

A Distributed Multicultural Network for Teaching Information Society: Cultural Diversity Aspects

Kerstin V. Siakas

Alexander Technological Educational Institution of Thessaloniki, Department of Informatics, siaka@it.teithe.gr

Abstract

This paper reports on the experiences gathered from the collaborative development of the Network for Teaching the Information Society (NETIS). The main aims of the project are to contribute to the emerging EU requirements of promoting an inclusive information society by developing a life-long open networked technology-based teaching-and-learning environment.

Emphasis is put on challenges of networking within an intercultural and interdisciplinary diverse environment with aspects of the Information Society. The networking challenges involve research, development of learning material and teaching on the same e-learning platform to students from different educational environments encompassing different disciplines, and from different national cultures with different languages.

The importance of taking the existing cultural particularities and the national ICT environment into consideration is highlighted by emphasizing particular caution and awareness of particularities, such as differences in national Information Society adoption levels, institutional regulations, disciplines (students from informatics and social sciences), language, attitudes and values, as well as operational issues, such as numbers of students that will participate in the Information Society course in the different countries. Our approach combines classroom experience and research evidence aiming for continuous improvement. Experiences, both from students and from educators are evaluated and reported.

Keywords

Network for Teaching the Information Society, NETIS, Networked life-long learning, Interculturality.

Introduction

In today's rapidly changing and highly competitive global environment, governments, organisations and citizens face more challenges than ever. These challenges are closely related to the Lisbon objectives, launched in 2000, of evolving Europe to "*the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion*" are closely related to the Information Society (IS). Information and Communication Technology (ICT) developments and the evolution of the internet have facilitated huge growth of the IS and the media convergence. New forms of working, such as tele-working, agile communities of people working in new collaborative virtual environments and "innovation ecosystems" (Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) global networks) are characteristic representatives of the world's new computerised economies (EU info Sheet 7.2).

The contribution of policy advances in education and training cooperation has a decisive role in the realisation of the Lisbon objectives. In addition to political cooperation on the future objectives of education and training systems in Europe, developments in ICT, the globalisation and the objectives of the Bologna Process have also set new demands on education, requiring a new paradigm of educational systems and pedagogic processes (Laurillard, 2001; Valkanos et al., 2005).

EU Objectives of Education Systems

The Lisbon objectives have a direct effect on educational cooperation, which today is widening and span across political and cultural boundaries.

The Education Council (2001) after having reflected on the concrete future objectives of education systems and focusing on common concerns and priorities while respecting national diversity expressed the following general aims regarding society attributes to education and training:

- *“the development of the individual, who can thus realise his or her full potential and live a good life”*
- *“the development of society, in particular by fostering democracy, reducing the disparities and inequities among individuals and groups and promoting cultural diversity”*
- *“the development of the economy, by ensuring that the skills of the labour force correspond to the economic and technological evolution”.*

These aims were adopted by the Ministers of Education and approved by the European Council to constitute the new and coherent Community strategic framework of co-operation in the fields of education and training. Three major goals to be achieved by 2010 for the benefit of the citizens and the EU as a whole were agreed upon, namely:

- *“to improve the quality and effectiveness of EU education and training systems”*
- *“to ensure that they are accessible to all”*
- *“to open up education and training to the wider world”*

In order to achieve these goals, thirteen specific objectives covering the various types and levels of education and training were agreed upon aiming at the realisation of lifelong learning. Improvements are encouraged in fields such as teacher training; basic skills; integration of Information and Communication Technologies; efficiency of investments; language learning; lifelong guidance; flexibility of systems, accessibility, mobility, citizenship education, etc.

The new education paradigm

As a result, learning is globally susceptible to remarkable changes. Visions, goals and objectives of lifelong learning have to be defined in order to design the new paradigm of education. The pedagogic process involves a huge complexity comprising internal and external stakeholders, such as students, educators, managers, funding providers and the society as a whole. The product of this complex process is both tangible in the form of qualified learners/graduates and less amendable to quantification in the form of accomplishment of higher level ideals and attitudes as well as transferable knowledge and skills (Georgiadou and Siakas, 2003).

