

Chapter 8

E-Learning Challenges in the European Knowledge- Based Society: Romania Case Study

Cristina Barna

Spiru Haret University, Romania

Manuela Epure

Spiru Haret University, Romania

Ruxandra Vasilescu

Spiru Haret University, Romania

ABSTRACT

In the context of 2009 European Year of Innovation and Creativity, this chapter focuses on ICT for innovation as a key challenge in the knowledge-based society. Today we are facing the growing complexity of the e-learning phenomenon and its role as a basic tool for high quality education and training. The authors approach the importance of e-learning in the European Lifelong Learning Program 2007 – 2013, the conceptual framework of e-learning, the characteristics of a teaching philosophy that provides stability, continuity and long-term guidance in the e-learning environment, the imperative of quality assurance and improvement in e-learning– a new paradigm in higher education systems, and the interdependencies between e-learning, e-inclusion and e-working. The Romanian case is presented as a comparative study with the EU and US standards in higher education.

INTRODUCTION

The chapter presents the e-learning challenges in the European knowledge-based society in the context of relaunching Lisbon growth and jobs strategy, of the European Lifelong Learning

Program 2007 – 2013, and of the 2009 European Year of Innovation and Creativity. The main objectives of the chapter are the awareness of the e-learning role for the success of the European Lifelong Learning Program 2007 – 2013, and for innovation in education as a key challenge in the knowledge-based society. We deal with the

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conceptual framework for e-learning: the terms used, the broad definition of the concept, the most recent definitions such as the definition of the Commission of the European Communities 2008, the definition of Webopedia Computer Dictionary 2009, the definition of BNET Business Dictionary 2009, the definition of MSN Encarta 2009, proposing also a teaching statement philosophy adapted to the e-learning environment characteristics of teaching. The Chapter also includes discussions on the Romanian case, a case study about understanding the imperative of quality assurance in e-learning. We conclude with a research on a future paradigm: social e-learning, which means setting up a socially inclusive e-learning environment within the European Union context. An important challenge is to direct e-learning to e-inclusion and to understand the interdependencies between e-learning and e-working.

MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

E-Learning: A Key Challenge in the European Lifelong Learning Program 2007-2013

The year 2009 is the European Year of Innovation and Creativity and it stays under the sign of the overall framework of several EU policy initiatives fostering Creativity and Innovation, amongst which the *European policy cooperation in Education and Training* has a leading place. It is common knowledge that the successful education and training in the knowledge-based society depend more and more on the innovative use of ICT. A remarkable progress in the use of ICT for education and training across Europe over the past few years should be pointed out: major benefits of ICT were seen in schools, but also in higher education (for distance learning, virtual mobility and ongoing professional development) and in big companies and public administrations as shown by e-learning in the workplace. ICT has played a

very important role in enhancing creativity and innovation in learning.

Four years after it was relaunched in 2005, the *Lisbon growth and jobs strategy* demonstrated that it is working, but the European Union must continue the reforms in order to succeed in a knowledge-based society marked by the acceleration of the globalization phenomenon. Definitely, the “*triangle of learning*” (*education – research – innovation*) plays a major role for a positive trend in growth and job opportunities. But what does the *New Lisbon Strategy* involve in fact? – an increased research development and innovation, a more dynamic business environment, *investing in people*, and greening up the economy. With reference to the objective of investing in people, we must consider besides more and better jobs, *lifelong learning* as essential, therefore we understand *e-learning* as the core of the lifelong learning concept.

The European Union strategic framework of co-operation in the fields of education and training is represented by the agreements of the 10-year work program of the *European Commission, Education and Training 2010* which are implemented through the open method of coordination. The *Education and Training 2010 Work Program* of the European Commission has made a vital contribution towards achieving the main objectives of the Lisbon Strategy: growth and jobs working together for Europe’s future. The conclusions of the Spring 2007 European Council described education and training as prerequisites for a well-functioning knowledge triangle (education - research - innovation) which plays a key role in boosting growth and jobs. In this context, of education seen as booster for growth and jobs and as the key to increasing opportunities for individuals and for creating a new Meta framework of levels in Europe, we will further analyze the e-learning phenomenon.

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