

TNP2 Workshop on New Learning Environments

7-8 June 2002, Handelshojskolen in Copenhagen

1.1. Introduction

The Workshop on New Learning Environments in Copenhagen was the culmination of year 2 of the TNP2 Subproject on New learning Environments (NLE) (for more information on the TNP project see: <http://www.fu-berlin.de/elc/tnp2/index.html>).

The workshop was in fact preceded by a meeting of the Scientific Committee of the subproject, which combines representatives from 21 countries. National reports were produced that give a survey of the situation with respect to NLEs in Europe and the information was then brought together in a synthesis report (see: <http://www.taalnet.rug.ac.be/tnp/NLEsynthesisreportdraft3.doc>).

The aim throughout was also to come up with recommendations for policy makers at the institutional, national and European levels with respect to the fundamental issues on NLEs. Part of the aims of the workshop was to discuss the implications of these recommendations.

The workshop brought together all the member-representatives of the subproject on NLEs, the coordinators of the other subprojects (on Quality Issues and Curriculum Innovation) and a number of external experts, who were asked to contribute their views to the issues at hand.

The students were represented as well through AEGEE.

An external evaluator, Victor the Kosinsky, was brought in to evaluate the activities of both the TNP in general and the subproject in particular.

1.2. Aims and structure of the Workshop (brief sent out beforehand)

The aims of the workshop are

- • To find consensus on the issues of importance in the Subproject on New learning Environments of TNP2 to set this out in workshop reports
- • To discuss and revise the set of recommendations worked out in Year 1
- • To set up plans for concrete action (e.g. project proposals) and identify areas that require additional work
- • To relate our work to the Bologna process and to lifelong learning and autonomous learning
- • To link NLEs to issues such as learning outcomes (in terms of linguistic and intercultural skills and competences)

There are to be 4 workshop sessions (90 min) + 1 introduction (60min) and a final discussion of 60 minutes.

Finally there will be a meeting on Saturday afternoon to discuss possible cooperation, followed by a reception

The proposed themes of the 4 sessions are :

1. Staff development and learner training
2. Methodology and materials development

3. Integration of CEF and Portfolio in NLEs
4. Technological environment (Virtual Learning Environment)

Throughout we will also be aware of the implications of our universities becoming European and the position of the LWULT languages (possibly including the use of English as a medium of instruction in higher education)

The workshop will start with a 30-minute introduction to the subproject by Anne Rasanen. There will also be a 30-minute presentation by a Maija Kalin on the Virtual University Language Centre of Finland, which will be a network language centre providing discipline-specific language and communication studies for virtual university degree students (lifelong learning and e-learning)

The workshop sessions will on average last 90 minutes each. In each there will be 1, 2 or 3 presentations of 25 minutes and 30 minutes of debate
Throughout the sessions special attention will be devoted to the LWULT countries.

1.3. Questions to be answered

1. Staff development and learner training in the light of e-learning and virtual universities
 - a. a. What skills and competences are needed in teachers and learners (apart from the technical skills) so that they are ready for e-learning and virtual universities?
 - b. b. What are the known problems and solutions with regard to teachers and learners in terms of NLEs?
 - c. c. What about the changing roles of teachers (and learners)?
 - d. d. To what extent do qualifications and job descriptions of teachers need to be reassessed?
 - e. e. How do we set up the necessary methodological teacher development programmes?
2. Methodology and materials development (especially for LWULT languages)
 - a. a. What are the elements of a good language pedagogy in terms of NLEs?
 - b. b. How far can we go with language independent approaches (eg. for the LWULT languages)?
 - c. c. How can we use existing VLEs such as Blackboard and WebCT? What can they do and where are their limits?
 - d. d. To what extent does language learning methodology have to be adapted in order to accommodate lifelong learning and autonomous learning?
 - e. e. How can we encourage the development of cross-platform materials and what are the criteria they have to fulfil?
3. Integration of CEF and Portfolio for assessment and programmes
 - a. a. How can the CEF and the Portfolio lead to common European assessment criteria for language learning and teaching?
 - b. b. How important is it to facilitate transparency and academic and professional recognition of language learning across Europe?
 - c. c. To what extent can CEF and Portfolio be used in practice today in higher education? To what extent are its needs different from those in adult and continuing education?
 - d. d. How to incorporate CEF descriptors in the description of learning materials and for the elaboration of language objectives?
4. Technological environment (Virtual Learning Environment)

- a. a. What are the technological elements needed to create a VLE?
- b. b. What are the required characteristics of these components?
- c. c. How can we cooperate by means of common technological platforms and learning spaces?
- d. d. To what extent can the social dimension of language learning be made part of the technological environment?

1.4. Present set of recommendations

(see Synthesis Report: <http://www.taalnet.rug.ac.be/tnp/>)

(E-European level; N-national; I-institutional)

1. *1. Development of national and institutional educational visions, policies, and strategies to recognise and foster the value of multilingualism and cultural competence, as well as ICT and lifelong learning skills, as integral parts of academic and professional competence. (N/I)*
2. *2. Improvement, updating, and tailoring of the necessary infrastructure (technical, strategic, staff) to guarantee baseline conditions and to serve the purposes of using NLEs in a flexible way in teaching and for independent language learning (ILL). (I/N)*
3. *3. Tailored and continuous technical support for actors involved and interdisciplinary co-operation. (I/N)*
4. *4. Continuous practical and methodological teacher development programmes and pedagogical support tailored particularly for the needs of higher education language teachers. (N/I)*
5. *5. Reassessment and updating of pre-service education of all language professionals to ensure their future expertise in the field (N/I).*
6. *6. Reassessment of qualifications and job descriptions and establishment of new qualifications programmes (e.g. linguistic engineer). (N/I)*
7. *7. Systematic learner training for independent language learning (ILL) and use of NLEs and adequate support systems. (I)*
8. *8. Acknowledgement of language studies as an integral part of academic and professional qualifications in all fields, and accreditation and validation of such studies as well as independent language learning achievement. (N/I)*
9. *9. Establishment of common standardised platforms and learning spaces to ensure easy access of resources and expertise. (E/N/I)*
10. *10. Joint institutional, national, and European projects and action research projects to evaluate existing, and to develop new programmes, materials and pedagogical approaches which promote multilingualism, use of NLEs and ILL. (I/N/E)*

11. *11. Encouragement to use common European standards of reference and assessment to guarantee transparency and reciprocal recognition. (N/I)*
12. *12. Creation of a European language teaching and learning network, which brings together all existing activities and organisations of European higher education institutions and serves as a main port of call for coordination and dissemination of information and experience. (E/N/I)*
13. *13. Creation of post-graduate and professional programmes whose validation can be recognised by European institutions and be included in universities' career structures. (E/NI)*
14. *14. Joint evaluation of effectiveness based on common criteria. (E/N/I)*
15. *15. Creation of a systematic approach to facilitating internationalisation at home and inclusion of mobile staff and students into the promotion of multilingualism and intercultural experience. (I/N)*