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Editorial

The theme and the priorities of the IJREL reflect the conceptual principles underlying the modernization of education and the reform of the educational systems in European countries, as well as national development strategies for the 21st century. One of the European Union's key educational objectives is the provision of equal opportunities for all with regard to access to learning and knowledge, regardless of gender, financial and physical ability, and place of residence. That is why distance learning has now been granted a status of high priority. If introduced on a wide scale, distance learning and teaching may make significant contribution towards the achievement of educational goals in member states.

The present volume includes nine articles gathered in five chapters. Chapter one “Conceptual Aspect of Preparing B-Teacher in the 21st Century”, prepared by Professor António dos Reis, a researcher from the Graal Institute, Portugal, expert in the area of multimedia and virtual classroom technology, teacher training in the area of ICT. Dos Reis's article entitled “Be a (Blended) B-Teacher in the 21st Century – Some Reflections” discusses the issue of what it means to be a teacher in the 21st century, which occurs to be a great challenge and requires considerable thought. The author points to an evolution which has happened over the last 70 years. As a result, e-learning has evolved to a new form, that is, b-learning, where students will never be alone and where interactivity becomes very important. B-learning has a different format now, as it is asynchronous (contents on demand and activities to be implemented in an interactive format with remote collaborative work) and synchronous in presence or virtual environment. This paper was presented as an opening keynote at the International Scientific Conference *Theoretical and Practical Aspects of Distance Learning* (DLCC 2015) which was held at the University of Silesia, Poland, 12–13 October 2015.

Chapter two, “Education Quality in Open E-environment Research,” begins with an article “Open E-environment – The Key Instrument of the Education Quality,” elaborated by researchers from the Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, Ukraine, Nataliia Morze and Oksana Buinytska. The article focuses and presents studies on aspects related to the creation of an open e-environment which is one of the main tasks of universities as its use for educational purposes enhances the

quality of education of the modern university. An analysis was made of the publication activity of scientific and pedagogical staff using the Ukrainian information-analytical system “Bibliometric of Ukrainian Science” and a comparative study was performed to analyse the qualitative provision of masters by the teaching staff based on the newly-established and implemented in the BGKU rating system “E-portfolios.”

Chapter three “ICT and E-learning Research in Higher Education” comprises two papers. The first one, “ICT in Higher Education Teaching: Advantages, Problems and Motives,” prepared by Mykola Nakaznyi, Lyudmyla Sorokina, and Maryna Romaniukha from Dniprodzerzhinsk State Technical University in Ukraine, analyzes some results of a survey for university professors and university management, held by the international research team within the European IRNet Project: International Research Network for study and development of new tools and methods for advanced pedagogical science in the field of ICT instruments, e-learning, and intercultural competences. The survey researched motivation and aims of professors from Dniprodzerzhinsk State Technical University – official partner of the project. The article reveals professors’ beliefs and preferences about ICT-aided learning, as well as analyzes advantages, problems, and motives of the introduction of ICT in higher education teaching.

The second article “Assessment in VLE Supported Foreign Language Learning,” prepared by Ryszard Kalamarż from the Foreign Language Teaching Centre, University of Silesia in Katowice, focuses on the role of Virtual Learning Environments in the scope of different types of assessment in foreign language learning and teaching promoting learner autonomy and developing such key competences as learning to learn. Effective language education calls for a more learner-oriented approach to assessment and Learning Management Systems such as Moodle seem to respond to such needs in the computer-assisted teaching/learning process.

