IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON LEARNING PARADIGMS AND TEACHING PRACTICES

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Abstract: The panel will seek answers to various questions related to the impact of technology on learning by presenting examples of particular experiences and then extrapolating in order to arrive to common conclusions or identify and reason controversial opinions.

Key words: e-learning; ethical education; web-based communities; distance education; course management systems; telework.

1. INTRODUCTION

Will media and technology influence learning? There has been an on-going debate in the educational community and views ranging between the two extremes of the continuum have been expressed. The globalization of the society and the remarkable developments in the ICT and global networking have given birth to the e-learning phenomena, which broadens the horizons of the traditional learning and creates opportunities, but also challenges, for all stakeholders in the teaching and learning process. Researchers and practitioners argue about pro's and con's of e-learning, but most are convinced that in order to ensure good quality of learning a whole range of issues have to be carefully considered with the learner in mind and a delicate balance of traditional and e-learning approaches has to be achieved.

The discussion about the impact of technology on learning paradigms and teaching practices raises a number of questions, among which: What is good learning? What should the role of the teacher in e-learning be? What

makes a good e-teacher? What are the difficulties in e-learning—for the teacher, for the students? What kinds of methods should be used and which are most effective? How to create a student driven environment? How does the technical learning environment increase student's capability? Can the student in a "happy" learning environment do more in e-learning framework than in a traditional classroom? How does the teacher avoid media hype?

This panel will seek answers to such questions by presenting examples of particular experiences and then extrapolating in order to arrive to common conclusions or identify and reason controversial opinions.

Following are four contributions, highlighting panelists' views and concrete experiences. The first one discusses e-learning issues for advanced technical topics. The second focuses on e-learning tools—it describes TeleCAD, an Internet based course management system, and comments on its usability and evaluation. The third entry presents a technology enhanced learning experience in which researchers, teachers and young students collaborate and learn together. Reflections about the impact on learning and teaching practices in such technology rich environment are made. The fourth entry provides a more general stand of e-learning, addressing its human and ethical dimension.

The four contributions focus on different aspects of e-learning and illustrate various approaches to utilize technology in order to enhance and support learning. We believe, though, that each of them illustrates the idea that the key to producing good quality of learning is in the right mix of traditional and innovative pedagogical approaches, from the one hand, and, supporting technology and learning services, from another, both centered on the needs and specifics of the learner. Though the role of technology is supportive and not central in learning, the appropriate choice of technology *can* facilitate learning and enrich learners' experiences.

Designing an effective technology enhanced learning environment is a difficult task, which could be eased by employing modern e-learning standards and by using relevant support tools, including course and content management systems.