the GIZ Academy for International Cooperation.



**Christoph Köck**, Dr., studied European Ethnology, Nordic Philology and Political Science in Münster, Germany and Lund, Sweden. He has worked at the Westphalian Open-Air Museum Detmold and at the University of Munich. From 2001-2010 he was Consultant for Quality Development as well as for Cultural and Social Education at the Bavarian Adult Education Association. From 2010-2013 he served as Educational Director of the Hessian Adult Education Association, and has been the Director of the Association since 2013. He has taught over the years at various universities (Munich/LMU, Zurich/UZH, Innsbruck, Turku, Lund, Mainz). Pedagogical work priorities: Interculturalism, General Studies, Expanded Learning Environments.



**Le Huy Lam** is the Director of the SEAMEO Regional Centre in Lifelong Learning (SEAMEO CELLL), based in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. He has a background in teaching English language skills and Teaching with Technology. His experience involves teacher-training, syllabus design and programme planning and management. His main interests are lifelong learning literature and teaching methodology, especially teaching and learning enhancement through effective use of technology.



**Guenter Podlacha**, Dr., heads the “Competence Centre on Methodology and Didactics in Continuing Education” at the GIZ Academy for International Cooperation. He started his eCareer more than 20 years ago in implementing Web-based information systems in forestry and environmental protection.



**Matthias Rohs**, Dr., is Assistant Professor of Adult Education at the University of Kaiserslautern and researcher at the German Institute of Adult Education. After his study of Educational Sciences, Sociology and Psychology at Freie University Berlin he worked as Research Assistant at different research institutes and universities in Germany and Switzerland. His research focuses on learning of adults with digital media, especially distance and informal learning, as well as professional development.



**Lali Santeladze** is an educational expert with 15 years of experience working in the education sector. She holds a Master in Journalism and Media Studies and a Master in Foreign Economic Relations. From 2000-2010 she was Education Project Manager/Education Project Coordinator of the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Georgia representative office. In 2009 she worked for the NRC office in Lebanon and coordinated the project on education for Iraqi youth. For several years she worked as Regional Training Officer for the Caucasus countries, as well as being responsible for the staff capacity building programme in Oslo. She is author/editor of a number of books on education and training of teachers, youth and vulnerable groups. Since January 2010, Ms. Santeladze has been working as Country Director of the DVV International office in Georgia.



**Beate Schmidt-Behlau, Dr.**, is currently Senior Desk Officer for Latin America at DVV International headquarters in Bonn. She joined the organisation in 2002 and since then has held different positions inside the organisation, including experience as Director of the regional office for South Eastern Europe in Sarajevo. Her educational background is a diploma in educational sciences and a PHD from the universities of Hamburg and Essen. Focus of her work is Human Rights, Intercultural Learning and Active Citizenship.



**Celia Sokolovsky** heads the project *Ich will Deutsch lernen* for the German Adult Education Association e.V. in Bonn. As a linguist and specialist in didactics, she developed curricula and learning/teaching materials for German as a second language and did research on language policy issues. For many years she taught German as a second language and worked in teacher training for adult education centres and universities.



**Anja Thöne** is the Senior Marketing Manager at DVV International, German Adult Education Association (DVV), in Bonn. The historian and fundraising manager has worked for more than 15 years in marketing for various non-profit organisations in the fields of education and international cooperation. Anja Thöne is the director of the pilot project "Digital Learning prior to migration" implemented in Kosovo and Morocco. She was responsible for the development of the first VHS brand in Germany. Anja Thöne is a lecturer for Social Marketing in the Department of Economic and Social Sciences at the University of Applied Sciences Koblenz.

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DVV International  
Obere Wilhelmstraße 32  
53225 Bonn  
Germany

Tel.: +49 (0)228 97569-0  
Fax: +49 (0)228 97569-55  
[info@dvv-international.de](mailto:info@dvv-international.de)  
[www.dvv-international.de](http://www.dvv-international.de)

