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EU Projects @ *die Berater*®

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Wikis in Education

Wikis are based on the principle of collaborative learning and making knowledge available for all. Occasionally, however, it can also be useful to restrict access to certain knowledge to defined groups of people, for example, people in individual courses or even whole schools. In this way, knowledge can be compiled and stored for current and future use, without the whole world having access to it.

Through such activities, schools or organisations can develop large knowledge pools that can be called up, enhanced and edited by everyone, whilst at the same time networking with other schools and organisations.

The EU project WikiSkills develops and implements a wiki training to teach educators how to make the best use of wikis in education. Through this the project promotes innovative pedagogical approaches to foster digital literacy, as well as social skills, writing skills and critical thinking.

In May 2012 *die Berater*® held a focus group with trainers in adult education on developing different ways and scenarios for integrating wikis in education (i.e. for project management, for the employees of a company to network and to share knowledge, for team building etc.). *die Berater*® is also responsible for the exploitation of the project results.

The project aims at :

- Developing collaborative leadership skills, collective decision making skills, conflict resolution skills, governance skills, etc., whilst contributing to the growth of a learning and working community
- Improving skills on collaborating with others to edit and develop texts
- Valorising existing cultural patrimony
- Acquisition of digital fluency basic knowledge

Collaborative Learning
For trainers to work with wikis, it is essential for them to be able to collaborate well with their students; good exchange between teachers and students is paramount to a successful wiki.

A lot of learning environments are characterized by one-way knowledge transmission processes in which the teacher is seen as the only source of knowledge. The teacher therefore assigns a learning activity that is carried out autonomously by the student.

By working with wikis students and course participants can learn not only how to publish content, but learn to acquire and improve cooperative skills.

What exactly is a wiki?
A wiki is a website whose users can add, modify, or delete its content simply via a web browser. Wikis permit asynchronous communication and group collaboration across the Internet. What separates the wiki from other online, distributed environments, such as Learning Management Systems (LMS) and groupware applications, is its open architecture. The design implies that structure is not imposed or predetermined (as in an LMS) but emerges as a result of participation.

The essence of the wiki concept may be described as follows:

- A wiki invites all users to edit any page or to create new pages within the wiki website, using only a web browser.
- A wiki promotes meaningful topic associations between different pages, by making page link creation intuitive and showing whether an intended target page exists or not.
- A wiki is not a carefully crafted site for casual visitors. Instead, it seeks to involve the visitor in an ongoing process of creation and collaboration that constantly changes the website landscape.

8th WikiSym - International Symposium on Wikis and Open Collaboration
The next WikiSym is held in Linz, from 27th to 29th August. WikiSym is a symposium (conference) series dedicated to wiki and open collaboration research and practice. This symposium has been a gathering place for those interested in how we can use technologies like Wikis to support, develop, and change collaboration and collective action.

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