In order to meet these challenges and to respond to the changes in technology and the subsequent consequences, proactive policies are needed at European, national and educational institution levels. The current EU objective of eGovernment policies is the provision of easier access to information and the realisation of more active citizen participation (COM 229, 2005). The European core vision, shared across both industries and governments, of a converged setting for media and communication technologies and markets, affirming that every user will be able to connect everywhere, anytime, with access to adapted and high quality content and communication services, in a safe and accessible environment, is commitment of to the European governments (HLG, 2006). Broadening the context of technology and information, prompts for consideration of the role of the citizen as an active and reflective learner, who works in a networked environment in his/her own place, pace and time (Georgiadou and Siakas, 2006).

Educational institutions, educators and education procedures influence the pedagogic process, the learning context, as well as the broader societal context, including the environment outside educational institutions comprising political, economic, technological and socio-cultural aspects (Lambert and McCombs, 1998). On the other hand, the societal context influences institutions within respect to their structures, strategies, management processes and means of operating procedures, including technology and individuals, as well as the context of learning (Georgiadou and Siakas, 2003).

Open and Distance Learning (ODL) is increasingly being considered as a feasible policy option for institutions and countries, seeking to increase accessibility for large numbers of learners in education and training opportunities. The unprecedented developments in ICTs and the rapidly shifting populations, as well as economies in transition require learning to be aligned with domains, such as physical (number of students on course, ICT uptake and national Information Society adoption levels), cultural (learners belonging to a group (e.g. country) with specific characteristics (e.g. language)), intellectual (learners' existing knowledge and skills) and social (external factors including disabled students, student living in geographically remote regions and students with work and/or family responsibilities) (Georgiadou and Siakas, 2006). Advocates of ODL tend to emphasise learning technologies, such as ICT platforms and artefacts, (curricula, materials and media of instruction and delivery) rather than the learning support needed (Lentell and O'Rourke, 2004). Distance education cannot exist without effective administration and tutors who provide feedback and guidance to students.

Cultural Diversity

The rapidly changing environment and increasing international activity has created new demands on those who participate in cross-cultural activities. An increased importance of understanding intercultural complexity and its effects has emerged. Harris & Morgan (1991) suggest that awareness of cultural strengths and biases in terms of national and organisational characteristics can be the foundation of success. People involved in international activities can take advantage of both differences and similarities, such as commonalities, through mutual cross-cultural synergy, for growth and development.

Many scholars consider that the internet creates so called "converge values" and that managing and operating ICT in a global context is largely the same as managing and operating ICT in a domestic localized context (Couger et al., 2001). The other view proposes that there are differences depending on cultural aspects, different business and legal environments, different languages and varying technology availability (Siakas and Georgiadou, 2007; Tractinsky and Järvenpää, 1995).

Hofstede (2001) argues that culture is a collection of characteristics possessed by people who have been conditioned by similar socialisation practices, educational procedures and life experiences. The anthropological view considers that culture is static and the fundamental values are inherited from generation to generation and change only slowly. The sociological view on the contrary considers that different values in society interact with changing economic and political conditions, and thus the culture is believed to be dynamic and evolving by culture negotiation/formation through intercultural interactions (Brannen & Salk 2000), multiple cultures perspective (Sackmann & Phillips, 2004), and multilevel cultural dynamics (Leung et al., 2005). However, the underlying basic values are considered to remain unchanged (Cray & Mallory, 1998).

Hofstede & McCrae (2004) affirm that personality traits are biologically based disposition and the question seems to be how personality traits (comparison of individuals - psychology) and culture (comparison of societies - anthropology) interact to shape the behaviour of individuals and social groups. They stress that culture is a collective (common to most of the people in a social group) attribute manifested in behaviour. Individuals are to societies as trees are to forest. The metaphor flowers, bouquets and gardens was used by Hofstede (1995) in comparing studies of individuals, organisational cultures and national cultures. Cultures, as a whole, cannot be understood in terms of personality dynamics of individuals (Hofstede & McCrae, 2004), but through the context of social interaction.

