Chapter XXI
Personal Knowledge Management Skills for Lifelong–Learners 2.0

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ABSTRACT

In this chapter the authors identify the Personal Knowledge Management (PKM) pre-dispositions, skills and competences of the current effective lifelong-learner 2.0. They derive a PKM-skills model centred on a division into basic PKM competences, associated with social software Web practices of create-organize-share, and Higher-Order skills (HO-skills), which identify enabling conditions and competences which favour the advanced management of one’s personal knowledge (PK). To derive the PKM-skills model we addressed a survey to 16 interviewees who can be defined as expert lifelong-learners 2.0. The HO-skills branch out into four macro competences, identified as connectedness, ability to balance formal and informal contexts, critical ability and creativity.

INTRODUCTION

Managing our personal knowledge through the use of technologies is referred to as PKM - Personal Knowledge Management (Dorsey, 2000; Sorrentino & Paganelli, 2006) and is a key asset in our society. This concept has been widely studied (Frand & Hixon, 1999; Dorsey, 2000; Wright, 2005; Jarche, 2006) in keeping with its importance in the Knowledge Society. Personal
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knowledge management (PKM), through interaction and sharing across members of a community, is the basis of an individual’s social learning. Indeed, awareness and responsibility for personal knowledge (PK) do determine the effectiveness of the individual inside a learning, professional, practice, or enterprise community.

PKM is a process and a strategy for the proper use of technology tools to enhance learning-skills (O’Conner, 2002). Research into how children and young people become competent in using the Internet and other research tools highlights that the information literacy of young people has not improved despite widening access to technology (British Library & JISC, 2008; Katz & Macklin, 2007; Katz, 2006; Kvavik, 2005). Indeed, their apparent familiarity and competency with computers disguises some worrying issues (Lorenzo & Dziuban, 2006): little time is spent in evaluating information, either for relevance, accuracy or authority. Young people find it difficult to assess the relevance of the materials presented and often print off pages with no more than a surface level glance at the content. Moreover, young people have a poor understanding of their information needs and thus find it difficult to develop effective information search and retrieval strategies.

Acquiring PKM-skills is a complex and ongoing process that can be favoured by enabling conditions and internalization of suitable and effective practices and behavioural values. The present chapter delineates the multifaceted and fluid profile of the lifelong-learner which, in our conception of it, becomes the mental habitus and, simultaneously, the ideal training path for the learner who is very much aware of the knowledge and learning processes which are inherent in the concept of the Knowledge Society (EU-Commission, 2006).

The long-term current research aim focuses on teaching-methodology i.e., planning PKM-skills training for adults who are not expert lifelong learners (e.g. undergraduates). We believe it possible to develop training aimed at triggering processes so that digital and social literacy skills and competences can be gradually enriched, become internalized and personalized by non-expert subjects. Hence, this study examines the efficacious practices of expert learners in relation to Web 2.0 tools and environments. On the basis of a qualitative survey, our objective is to delineate a competence profile of the lifelong-learner 2.0 so as to identify a valid quality-training planning support-tool aimed at developing PKM-skills in non-experts. This PKM-skills model centres around basic competences and Higher-Order skills (HO-skills). It identifies enabling conditions and competences which favour effective management of one’s PK (Mangione, Cigognini & Pettenati, 2007).

The research linked to the HO-skills model design is presented in three main parts: (i) theoretical precepts and structure of the initial PKM-skills model; (ii) qualitative research to identify HO PKM-skills using a semi-structured survey to 16 expert lifelong-learners 2.0 defined as such based on their everyday PKM uses in their work; (iii) analysis of results in a model which restructures and advances our previous one (Mangione et al., 2007).

PART 1: BACKGROUND

Literacy and Skills for Knowledge Society Learners

Developing a PKM competence landscape (Martin, 2006a) helps prepare and orient Net-Generation learners (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005) for a lifelong-learning culture which helps them perform better in the Knowledge Society.

Many terms used to denote concepts akin to PKM-skills include: literacy (UNESCO, 2002), information literacy (Irving & Crawford, 2007), media or multimedia literacy (Aviram & Talmi, 2004), e-skills (European e-Skills Forum, 2004), eLiteracy (Martin, 2003; 2006a-b), digital lit-