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Changing the trajectory - An Introduction

Digital technologies are radically changing the landscape of education and training. Open educational resources (OER), ‘Massive Open Online Courses’ (MOOCs) and the question of how to recognize open learning in formal education are challenging traditional models and practices.

These global changes are having an increasing impact on education and training institutions, teachers, learners and publishers. With the introduction of MOOCs in recent years and the uptake of open education resources, open education at large and its quality have become an issue of major importance for education and training institutions, policies and professionals. Studying and learning have evolved from closed to open processes, which demand greater self-organization skills, higher levels of media literacy and new models of support and organization. Education institutions, professionals, policy makers, public authorities for formal education as well as non-formal training providers and learners are discovering the benefits of opening up learning opportunities.

However, quality evaluation and development models have not yet matured enough in order to provide guidance for open learning models to all stakeholders how to shape content and learning environments or provide effective support for institutions and educators. Uncertainty is growing as to whether the new open learning environments are fit to lead the European learning revolution needed for the 21st century. In order to make open learning and education more relevant and feasible for organizations as well as learners, innovations have to be combined with well-proven learning traditions and flexible quality standards. In addition new models for recognition of open learning are needed: education institutions need a better understanding of how open education processes can contribute to excellent learning and high quality education provision, and certification schemes need to incorporate more flexible concepts of open education.

The international EIF / LINQ Conference 2014 addressed innovations and quality in lifelong learning, education and training: potential points of access to this field include new learning methods and design, technology-enhanced learning, quality standards and certification, human resources development, competences and skills, digital resources, learning materials, and online collaboration and communities in particular in the light of the European Commission’s Opening up education initiative launched in 2013.
Thus, the book contributes to the current debate on one of the greatest challenges in today’s quality development for education and training: How to achieve quality for opening up education?

The presented articles are the result of the Open Calls for Papers, Projects and Workshops issued by the international EIF / LINQ Conference 2014. EIF, an annual event of the European Foundation for Quality in e-Learning, and LINQ, a leading annual European and international Conference on Learning Innovations and Learning Quality, have joined forces in the year 2014 to shape the 2014 Mega Event for Quality and Innovation in education and learning: The EIF / LINQ Conference 2014 that took place in Crete, Greece, from 7th to 9th of May 2014.

The international EIF / LINQ Conference 2014 addressed these issues in particular in the light of the European Commission’s Opening up education initiative launched in 2013. Together with colleagues from leading organizations in the field of quality and innovation in education, such as ICDE, OCW-C, Creative Commons, EDEN, EUA, ENQA, Commonwealth of Learning, EURASHE, ESU, the European Commission as well as many innovative projects, conference participants could discuss the implications of openness on quality in e-learning and take steps to strengthen cooperation between stakeholders.

The papers, projects and workshops address in particular following one or more of the following nine topics:

- Quality indicators and methods to describe, measure and evaluate quality for open education, OER and MOOCs
- Conceptual contributions on new and innovative quality models, methodologies, standards and approaches for e-learning and open education
- Experiences and reports from practice with implementation of quality approaches for open education
- Required competences by institutions as well as by learners for designing, practicing and improving open learning with high quality
- Local, national, regional and European quality projects in the field of the conference
- Methodologies for and experience of recognition of open learning in formal education and training
- Certification of e-learning and open education in institutions, programs and courses
- Integrated innovation and quality approaches
Global aspects of high-quality Open Education (e.g. collaborations, comparative studies, cultural aspects)

The scientific articles and interactive workshop sessions published in this book are the selected submissions of applicants from over 30 countries received upon the Open Call for Papers and the Open Call for Workshops issued by the International Conference EIF / LINQ 2014: They were reviewed by the international scientific Programme Committee of EIF / LINQ 2014 in double-blind peer reviews and selected according the review results. In addition all submissions from projects received upon the Open Call for Projects also issued by EIF / LINQ 2014 and selected by the international Conference Committee of EIF / LINQ 2014 are published in the proceedings, too. All authors of the selected articles and projects descriptions could present and discuss their papers and projects at the EIF/ LINQ 2014 in a speech.

In the introductory article Christian M. Stracke (Germany) presents the concept of Open Learning as combination of suitable open learning styles and open learning scenarios and adapted for school education as an example. This article discusses how to achieve the best appropriate learning quality as the core objective in learning, education and training by combining the three dimensions learning history, learning innovations and learning standards.