Chapter four “Research Results on Effective IT Tools” opens with the paper “Discussion Paper on More Adequate and Effective IT Tools. Some Previous Results Concerning More Adequate and Effective IT Tools in the Category: Tools for Making Presentations,” prepared by the international team: Eugenia Smyrnova-Trybulska, Ewa Ogrodzka-Mazur, and Anna Szafrńska-Gajdzica from University of Silesia, Poland; Martin Drlík, Martin Cápaj, Júlia Tomanová, and Peter Švec, researchers from Constantine the Philosopher University (Slovakia); Nataliia Morze and Rusudan Makhachashvili represent Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University (Ukraine); Maryna Romanyukha, Mykoła Nakazny, and Lyudmyla Sorokina from Dniprodzerzhinsk State Technical University (Ukraine); Tomayess Issa and Theodora Issa from Curtin University (Australia). The article describes some preliminary results of the implementation of WorkPackage 4 (WP4) “Selection and testing new IT tools” in the framework of the international research network IRNet and researchers from partner institutions. These results concern analysis and study of some categories of IT tools for making multimedia presentation. Authors

presented a ranking list based on quality and quantity assessment of chosen IT tools and proposed some recommendations of features considered indispensable for good presentation, as well as analysed some frequent mistakes made by users elaborating presentations.

Chapter five “Reports” includes two papers, that is, “Report on the Implementation of WorkPackage 2: ‘Analyses of Legal, Ethical, Human, Technical and Social factors of ICT and E-learning Development and Intercultural Competences State in Every Partner Country’ in the Framework of the IRNet Project,” prepared by international team of authors – researchers from different scientific areas, connected with ICT, e-learning, pedagogy, and other related disciplines team of authors from nine countries: Eugenia Smyrnova-Trybulska, Ewa Ogrodzka-Mazur, Anna Szafrńska-Gajdzica, and Ewelina Doluk, from the University of Silesia, Poland; Piet Kommers, from University of Twente, the Netherlands; Nataliia Morze and Borys Grinchenko, from Kyiv University, Ukraine; Tatiana Noskova, Tatiana Pavlova, and Olga Yakovleva, from Herzen State Pedagogical University of Russia, St. Petersburg, Russia; Paulo Pinto, from Lisbon Lusíada University, Portugal; Juan Arias Masa, Sixto Cubo Delgado, Gemma Delicado Puerto, from University of Extremadura, Spain; Martin Drlik, from Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra, Slovakia; Josef Malach, from University of Ostrava, Czech Republic; Tomayess Issa, from Curtin University in Perth, Australia; as well as Maryna Romanyukha, from Dniprodzerzhinsk State Technical University, Ukraine. This article focuses on the objectives and some results of the international project IRNet. In particular, the article describes research tools, methods and some procedure of the WP2: Analyses of legal, ethical, human, technical and social factors of ICT and e-learning development, and the state of intercultural competences in partner countries: Objectives, Tasks, Deliverables, implementation of research trips. Researchers from Poland, the Netherlands, Spain, Slovakia, Portugal, Czech Republic, Australia, Ukraine, and Russia analysed results of WP2 in the context of the next stages and Work Packages of IRNet project – International Research Network.

The subsequent paper “FATIH Project in Turkey: A Case Analysis,” elaborated by Nuh Yavuzalp, Melih Derya Güner, Orhan Curaoğlu, Soner Durmuş, Sedat Akayoğlu, Mehmet Bahar, Fahri Kiliç, and Erkan Tekinarslan, from Abant İzzet Baysal University, Bolu, Turkey, describes selected results of the project FATIH (Increasing Opportunities and Improving Technology Movement) in Turkey, started in 2010. In order to achieve the aimed goals, FATIH project consists of five main components. These components are establishing hardware and software infrastructure, educational e-content preparing and managing, effective use of IT in the curriculum, in-service training of teachers, conscious, reliable, manageable and quantifiable IT use. This paper presents the first component of the FATIH project and proceeds to discuss the current situation and future goals of the ongoing project.

In conclusion, it can be stressed that articles gathered in this issue, prepared by an international team of authors from 11 countries of the Western, Central and

Eastern Europe, as well as Asia and notably Australia, present a comprehensive overview of various aspects of the development of ICT and e-learning: their educational, scientific, human, social, technological contexts, and show that the contemporary space with no frontiers, no boundaries, and in conditions of globalization and internationalization becomes small. Simultaneously, every step, made by each individual researcher or a team of researchers as part of international research network helps to improve the educational process, raise its quality and foster development of an effective and valuable level of regional and global e-environment and e-space.

Eugenia Smyrnova-Trybulska