Recent research indicates that communication, knowledge sharing and learning are profoundly influenced by cultural values of individual stakeholders (Hambrick et al., 1998; Hofstede, 2001; Hutchings & Michailove, 2004; Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000; Siakas & Georgiadou, 2003; 2006) and culture creates the context for social interaction and shapes the processes by which new knowledge is created, legitimated and distributed (De Long & Fahey, 2000).

Tsatsou (2005) articulates a major critique on the current EU policy process regarding the failure of the EU to recognize and adjust its policy to the existing cultural particularities of its Member States. She poses the question of whether digital divides constitute 'cultural divides' having an impact on the policy, regulation and future evolution of the EU Information Society. She addresses the need of an EU policy

that takes into account the socio-cultural particularities of each EU Member State without losing its broad scope and common aim across the EU.

The NETIS approach

The NETIS approach conforms to the following actions required of the member states and the Commission (EU Council, 2006), namely to:

- *promote the European dimension of the joint development of Higher Education (HE) curricula*: the members of the NETIS project jointly develop a curriculum regarding the Information Society. The interdisciplinary, intercultural online course provides a European education experience and promotes the dimension of joint development of HE curricula.
- *capitalise on the potential of the Internet, multimedia and virtual lifelong learning environments*: an Open Source teaching-and-learning platform, Moodle, is used to allow asynchronous user-centred lifelong learning possibilities. The platform will be available for download, use and eventual further development after the end of the project.
- *encourage the development of high-quality digital teaching and learning materials to ensure the quality of resources available online*: the digital teaching and learning materials in English, Greek and Hungarian are enriched with learning objectives, quizzes and self-assessment possibilities to motivate learners for active involvement and increase learning effectiveness
- *support the development and adaptation of innovative teaching that incorporates the use of technologies*: the NETIS approach comprises blended learning by integrating different degrees of technology based learning with traditional education for facilitating political and cultural divergence as well as different learning preferences
- *take advantage of the communication potential offered by ICT to foster European awareness*: Digital libraries and electronic online European information and statistics are actively used for the performance of the tasks aiming to increase awareness of European and Information Society issues.
- *support virtual forums for cooperation and exchange of information*: both project members and students use virtual ICTs for cooperation and exchange of Information. In addition they are encouraged to use social networking tools included in Wiki 2.0, such as blogs and chats, for knowledge transfer (see e.g. <http://netis.edublogs.org/> and <http://socializeit.gr/>)
- *monitor and analyse the process of integration and the use of ICT in teaching*: the use of ICT in teaching is monitored partly by the Moodle teaching-and-learning environment. The results are analysed together with metric data from other sources, such as number of emails, blog-posts etc.

The NETIS course will be taught for two semesters in the academic year 2007-2008 in Estonia, Hungary, Greece, Slovakia and the UK by using different degrees of blended learning. The teaching material developed by partners of the NETIS programme is integrated on an Open Source e-learning platform (NETIS Moodle, 2007) and an actual textbook is printed in different languages. In addition to the e-learning platform, social networks, commonly called Web 2.0, are used for generating content by users (educators and students) and enhancing knowledge sharing (Siakas and Georgiadou, 2007, Kwai Fun & Wagner, 2007).

Blended Learning in a multi-cultural and multi-disciplinary environment

The contemporary demands on education triggered by advances in ICTs (technology and media convergence; financial and funding imperatives), globalisation (career opportunities; cultural divergence), life long learning (learners needs; stakeholders demands), as well as the Lisbon and Bologna objectives (competitiveness; quality standards), predispose a new paradigm of educational systems and pedagogic processes changing the emphasis from educator centred to learner centred learning. Laurillard (2001) emphasise that in order to advocate a learner centred approach the learner and stakeholders (society in large) should be considered in the first place followed by present and future career opportunities. Other drivers, such as strategy, quality standards etc., should be tuned to fit the goals of the educational institutions and raise competitiveness.

