Changing Roles and Changing Interaction? Teachers and Students Experiences of e-Learning at the Open University in Finland

Böök Marja Leena, Ladonlahti Tarja, Mykkänen Johanna, Saurén Kirsi-Marja, Uotinen Sanna

The Open University of the University of Jyväskylä (Finland)

marja.leena.book@jyu.fi, tarja.ladonlahti@jyu.fi, johanna.mykkanen@jyu.fi, kirsi-marja.sauren@jyu.fi, sanna.uotinen@jyu.fi

Distance learning and e-learning are increasingly becoming more common in higher education. Even so, studies concerning teacher's role and professional identity in these new environments are sparse. The purpose of this study is to discuss the phenomenology of teaching and learning in modern technology. E-learning environment challenges both teachers and students to consider their own role. Two main interests in this research are to examine 1) teacher's changing role in e-learning environment, and 2) student's experiences in e-learning environment. This study takes place at the Open University of Jyväskylä. Students at the Open University are heterogeneous group and they come from all over Finland. Therefore, teachers are obligated to develop distance learning possibilities for students and at the same time they should adopt new skills and role required in e-learning environment. The data of this qualitative research is collected from teachers (n=5) and students (n=41) of Qualitative research method course (5 ECTS). The course is implemented in web based learning environment Optima and AdobeConnect AC (web meeting solution for e-learning), which enables online-lectures. Data involves a) reflective discussions /interviews of teachers after each teaching session, b) recordings of on-line lectures and small group sessions, and c) students' feedback of the course. In this presentation we will present some preliminary results. It appears that students are very pleased with the possibility of e-learning. Students enjoyed meeting other students in web based learning environment. Sense of loneliness in distance learning decreased. Both students and teachers experienced interaction in online-lectures especially rewarding. Teachers had to innovate new pedagogical solutions in e-learning environment. Results will be discussed in more detail in our presentation.