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2004

Supporting the Learner in Distance Education and E-Learning

Proceedings of the Third EDEN Research Workshop

Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, Germany
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Edited by

Ulrich Bernath and András Szucs
on behalf of the European Distance and E-Learning Network
and the Programme Commitee of the Third EDEN Research Workshop

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Introduction

In 1998 EDEN initiated a strand of research activities as part of the association's strategy to support professional development in open and distance learning in general and EDEN's Network of Academics and Professionals (NAP) in particular. The First Research Workshop in Prague in 2000 on "Research and Innovation in Open and Distance Learning" was followed by the second in Hildesheim in 2002 on "Research and Policy in Open and Distance Learning". Now, in 2004, the third on "Supporting the Learner in Distance Education and E-Learning" is hosted by Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg in Germany.

The theme of the Third EDEN Research Workshop addresses learner support as a central issue for success in education and training in general and in open and distance learning (ODL) in particular. The emergence of e-learning demands that we examine, analyse and develop our concepts and practices. Hence the objectives and structure of the conference and workshops in Oldenburg focus on research and innovative practice in the effective support of learners in distance education and e-learning. This provides the opportunity for an exchange of ideas, experiences, and best-practices in student support in ODL within the different and varying contexts of both the academic and corporate settings. A particular emphasis will be on recent developments in practice and its conceptualisation. It is also intended to strengthen the cross-cultural and international interchange of ideas and expertise with a particular focus on effective approaches to student support, the building of learning communities, and sustainable institutional models of best practice.

The keynote addresses given by Otto Peters (FernUniversität in Hagen), Nicholas Alan (University of Maryland University College), Alan Tait (The Open University United Kingdom), Gilly Salmon (The Open University United Kingdom), Elsebeth Korsgaard Soerensen (Aarhus University), and Terry Anderson (Athabasca University) will be followed by parallel discursive workshops based on 85 papers selected from more than 110 submissions from all around the world. The papers assembled in this book cover with almost equal emphasis the topic areas of the Call for Papers announced in July 2003:

Visions and principles of learner support: learner support as part of the institutional mission, from student to learner support, learner autonomy, peer-to-peer support, learner-centred approaches, communities of learners, knowledge building communities, community of practitioners, from input to outcome orientation, from welfare to neo-liberal/post-modern concepts of learner support, learner characteristics and serving special populations, understanding the target audience, assessing learner needs and appropriate services, gender mainstreaming in student support services.

Models of learner support: institutional aspects & approaches, organisational structures, centralised and decentralised models, regional study centres/virtual study centres, large scale/small scale approaches, business of learner support, cost-effective solutions, scalability of online tutoring, low-cost/high-outcome approaches.

Teachers & staff and learner support: tutoring, peer-tutoring, e-mentoring, moderating, facilitating, counselling, advising, guiding, coaching, non-academic support services (career counselling, study skills assistance, library services etc.), administrative support services (admissions, registration, student information systems, technical support), staff development, supporting teachers, models & best practices.

Study materials and learner support: supporting the learner through content and course design, creating learner-centred study materials, development of independent learning skills, assessment strategies.

Learner support for workplace training: supporting the employees as learners, using incentive procedures for increasing motivation, creating a learning organisation, supervisors as coaches, just-in-time training, learning-management systems as learner support.

Ensuring quality in learner support: evaluation, measures of success, efficiency, retention, student satisfaction.

The reader will now find papers assembled around workshop titles, which are not identical with the described topic areas. Readers are asked to access the texts via the workshop themes and titles of papers. Participants of the Third EDEN Research Workshop gain comfortable access to the papers through a password-protected database with full-text search function. The tight schedule between the submission of the final papers and printing of these Proceedings did not allow providing an index for avid readers.

We are grateful to all the authors who contributed to this undertaking and thus lay the ground for a promising Third EDEN Research Workshop. Franziska Vondrlik and Anna Wagner deserve our special appreciation for their support in the publication of this book.

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