Blended learning is suggested to provide a promising approach facilitating individuals to adapt learning to their own and needs, schedules and preferences (Matheos et. al., 2005). Customised blended learning

approaches combine a myriad of delivery methods to suit the unique needs of the learners, the educators and the institutions, by other words people and culture. Supporters of the blended learning approach argue that it enhances learning both in classroom settings and in technology based learning environments (Collis, 2002), as well as enhance learning experiences, increase learning outcomes and is cost-effective (Singh and Reed 2001; Twigg, 2000). However, Oliver and Trigwell (2005) consider that blended learning requires a shift from instructor/educator-centred to learner-centred learning. A paradigm shift embracing active learning and knowledge sharing is needed in the age of information and knowledge.

A paradigm shift and a cultural change strategy – the case of the Greek partner

As an example of a paradigm shift and a cultural change strategy we will analyse the case of NETIS by the Greek Partner Institution. In Greece education traditionally is about learning how to do things opposed to learning how to learn (Siakas and Mitalas, 2004; Hofstede, 2001). The diploma provides social acceptance and honour to the holder and to his/her in-group and is considered to provide entry to higher status groups. Students' performance is important and good students expect to be rewarded. Education is teacher centred, praising the excellence of teacher. Students depend on teachers, who initiate all communication in class, and are seen as gurus who transfer personal wisdom. Students expect to be told what to do, individual initiatives are discouraged and they do not speak up in class or large groups. Self-efficacy is low rated by students, who seek structured learning situations and right answers supposed to be known by teacher. Motivation factors are security and fear of failure. Task preferences are those with clear instructions and sure outcomes.

The educational system in Greece does not embrace open-ended teaching methods, in particularly not on pre-university level. The transition from the traditional pedagogic environment towards more participative, active and open-ended learning situations based on adaptive project-based learning and collaborative activities, with exercises supporting reflective thinking, problem-solving skills and productivity entail a fundamental cultural change. The content of a compulsory traditional theory course in the 6th semester called "Informatics and Society" (3 ECTS) in the ordinary curriculum of the department of Informatics was exchanged with the new NETIS course. Usually such courses cover around 100 students. The allocated time for the lecture of this course is 2 hours per week and the attendance of classes is optional, usually starting with around 20 percentages of the students attending classes and slowly decreasing in number. The NETIS course was planned with caution and awareness. Because of the expected big number of enrolled students, the cultural particularities and diverge values. Clear learning goals and expectations on learners were announced early on the normal announcement board in order to prepare the enrolled students about the changes in the program. It was decided to provide three alternatives to students in order to experiment with the new content and the new e-learning environment, as follows:

- Traditional teaching/learning including one hour theory presentation by educator per week with two final exam periods in the end of the semester. During the second hour the students were asked to participate in the active students' presentations and discussion. Very soon it showed that the students, that had chosen the traditional teaching learning methodology, did not attend neither the first traditional theory lecture nor the students' presentations and discussions.
- Active learning. In order to take part in this form of learning students were asked to prepare different tasks weekly, present their results and take part in discussions. The grades of the active students will be based on their degree of participation and quality of outcome. Students were motivated to work in pairs for improved knowledge sharing and peer support. In total 10 pairs became active learners. One student preferred to work alone for more independence. The active students came regularly to the classes and also took part in the lecture (1 hour) of theory presentation by the educator. One of the objectives of this experiment was to embrace a student centred teaching/learning approach. In the end of every class the students were asked about their opinions regarding the class and the following class was adapted accordingly. The student presentations were appreciated more than the lecture presentation and the discussions were much livelier after the student presentations (a cultural question of authority). The role of the educator as a moderator became obvious.
- Research. These students prepare (with the supervision of the educator) one subject related to the Information Society to be included in the textbook of NETIS. Some of these students come occasionally to both the theory classes and student presentations.

