THE e-LEARNING CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK PROJECT 2010

BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE DEFINITION FOR e-LEARNING

DESCRIPTION

THIS PROJECT IS BASED ON THE HYPOTHESIS THAT CURRENTLY THERE IS **NO SINGLE CONCEPT OF e-LEARNING** –ACCEPTED BY THE MAJORITY OF THE **SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY** OR, INDEED, BY PRACTITIONERS. THUS, THE AIM IS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE CONSOLIDATION AND SPECIFICATION OF THE CONCEPT OF e-LEARNING AS MUCH FROM THE SCIENTIFIC POINT OF VIEW AS FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE FIELD OF EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY. THE PROJECT WORK TEAM BELIEVES THAT THE **PRECISE IDENTIFICATION** OF THIS CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK WILL CONTRIBUTE TO THE **ADVANCEMENT OF THE DISCIPLINE** IN TERMS OF RESEARCH, INNOVATION AND EDUCATION.

The project began with the desire to find **scientific consensus** in the definition of e-learning as a **discipline**, to subsequently **analyse**, under this umbrella, the various lines of e-learning **research**, **innovation** and **practice**.

Once an inclusive definition has been reached, a second phase of the project is planned with the identification and analysis of the various models of e-learning practice observed in the educational sector and, more specifically, in higher education.

METHODOLOGY

The first phase of the project's development was divided into four main stages:

- ❯ **Literature review** of the e-learning concept in journals of international impact, research-oriented web pages, reports and books published since 2005.

- ❯ Four **focus groups**, with the participation of professionals (professors, tutors, instructors and management personnel) from the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (Open University of Catalonia, UOC), where their perception of the e-learning concept was discussed.

- ❯ Application of the **Delphi Method** with surveys sent to prestigious experts in

the field of e-learning to gather their perceptions on the definition of e-learning, in order to ensure the soundest consensus possible.

- ❯ Collection and analysis of the data obtained, and writing of the final project report.

RESEARCH TEAM

The project is funded by the eLearn Center, the UOC's centre for research, innovation and training in e-learning. The centre promotes an approach to **interdisciplinary online education** where training is driven by the results of **research** and **innovation**, which, in turn, provide feedback and educational and learning experiences that give rise to new lines of research and innovation.

The members of the research team are:

Dr. Albert Sangrà (project coordinator) is senior professor, researcher and academic director at the eLearn Center. His research work is being developed as part of the Edulab research group, and mainly focuses on the policies, organisation, management and leadership of ICT at educational institutions, and on quality issues in e-learning.

Dr. Dimitrios Vlachopoulos is research associate at the eLearn Center. He is presently conducting research on the introduction of e-learning in higher education and, especially, in humanities and social sciences. His previous work includes action research on evaluation of competences in higher education and on didactics with the use of ICT in learning activities.

Dr. Nati Cabrera is lecturer and researcher at the UOC's International Graduate Institute. Her research work is being developed as part of the Edulab research group, and mainly focuses on the policies, organisation, management and leadership of ICT at educational institutions, quality issues in e-learning, and assessment and evaluation.

In addition, the research team has had the chance to collaborate with Dr. Silvia Bravo Gallart, Ms. Stefanie Schuler and Ms. Hafsa Akhrif, who have contributed during different phases of the project.

CONTACT:
asangra@uoc.edu or dvlachopoulos@uoc.edu

RESULTS

The first important result of the project is the inclusive definition of e-learning, following an important level of consensus reached by the research team and the participating experts. This definition is what must define the **limits of action** of the eLearn Center itself, despite the fact that its activity does not necessarily cover the entire conceptual spectrum.

The project's whole process and individual results can be found in the Final Project Report.

The project's methodology and results are widely disseminated through participation in international conferences and publications in scientific journals.

From this point on, further research will focus on providing a theoretical framework for the identification and analysis of the **different e-learning models** applied in higher education.