SVEA Final Conference:
"Next Generation Learning - How to Integrate Social Media in Vocational and Adult Training"

Brussels – 23rd of November 2011

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1

The use of web 2.0 social platforms such as wiki's, blogs and podcasts offers new possibilities for networking and project management. Users are able to publish their own texts, images or videos, and can share them with others. A European partner consortium, including MFG Baden-Württemberg in Germany, CSP Innovazioni nelle ICT in Italy, EuroPACE ivzw in Belgium, FUNDECYT in Spain, and Coleg sir Gâr in Wales, aimed to realize the organizational and educational development potential of web 2.0, through an innovative EU-funded project called SVEA.

The **Next Generation Learning Conference** was organised on the 23rd of November 2011 as the final event of the SVEA project and as pre-conference event of the [Media & Learning 2011 Conference](#).

The **Next Generation Learning Conference** was open to all learning practitioners, trainers, curriculum designers, directors and managers of training institutions and offered a unique opportunity to discuss the benefits arising from the growing use of social media in vocational and adult training.

The programme

The participants of the conference were welcomed by Dr. **Nicola Schelling**, Director of the Representation of the State of Baden-Württemberg to the EU. After the warm welcome the programme kicked off with the three keynote speakers of the day.

First, Dr. **Godelieve Van den Brande**, Senior Policy Officer responsible for 'ICT and education' from Directorate General Education and Culture of the European Commission talked about the **'**Future Challenges for the EU in the Field of e-Education'. She focused on a few of the problems when using ICT in an educational environment:

Dr. Godelieve Van den Brande

- ICT is still embedded in a traditional learning paradigm
- The real potential of ICT to make learning more innovative, creative, relevant and interesting is not being realised within formal Education and Training.
- A lot of innovative ICT projects in Europe do not reach beyond the "early adopter stage"

Still the main issue concerning ICT in an educational environment remains implementation. To overcome these problems the European Commission already implemented a lot of initiatives and

programmes like Socrates Minerva, e-Learning, Lifelong Learning Programme... To obtain even better results Europe outlined a number of targets to be reached by 2020, e.g.

- Decreasing the 'Early School Leaving' from 14,4% (in 2009) to 10% at the most (in 2020)
- Increasing the 'Higher Education Attainment (age 30-34) from 32,3% (in 2009) to 40% at least (in 2020)

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2

The European Commission is convinced Education and Training have a unique role to play in enhancing the use of ICT for learning and should take up a leadership role. The actions set up under ET 2020 are oriented around three objectives to be tackled simultaneously:

- Increasing digital competences
- ICT and an enhancer of innovation of Education and Training
- Improving the e-skills of the professionals

In her presentation Dr. Van den Brande outlined the key factors to success for these three objectives. For example a key factor to increase the digital competences can be the implementation of an ICT skills supplement to the European Skills Passport. Therefore the development of a better measurability system for the use and impact of ICT in education is critical.

Support to Member States to reach the objectives of ET2020 and to mainstream ICT in educational policies and practices will be given through the 'Creative Classrooms for an innovative Europe' initiative. This scheme will be launched mid-2012, initially only for compulsory education, later on lifelong learning will also be included.

Professor Gráinne Conole

The second keynote speaker at the SVEA Final Conference was professor **Gráinne Conole**, professor of Learning Innovation at the University of Leicester (UK). Title of her presentation was "Pandora's Box – the Implications of New Social and Participatory Media". Professor Conole highlighted the changing educational context of today:

- The rapidly changing technological environment
- The new digital literacy skills needed for learners and teachers
- The new emerging open practices
- The new forms of online community and interactivity

Adopting new so-called e-pedagogies in education gives the learner a new experience but also leads to new paradoxes concerning the teachers:

- New technologies are not extensively used
- There is a lack of uptake of OER
- There is little use beyond the early adopted
- Despite the rhetoric and funding there is little evidence of transformation.

To overcome this paradox professor Conole stressed the importance of implementing open practices in all steps of education, not only for students but also for teachers.

In her concluding remarks she focused on the way to evolve from 'closed practices' to 'open practices' and the advantages from these open practices:

- Open, participatory and social media enable new forms of communication and collaboration
- Communities in these spaces are complex and distributed
- Learners and teachers need to develop new digital literacy skills to harness their potential

- We need to rethink how we design, support and assess learning
- Open, participatory and social media can provide mechanisms for us to share and discuss teaching and research ideas in new ways
- We are seeing a blurring of boundaries: teachers/learners, teaching/research, real/virtual spaces, formal/informal modes of communication and publication

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3

Third and last keynote speaker of the day was Ms. **Helen Keegan**, Senior Lecturer at the University of Salford (UK). In her enthusiastic talk she used a lot of examples from her own experience as a lecturer and programme leader on Interactive Media and Social Technologies.

Ms. Helen Keegan

She talked about processes, challenges and tensions in implementing Web 2.0 including how the distinction between the public and private person tends to disappear when using technologies like Twitter and Facebook for educational purposes. Experiences with her students showed that sometimes the border between public and private life becomes very thin.