All students are encouraged to use the moodle e-learning platform for reading the learning material including learning objectives, pre-tests, quizzes etc.

Learning is by definition a psychological process. The individual learner decides what and how much to learn. The degree of learning is influenced by the learner's intrinsic motivation to learn. Motivation to learn in turn is influenced by interests, goals and objectives, as well as the emotional state of the learner (Lambert and McCombs, 1998). Learning is also influenced by environmental issues, such as culture, technology and instructional practices (Georgiadou & Siakas, 2003). Learners have distinctive perspectives and learning preferences originating from their history, environment, interests, beliefs, values and feelings of efficacy (cultural preferences) as well as learning styles, stages of development (maturity), abilities and talents (personal preferences). The NETIS experiment confirmed the above.

Embracing multicultural differences in a Teaching and Learning context

Different cultural contexts bring about differences in:

- assumptions about learning (Siakas & Georgiadou, 2003; 2006a; Hofstede, 2001)
- relationships between educator and learner (Siakas and Mitalas, 2004)
- impact in collaboration between students on subsequently on knowledge sharing and (Siakas & Georgiadou, 2006b,2006c).

In the NETIS project there are two disciplines involved, namely Social Sciences (Estonian, Hungarian and Italian partners) and Information Systems Engineering (English, Greek and Slovakian partners). The main learning material (the course book) is developed by partners from the Social Sciences. However, this is considered as richness by the Informatics partners, since the main aim of the course is to improve awareness of the role of ICTs in the Information Society. The blended learning method was chosen to facilitate flexibility and allow a student centred approach regarding the emphasis in the course. Below are the NETIS learning objectives and the learning strategy to obtain the objectives described.

Learning Objectives

- Focus on learner and learning – flexible, personal models for developing learner's capabilities and cognitive skills
 - Communities of learning – supporting the identification and implementation of virtual communities, involving students with similar learning needs, within and across institutional boundaries.
 - Soft skills and informal learning – supporting the learner to develop soft skills, such as interpersonal communication, team work, leadership and project management, through knowledge sharing, dynamic learning content generation, etc.

Learning strategy

- Meeting the needs of learners; high levels of interactivity between all participants.
- Developing learning material relevant and meaningful to the learner; Adjustments and adaptations between materials, learning styles and learning contexts.
- Stating learning goals; creating and using of different thinking and reasoning strategies to achieve complex learning goals;
- Expressing clear expectations on learners; creation of a model of delivery that includes thorough planning, monitoring, reviewing and evaluating of course materials and student progress.
- Promoting creative and critical thinking by engaging the learners actively in learning experiences that encourage synthesis and analysis for constructing their understanding, own meaning and knowledge.
- Connecting learning with prior knowledge and experience by linking new information with existing knowledge (previous courses, educator and student experiences) in meaningful ways.
- Encouraging social interactions, interpersonal relations and communication with peers and others
- Guiding student exercises toward fostering independent learners; communication of the purpose of each class session and learning activity; encouragement of students to think independently.
- Providing correctives and feedback on students' performance; setting appropriate and challenging standards/rates and assessing (diagnostic, process and outcome assessment) the learner, as well as the learning progress.

When the same learning material and e-learning platform is used in a multi-cultural and multi-disciplinary environment it is extremely important that the local educator act as a facilitator to accommodate local differences and takes different linguistic, cultural and social backgrounds of learners into consideration (Siakas & Georgidaou, 2006). The NETIS blended learning approach combines the e-learning platform with face-to-face contact, thus allowing emphasis on students' needs and consideration of local diversity. In addition to the learning strategies motivation strategies are particularly important when a new learning approach is introduced in order to avoid resistance and reduced learning outcome. Making learners feel acknowledged, respected and appreciated is a basic cornerstone for building and sustaining a coherent learning environment.

According to a European survey (Ehlers et. al., 2005) with 1 743 respondents the quality in e-learning is considered to be the "best learning achievements" (50 %) and "excellent performance" (19 %). The NETIS project aims to produce learning material of high quality and frequent member collaboration for knowledge sharing. However, the students' performance and achievements are within the responsibility of the members' professional activities (implicit) with respect to the interdisciplinary and intercultural characteristics of the member institutions and countries.

