

E-LEARNING ACTIVITY OF THE WARSAW SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

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The Internet and ICT have significantly influenced the educational system, giving teachers and students brand new possibilities of enriching learning materials, broad access to information, and opportunity to teach online. More and more universities have realized that they should undertake programs of change in the traditional curriculum, and implement ICT into the didactic process. The Warsaw School of Economics (SGH, www.sgh.waw.pl) is one of the Polish universities which faced the challenge, and started to develop e-learning projects for their students.

Centre for Development of Distance and Permanent Education (CREN)

The Warsaw School of Economics is the oldest (active for 100 years already) and leading university of economics in Poland, a member of CEMS, EUA and PIM network. Over 70.000 people have graduated from the University so far. Its activity in the field of e-learning was started in October 2001. Soon, the Centre for Development of Permanent and Distance Education (CREN, www.cren.pl) has been created as a department responsible for the overall strategy and organization of e-learning activities of the University. The Centre carries out research, organizes seminars and workshops, develops educational projects and trainings, also for companies.

As a result, SGH students have a possibility to use online materials supporting traditional classes, and participate in over thirty-five fully online courses, which have been created by their teachers, in line with internal standards, and published on the CREN e-learning platform: www.e-sgh.pl. E-learning tools support interaction between students and lecturers, and additional supplementing materials can be easily accessed there. The platform, built according to SCORM specifications, has over 20.000 unique users, and each year the number is increased by new students.

Apart from enriching the lectures with e-learning materials, and organizing full online courses and trainings, SGH carries out educational projects. An interesting initiative, which is an example of a broad cooperation and promotion of e-learning, is *Econet* - a joint project of five Polish universities of economics. Participating in the project, students from those universities can

work together - taking part in joint online courses, exchanging ideas, and building new contacts - and gain experience.

SGH is also active in international cooperation. A joint e-learning course, organized with the University of Illinois at Springfield, USA, is simply one of the examples. During the project, students not only have had a possibility to study online, but also to work in an international environment, experience a mixture of cultures, and prepare themselves for working in the globalized world. For such courses, an English version of the e-learning platform (www.e-sgh.com) has been created.

Cooperating closely with the Foundation of the Promotion and Accreditation of the Economic Education (www.fundacja.edu.pl), CREN is also involved in organizing a series of conferences on *The development of e-learning in higher education of economics* (www.e-edukacja.net). In November 2007, the fourth edition of the conference took place in Wroclaw, Poland. The main aim of the meeting is to promote and continue an academic discussion on implementing and developing e-learning in higher education, particularly in teaching economics. The large number of participants is a clear sign of the conferences high quality.

CREN is also involved in the actions of the Association of Academic E-learning (AAE), which has been created in September 2006. The main aim of AAE is to promote and develop e-learning in academic, business, and Public Administration environments. It supports scientific and organizational cooperation of institutions involved in distance education, and inspires bonds between science and economic practice.

“E-mentor” magazine

The Warsaw School of Economics is also co-publisher of the “E-mentor” magazine - a Polish academic bimonthly review, the main sections of which are: e-learning, lifelong learning, knowledge management, e-business and, in more extensive scope, methods and forms of training at the academic level. The main aim of the magazine - which is published both online and in print - is to promote the abovementioned areas, encourage discussion, exchange ideas, and share results of the latest research in the academic environment. “E-mentor” supports the process of creation of organizational cultures, which implement Knowledge Management (KM), using new technologies in education, increasing

the quality of teaching, and developing the information society concept.

The first issue of “E-mentor” was published in October 2003, and in June 2008 the 25th issue will be printed. The journal contains reviewed articles (about 300 published so far), interviews, case studies, reports from scientific conferences and seminars (over 100 until now), as well as a ‘Recommended’ section, in which most interesting publications, Websites and forthcoming events are described. The publication is supervised by the Program Committee, composed of Professors and Doctors of the Warsaw School of Economics, and other academic institutions.

The printed version of the magazine is distributed for free to subscribers - over 280 educational institutions, which deal with distance education all over Poland. The online version, which is enriched by interactive tools, such as forums, conference calendar, map of universities of the third age, and search engine, is visited over 60.000 times each month, and, in May 2008, our statistics noted the 2.000.000th visitor. The number of online users is still growing, reflecting the global trend of an increasing number of people reading papers online.

Our readers are mostly: academic teachers, lecturers, non-academic teachers, authorities (rectors, deans), experts, students, administration employees and, generally, all people interested in modern trends of enriching education with the use of ICT, new trends in economy, e-business and knowledge management, and the idea of continuous training. “E-mentor” gives them a possibility to increase their knowledge, analyze case studies and educational projects of other universities. We often publish articles which show good practices, which can serve as model examples for other educational institutions. Therefore, dissemination of knowledge and information between different universities and teams of experts and researchers is being made. We always encourage academics to publish results of their research or implementations in “E-mentor”, so that others could benefit from their experience.

“E-mentor” is written in Polish, but we do not confine it to Polish issues only. There are two ways in which we cooperate with the international e-learning environment. First of all, each issue of “E-mentor” also includes an English version, which is published online. The version contains summaries of all articles, and full versions of articles, which are originally written in English. Such

solution makes it possible for foreign readers to know more about the state of e-learning development in Poland, our conferences and seminars, implementations of KM systems in organizations, and also international cooperation with foreign universities. Secondly, we cooperate with foreign authors, and publish their articles in "E-mentor". The section 'E-learning worldwide' enables our readers to get acquainted with the state of e-learning implementations in many different countries (e.g. Greece, Denmark, Croatia, Germany, South Africa). They can serve as a comparison for our own Polish achievements, and can be used for benchmarking.

Having experience and appropriate resources, the Warsaw School of Economics can contribute a lot, participating in international e-learning projects and research. The University is still developing its e-learning potential, works as a partner in projects co-financed with the European Union Funds, and is open for further cooperation.