Karen Kear, Keith Williams, and Jon Rosewell (all from UK) describe the Excellence methodology for the quality assurance of e learning. They outline the Excellence process, and describe the main supporting resources: a set of 35 benchmarks, a quality manual and the ‘Quickscan’ self-assessment tool. The collaborative approach described in the paper helps higher education institutions to review their e learning and to plan for improvement.

Richard Heinen, Ingo Blees, Michael Kerres, Marc Rittberger (all from Germany) present in their paper “Open educational resources and social bookmarking” two cases of reference platforms (Elixier and Edutags) using different ways to aggregate contents. A comparison of the inventories of both systems shows that each system can benefit from the other’s metadata.

Alan Bruce (Ireland) invites discussion about the emergence and growth of competence-based education, which represents a radical shift away from traditional time-bound schooling systems based on curriculum rigidity to a new system based on competence and sustainable skills based learning. In his paper, competence frameworks are analysed with reference to standards, quality and teachers’ professional formation. Specific reference is made to the learning and insights of the TRANSit project and its research on best practice as well as to the
role of competence is fostering transferable skills, critical reflection and innovative thinking.

Mark Hamilton, Gráinne Conole, and Terese Bird (all from UK) report on the evaluation of the use of iPads in Medicine. The focus of their research was to elicit how first-year Medics were using iPads to support their learning and what their perceptions were of the use of the devices. The authors state that students increasingly liked their iPads as the term progressed and increasingly incorporated them into their practice. This fits the ‘Integrated innovation and quality approaches* theme.

Thomas Richter and Heimo H. Adelsberger (both from Germany) discuss the conflicts that occurred in a highly experimental course setting, in which they implemented a student-centered course in urban higher education with a constructivist, blended-learning design. The authors analyse to which extent the cultural country profiles from our Learning Culture Survey suffice to prevent intercultural conflicts in education and provide support for the design of respective interventions.

Jon Rosewell (UK) and Darco Jansen (the Netherlands) report on the development of the OpenupEd Quality Label, a self-assessment and review quality assurance process for the new OpenupEd MOOC portal (www.openuped.eu). This process is focused on benchmark statements that seek to capture good practice, both at the level of the institution and at the level of individual courses. The benchmark statements are derived from benchmarks which emerged from the E-xcellence e-learning quality projects. Self-assessment and review is intended to encourage quality enhancement, captured in an action plan. A quality label for MOOCs will benefit all MOOC stakeholders, so the authors.

At the 2013 EFQUEL Conference Sir John Daniel and Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić (both from Canada) presented a Guide to Quality in Online Learning that has been published with Academic Partnerships, Inc. That Guide focused primarily on formal online courses and programs leading to credit and conventional credentials. However, the steady expansion of online learning in regular programs is also accompanied by the multiplication of alternatives to traditional courses and credentials. The authors call these alternatives ‘post-traditional online education’. Sir John Daniel and Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić are now preparing a second guide on Quality in Post-Traditional Online Higher Education. This guide, described in their paper, provides a roadmap of the issues generated by the concepts of openness and post-traditional online higher
education, suggesting how universities can embrace greater openness without sacrificing their reputation for quality.

Grammatikopoulos, V., Gregoriadis, A., Zachopoulou, E. (all three from Greece), Liukkonen, J. (Finland), Gamelas, A., Leal, T., Pessanha, M., and Barros, S. (all four from Portugal) present the initial results of their evaluation of early childhood education (ECE) quality in six European countries. They discuss and compare various aspects of the ECE quality in different educational systems. According to the authors, such comparisons can create a fertile ground for communication and collaboration among the educational communities of different European countries and promote open education. Implications and future recommendations are also discussed.

Harri Lappalainen and Pia Suvivuo (both from Finland) share their experience with Innovation pedagogy, a learning approach which opens up education for stakeholders outside of the academia. Two selected Educational Research, Development and Innovation Methods (ERDIM) used in their university (Turku University of Applied Sciences, Finland) are presented and described in detail.

Marinos Kavouras, Sofoklis Sotiriou, Alkyoni Baglatzi, Nancy Darra, Margarita Kokla, Aggelos Lazoudis, Katerina Pastra and Eleni Tomai (all from Greece) are researching the topic of Geospatial thinking, a newly acknowledged ability with profound and rewarding effects on numerous aspects of everyday life and science - from giving and following directions and interpreting maps and diagrams, to achieving innovation in STEM disciplines. The GEOTHNK approach aims at enhancing geospatial thinking skills and engaging users in meaningful, inquiry-based learning experiences. The main outcomes and perspectives of the GEOTHNK approach for learners are also described in the paper.