Conclusions and further work

This paper reported on the experiences gathered from the collaborative development of the Network for Teaching the Information Society (NETIS). In particular the multi-disciplinary and multicultural environment was emphasised by analysing learning objectives and strategies incorporating learners' needs and the blended learning approach combining classroom experience and research evidence aiming for continuous improvement.

Further work will concentrate on designing the extension of the course to a life-long environment by involving learners from a broader population and incorporating specific needs.

References

- Brannen, M.Y., & Salk, J. (2000). Partnering Across Borders, *Human Relations*, 53 (4), pp. 451–487
- COM 229 (2005). "i2010 – A European Information Society for growth and employment". communication from the commission to the council, the European parliament, the European economic and social committee and the committee of the regions, Brussels, 1.6.2005.
- Collis, B. (2002). The Net as a Tool for Blended Learning. What are the Ingredients for Success? *Netlearning*, November, Ronneby, Sweden
- Cray, D., & Mallory, G. R. (1998). Making Sense of Managing Culture, London, UK, International Thomson Business Press
- Couger, J.D., Halttunen, V. & Lyytinen, K. (1991). Evaluating the motivation environment in Finland compared to United States - a survey, *European Journal of Information Systems*, 1(2), 107-112.
- Davis, H. C. & Fill, K. (2007). Embedding blended learning in a university's teaching culture: experiences and reflections. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 38 (5). pp. 817-828.
- Education Council (2001). *The concrete future objectives of education and training systems*, Report 5980/01 EDUC 23 to the European Council, available at http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/et_2010_en.html [viewed 17 December 2007].
- EU Council (2006). Council Resolution of 13 July 2001 on eLearning, Official Journal C 204 of 20.07.2001. available at <http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c11052.htm>, [viewed 17 December 2007].
- EU Council (2002). Detailed work programme on the follow-up of the objectives of Education and training systems in Europe (2002/C 142/01), Official Journal of the European Communities, available at http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/2010/et_2010_en.html [viewed 17 December 2007].
- EU Info Sheet 7.2 (2006). "i2010 - The world's economies depend on Information & Communication Technologies (ICT)", May, Fact sheets: 6.35.
- Ehlers, U.D., Goertz, L., Hildebrandt, B. & Pawlowski, J.M. (2005). Quality in e-learning, Use and dissemination of quality approaches in European e-learning. Luxembourg: Office for Official

