



Peer Learning by Means of Interactive Social Media as a Tool for Sustainable Teaching and Learning

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This paper draws from the experience of Isabel Project (www.isabelproject.eu). The aim of this KA3-project is to promote community engagement through use of social media and through the practice of “community reporting”, that is narrating and reporting about own community concerns. In the ISABEL project we defined “community” equally to a community of place or a community of interest.

The Isabel project itself was presented at Future of Education-Conference in June 2011, yet [1]. The presentation showed how web 2.0 and social media applications / practices can provide learning opportunities on the one hand and equip citizens with skills and competences to fit new models of active citizenship based on the use of ICT technologies on the other hand.

Literature consistently proves how social media can effectively support peer learning and social inclusion processes in general. Several researches show that online communities can be successful for engaging back to learn disaffected youth since “a strong sense of community not only increases persistence of students in online programs, but also enhances information flow, learning support, group commitment, collaboration, and learning satisfaction” [2]. As far as formal education is concerned, the “flipped classroom” is a new, IT-based training practice that is apparently proving to be effectively advantageous, at least in certain social and learning contexts [3].

In this paper we are tackling Web 2.0-based community reporting practices from the point of view of sustainability, presenting data in a case studies perspective. Sustainability in training and learning shapes in a multiplicity of dimensions, like economical, ecological, social and didactical aspects:

1. Economical means: use of cheap equipment, free access to equipment (using/renting equipment of the partners), free access to software, free access to user generated content worldwide.
2. Ecological is concerned with the use of energy and other resources. The equipment should be certified (e.g. by Blue Angel, see <http://www.blauer-engel.de/en/index.php>), servers should be low carbon etc.
3. Social means: Interactive Social Media entails facilitation of communication and interaction of communities [1].
4. Finally, didactically the ISABEL-trainings use an informal empowerment approach fostering self-esteem in participants and supporting pleasant learning situations by use of easy to handle equipment. At the level of didactics, sustainability means “autonomous learning”, where the latter not only is defined as the capacity of working on one’s own and constructing own knowledge but, overall, promoted and acquired as a “habit of mind” [4].

- [1] Blümcke K. / Paas, F. Interactive Social Media for Informal Learning and Empowerment – The Project Isabel
- [2] Johnson J. / Dyer J. Using Multimedia in an on-line community for disenfranchised youth; online pdf <http://www.inclusiontrust.org/Library/>
- [3] <http://www.thedailyriff.com/articles/teachers-doing-the-flip-to-help-students-become-learners-531.php>
- [4] Crome K./ Farrar R. / O'Connor P. 2009. What is Autonomous Learning ? In: *Discourse*, Vol 9, nr.1