Chapter V
Training Teachers for E-Learning, Beyond ICT Skills
Towards Lifelong Learning Requirements:
A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

This chapter describes an experience in teacher training for e-learning in the field of adult education. It takes into account the models offered by flexible lifelong learning as the proper way to develop training for teachers in service, considering the advantages of blended learning for the target audience. The chapter discusses the balance between mere ICT skills and pedagogical competences. In this context the learning design should always allow that the teachers in training integrate in their work ICT solutions that fit to the didactic objectives, renew teaching and learning methodology, facilitate communication, give place to creativity, and allow pupils to learn at their own pace. By doing so, they will be closer to the profile of a tutor online, as a practitioner who successfully takes advantages of the virtual environments for collaborative work and learning communication.
INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to focus on the features a teacher training course has to fulfil, in order to facilitate in teachers the use of ICT as a tool to reach learning goals. Skills and competences are to be developed to guarantee that teachers not only are able to make proper use of computers, but also, and most important, that they are aware of the major challenges ICT brings as a powerful means of communication and as an emerging new pedagogical model. A case study is offered to point out possible approaches to develop training programmes.

BACKGROUND

Teaching training is a steady challenge in the always evolving learning the knowledge society requires. It is nowadays a common place to point out the advantages of ICT integration into school as a proper way to transform information into knowledge (Barberà-Badia, 2004). As shown in a survey developed for the European Union by the European Schoolnet (2005), in the last years a great effort has been made to ensure the presence of ICT in every school through the necessary infrastructure. As a result, more than 80% of the European teachers describe themselves as competent in using computers and the Internet in classroom situations; two-thirds dispose of the necessary motivation for doing so (according to their own opinion), and 60% describe the ICT infrastructure in their schools and the Internet connection as sufficiently rapid. This means that most teachers use computers in their everyday work, but, on the other hand, some are still reluctant to do so, mainly those who claim that a subject does not lend itself to being taught with computers, or that there is a lack of proper didactic contents.

The point of view of the teacher staff may lead us to conclude that most teachers are aware of the advantages of using ICT in education. It could not be otherwise. Computers are a part of our daily life and ICT skills are thus among the new basic skills, according to the Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of 18 December 2006 on Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (Recommendation, 2006).

But if we observe at a certain scope, we can easily notice that the current use of ICT in classrooms is mainly related to information and data transfer and interactive exercises. This is closer to the Computer Aided Instruction (CAI), than to a truly e-learning system. In other words, the possibilities of the Internet as a tool to communication, collaborative learning, and development of social spaces for sharing and building knowledge remain still almost unexploited. For instance, the flexibility that e-learning offers to support and guide the learning activities of pupils who need to increase their learning result is an almost unexplored field. In the process of developing e-learning solutions for schools, teacher staff, policy makers, and other stakeholders are due to shift to a broader understanding of the possibilities of e-learning within the formal learning. From a content centred approach, that may help teachers in delivering instructional predefined contents. It is possible to reach a more flexible e-learning model, which also correlates to the lifelong learning objectives.

This previous path is to be taken to ensure positive experiences for teachers and interesting learning results, and, accordingly, a natural shift to a more open minded use of the Web as a powerful way to build and share knowledge, which will probably bring us to the almost mythical realm of e-learning 2.0, often foretold as the future scenario that will allow learning in every possible human situation.