- Publications of the European Communities, Cedefop Panorama series, 116, available at http://www2.trainingvillage.gr/etv/publication/download/panorama/5162_en.pdf.
- Georgiadou, E., Siakas, K.V., Berki, E. (2006): Knowledge Creation and Sharing through Student-lecturer Collaborative Group Coursework in Peter Feher (ed), Proceedings of 7th European Conference of Knowledge Management (ECKM06), 4-5 Sept., Public Academic Conferences Ltd. Reading, UK, ISBN 978-1-905305-26-5 Book, pp. 678-689
- Georgiadou, E. & Siakas, K.V. (2006). Distance Learning: Technologies; Enabling Learning at Own Place, Own Pace, Own Time. In R. Dawson, E. Georgiadou, P. Linecar, M. Ross. G. Staples (Eds.), *Learning and Teaching Issues in Software Quality*, Proceedings of the 11th International Conference on Software Process Improvement - Research into Education and Training, (INSPIRE 2006), April, Southampton, UK. (pp. 29-40). The British Computer Society
- Georgiadou, E. & Siakas, K.V. (2003). Technology-based learning - Cultural Dimensions and Considerations. In R. Dawson, E. Georgiadou, P. Linecar, M. Ross. G. Staples (eds), *Quality in Teaching and Technology Based Learning*, Proceedings of the 8th International Conference on Software Process Improvement - Research into Education and Training, (INSPIRE 2000), April, Glasgow, UK. (pp. 23 – 34). The British Computer Society
- Hambrick, D., Davison, S., Snell, S. & Snow, C. (1998). When groups consist of multiple nationalities: toward a new understanding of implications, *Organisation Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2, pp. 181-205
- Harris, P.R. & Morgan, R.T. (1991). *Managing Cultural Differences*, 3rd Ed. Houston, TX: Gulf Publishing Company
- HLG (2006a). *The Challenges of Convergence*, European Commission Discussion paper, i2010 High Level Group, 12.12.2006.
- Hofstede, G. & McCrae, R. R. (2004). Personality and Culture Revisited: Linking Traits and Dimensions of Culture, *Cross-Cultural Research*, 38 (1), 52-85
- Hofstede, G. (1995). Multilevel research of human systems: Flowers, Bouquets and Gardens. *Human System Management*, 14, pp. 207-217
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: comparing values, behaviours, institutions, and organisations*, Thousand Oaks, California, London: Sage Publications
- Hutchings, K., & Michailova, S. (2004). Facilitating knowledge sharing in Russian and Chinese subsidiaries: the role of personal networks and group membership, *Journal of Knowledge Management*, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 84-94
- Kwai Fun, R.I.P. & Wagner, C. (2007). Weblogging: A study of social computing and its impact on organizations, on-line Science Direct article, <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/B6V8S-4N3GF96-4/2/549dc31a08806e6881cdc85e53e0ba14>
- Lambert, N., & McCombs, B. (1998). Learner-centred schools and classrooms as a direction for school reform., in N. Lambert & B. McCombs (eds.). *How students learn: Reforming schools through learner-centred education*. (pp. 1-22). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Laurillard, D (2001). *Rethinking University Teaching: A framework for the effective use of educational technology*. London: Routledge Publishers.
- Lentell, H. & O'Rourke, J. (2004). Tutoring Large Numbers: An unmet challenge, *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 5 (1), 1-17.
- Leung, K., Bhagat, R.S., Buchan, N.R., Erez, M., & Gibson. C.B. (2005). Culture and International Business: Recent Advances and Their Implications for Future Research, *Journal of International Business Studies*, 36, pp. 357–378
- Matheos, K., Daniel, B.K. & McCalla, G.V. (2005). Dimensions for Blended Learning Technology: Learners' Perspectives, *Journal of Learning Design*, 1 (1), pp. 56-74.
- Oliver, M. & Trigwell, K. (2005). Can 'blended learning' be redeemed? *E-Learning*, 2(11), 17-26.
- Pfeffer, J. & Sutton, R. (2000): *The Knowing Doing Gap: How Smart Companies Turn Knowledge into Action*, Boston Ma: Harvard Business School Press
- Sackmann, S. A. & Phillips, M. E. (2004). One's Many Cultures: A Multiple Cultures Perspective. In N.A. Boyacigiller, R.A. Goodman, & M.E. Phillips (eds), *Crossing Cultures: Insights from Master Teachers*, pp. 38–47. New York, USA: Routledge.
- Siakas, K.V. & Georgiadou, E. (2006): Knowledge Sharing: Cultural Dynamics, in Peter Feher (ed), Proceedings of 7th European Conference of Knowledge Management (ECKM06), 4-5 Sept., Public Academic Conferences Ltd. Reading, UK, ISBN 978-1-905305-26-5 Book, pp. 505-513
- Siakas, K. V. & Mitalas, A. (2004): Experiences from the Use of the Personal Software Process (PSP) in Greece; Analysis of Cultural Factors in the 9th International Conference on Software Process

Improvement - Research into Education and training, INSPIRE 2004, Kent, UK, 05-07.04.2004, pp. 11-21

Valkanos N., Siakas K. V. & Manitsaris, A. (2005): The Bologna Process and the Challenge of Open and Distance Mode Education, The 10th International Conference on *Software Process Improvement - Research into Education and training*, INSPIRE 2005, 21-23 March, Gloucestershire, UK