Ebba Ossiannilsson (Sweden) focuses in her paper on the four addressed tracks presented during the second eMOOCs 2014 European Stakeholder Summit: namely, the experimental, policy, research, and business tracks. The official Communicators from the eMOOCs Summit are addressed in the paper.

Dimitra Pappa (Greece) demonstrates the use of Open Educational Resources (OER) from the corporate point of view, discussing existing barriers and requirements for the adoption and effective integration of OER in the organisational setting.

Aleksandra Mudrinić Ribić and Maja Quien (both from Croatia) present and discuss two main approaches in implementing ICT in the national school curriculum. Bottom-up approach focuses on activities for schools and teachers,
while the top-down includes a formal, structural change; therefore, it focuses on the responsible ministry and other state bodies. Combining these approaches and their specific activities that focus on awareness, education, implementation, promotion and support, can significantly contribute to the implementation of ICT in the national school curriculum in Croatia.

David Smith (Australia) presents a pilot study on the development of one education degree within a large regional university in Australia using a mobile application to facilitate the understanding of technology use and mentoring for lecturers in developing subjects for online delivery. In this paper, the author describes the structure of the mobile app, provides a short description of the underpinning learning theory and the mentoring given to the lecturers on the use of the mobile app suggesting a model for the design of online subjects in higher education.

Antonella Poce and Annalisa Iovine (both from Italy) present in their paper results and experiences, in the framework of larger research project entitled Adaptive message-Learning project (funded by the Italian Ministry for Research and Education in 2009 and is still ongoing). The authors introduce the model to make a critical use of technology and, employing consolidated teaching and learning structures, put cultural insights democratically at everyone’s disposal, which are essential to educate “a free citizen in a free republic”.

Edmundo Tovar Caro and Ana Dimovska (Spain) introduce guidelines and recommendations for successful implementation of Open Course Ware that institutions could use when adopting and/or creating a virtual mobility programme. In this paper the results of a European education project (LLP Programme, “Open Course Ware in an European Union higher education context: How to make use of its full potential for virtual mobility (later VM)?”) are presented, in particular focusing on a proposal of a quality model with guidelines and recommendations for the implementation of Open Course Ware in Higher Education Institutions.

J. A. D. Janaka Jayalath (Sri Lanka) shares his experience and ideas about development of quality standard for eLearning courses in Tertiary and Vocational Education Commission sector (TVET) in Sri Lanka. The author states, that lack of quality assurance of eLearning programmes has created issues in recognition of online courses in Sri Lanka. Delivery of TVET courses through distance learning, eLearning and blended learning have now become popular in Sri Lanka. A wide use of these methods makes it possible to ensure equal possibilities of receiving an education and of a continuous further training for all people regardless of their place of residence, social and economic status.
The paper of Fabio Nascimbeni (Belgium), Rory McGreal (Canada) and Grainne C. Conole (UK) presents the work of the eMundus project that began in October 2013 and reports on the project activities to the present date. The aim of eMundus is to strengthen cooperation among HE institutions from the involved regions and globally, by exploring the potential of Open Approaches (e.g. OER, MOOCs and Virtual Mobility amongst others) to support long term, balanced, inter-cultural academic partnerships for improving learning and teaching through Open Education approaches.

Finally 28 European projects are briefly presented in this book. All 28 projects were selected upon receipt contributions following an Open Call for European Projects that was issued in cooperation with the European Commission and its European Agency EACEA responsible for the management of European projects from the Lifelong Learning Programme. The projects were selected and approved by the international Programme Committee of LINQ/EIF 2014.

Every project description starts with the logo, name and acronym of the project. Then, the information about aims, objectives and main target groups of the project are given. Furthermore, the project description provides an answer on the question how every project contributes to learning innovations and learning quality. After that, the projects' main outcomes are presented. All project representatives have been asked to give a short quote on the question what is most important for learning innovations and quality today and could present their project at the LINQ conference in a short speech. For more information about every project can be find online - links to project websites and a main contact are provided on the bottom of every project page.

To summarize:

This book contributes to the current debate on learning innovations and quality in lifelong learning, education and training. LINQ 2014 and the 9th EIF continued the exploration of the relation between learning innovations and learning quality address one of the greatest challenges in today’s quality development for education and training: how to achieve quality for opening up education?

For the best learning innovations and learning quality for opening up education!

Alastair Creelman and Tatiana Shamarina-Heidenreich