



Rebuilding Educational Institutions from Scratch: Practical Experiences using Social Media and Virtual Worlds for Education

¹Susanne Hecht, ²Donovan Babin, ³Erika Hummer, ⁴Klaus Hammermüller
shecht@uni-bielefeld.de, donovan.babin@uni-bielefeld.de, erika.hummer@inode.at,
klaus@talkademy.org

¹⁻²University of Bielefeld (Germany), ³⁻⁴Talkademy (Austria)

Abstract

The British creativity expert Sir Ken Robinson (1) suggests that we drastically need to „re-format“ our educational system to answer the 21st century requirements because existing systems are severely outdated and still trapped in a 19th century design. The Indian education expert Sugata Mitra (2) demonstrates that education can be delivered without a teacher with similar results in India and in Italy alike. The current PISA results (3) underline that innovation in education in Europe is discussed but not really implemented. Finland alone is representing Europe in the top 10 when today's standards are defined by the Asia-Pacific region. This paper explores one experiment in the rebuilding of our educational system. It is based on practical experiences using social media and virtual worlds in language education reorganizing the way education is delivered. It leverages from the immersive power of these new media allowing to implement an experience based, learner centered education. The restructuring of the role-model in education is the key in our experiment: In our learning environments we empower the student to do and act. They collaborate with peers and coaches (not teachers), actors, native speakers and experts to solve problems and to face challenges important to them. A new social world of education is emerging. The results presented in this paper are derived from courses held in universities and schools in Central Europe during the last three years. Participants are much more active and engaged in this new social setting, thus training and learning more and with greater ease. We will set our findings in virtual worlds in context to other experience based learning environments like field-trips, practicas and hands-on workshops. We propose that we need much less classroom learning experiences and much more learning experience connected with the real world.