In another example she demonstrated 'the power of the hashtag' (Twitter), using a hashtag to inform her students in real time while attending a conference in Seattle (U.S.). By using this technology her students were part of/participating in the conference. Via her they could ask questions, make remarks. These were just a few of the examples Helen Keegan gave on how she uses new technologies to make education more driven by learner interests and less by a strict curriculum.

But she not only highlighted all the advantages new technologies can bring to education. She also pointed out that things can go wrong, e.g. inappropriate behaviour online. People who use social networking a lot do not automatically have digital citizenship, which means they do not always talk open and honest, do not respect other opinions, ...

The third part of her presentation focused on the blurring boundaries new technologies brings to the relationships between teachers, learners and mentors.

To conclude, she focused on opening up the processes of knowledge creation. While these new processes can cause confusion, mistakes made should also be seen as opportunities for further learning.

After these interesting keynote speakers it was time for three members of the SVEA-team to take the floor. Ms. **Petra Newrly** (MFG), Ms. **Lara Marcellin** (CSP) and Dr. **Tony Toole** (CSG) gave a quick roundup what the SVEA-project was all about, how it was conducted and what were the main lessons learned. All this information can be found on the SVEA project website.

Ms. Lara Marcellin

Ms. Petra Newrly

Dr. Tony Toole

SVEA Final Conference "Next Generation Learning - How to Integrate Social Media in Vocational and Adult Training"
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4

After a short break it was time for some workshops on this SVEA Final Conference. The participants could chose between two parallel workshops, one targeting the managers of training institutions, the other one targeting the trainers.

The first group, moderated by Dr. Tony Toole, talked about what Vocational and Adult Training Institutions will have to change to optimize their organisational processes when using social media.

Professor **Mark Stiles** (University of Staffordshire, UK) focused on the organisational policies, governance and processes as barriers to the use of social media. He gave the participants the following messages:

- "Social media use" in education is an innovation
- Many organisations – especially educational ones – struggle to maintain innovations
- "Social media use" challenges organisational structures and cultures
- Learners and practitioners will lose heart if things are made difficult and fail to meet their expectations

Discussion with Professor Mark Stiles

These messages should be taken into account when 'fighting' policies, governance and bureaucracy in an educational institution. Most important for professor Stiles was showing and proving innovation works!

Ms. **Francesca Carmagnola** (ENGIM Piemonte, Italy) talked about 'Participatory learning and working in Vocational and Educational Training' and explained how they used new social media to provide a greater support for innovation at her institution. Although they already focused on forms of collaborative working between co-workers, trainers and students, new tools made it much easier to adapt to this new way of working together. The main outcomes being:

- Behavioural change: thanks to the easiness of the participating tools every member of the 'Community of Practice' participates in the creation of content
- Reduction of the digital divide
- A continued and growing enthusiasm for collaboration
- Many self-organised networks

The second group, moderated by Professor **Wim Van Petegem** (K.U.Leuven), focused on how trainers can overcome resistance and benefit from the integration of social media in vocational and training institutions.

First Mr. **Tom Wambeke** (ILO, United Nations, Italy) explored, in a tight scheduled presentation, some of the social media myths. He gave a short re-cap of success factors of major web2.0 learning and training initiatives. Afterwards he demystified social media myths and reflected upon challenges and statements about social media implementation. Lastly he explored jointly quick wins that can be implemented in the organization, and share models, tools and interesting practices. During his dynamic talk he gave a lot of good practises in using web 2.0 in training institutions.

Secondly, Dr. **Steven Verjans** (Open Universiteit, the Netherlands) talked about the way they introduce new social media in his institution. It comes down to a few basic rules:

- Show and share good examples
- Take small steps, one at time
- Stay close to practice
- Stay close (enough) to comfort zone
- Listen, evaluate, improve

Fish Bowl Discussion

After the workshops it was time for the final part of this SVEA Final Conference. Both groups joined forces again to participate in a discussion session on "Social Media: a new hype or a revolution that will shape the way we learn?"

Using the concept of a 'Fish Bowl Discussion' made it possible for all participants in the conference to join this very lively discussion lead by Prof. Tony Toole.

The participants

Over 65 participants from 6 countries (Belgium, Germany, Italy, Spain, The Netherlands, and United Kingdom) came to the conference to discuss the topic of social media use in vocational and adult training and learning.

Participants were asked for their feedback after the conference and the responses have been very positive. There were also some positive comments on twitter:

Taaltutor Sandra Wormgoor
@SVEAproject Well done, people of SVEA, I took a lot of notes (with a pen!) to use in plans; learned a lot, liked the fish bowl discussion!
23 november

SVEAproject SVEA project
@heloukee @gconole Thank you for your great keynotes and for sharing your presentations!
28 november

als antwoord op ↑

@heloukee
Helen Keegan

@SVEAproject @gconole ... and thank YOU for inviting us! It was a really great event :)

28 november via web

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Brussels, Belgium – 23rd of November 2011

6

SVEA Consortium:

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7