



Learn, not labour

Dr Daniel Burgos, Dr Jesús G Boticario and Dr Helen Petrie explore how ICT in lifelong learning can help to create equal opportunities and to narrow the digital divide...

The EU Education and Training Policy states three main objectives: improving the quality and effectiveness of education and training systems; facilitating access to education and training systems; and opening up EU education and training systems to the wider world. A key action line to support these objectives is the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLL).

LLL aims to contribute to the development of the European Community as an advanced knowledge society, with sustainable economic development, more and better jobs, and greater social cohesion. It aims to foster interaction, cooperation and mobility between education and training systems within the community. LLL recognises that learning is not confined to childhood or the classroom, but takes place throughout life and in a range of situations. Learning can no longer be divided into a place and time to acquire knowledge (eg. school) and a place and time to apply the knowledge acquired (eg. the workplace). There are several established contexts for lifelong learning, for example, home schooling, adult education, continuing education, work-based learning, and personal learning environments. Furthermore, LLL envisages that many adult learners will have left their initial formal education and will resume some kind of education later in life. There are many implications for personal, group, and social contexts.

Between 2007 and 2013, LLL will integrate a number of educational and training initiatives, including Leonardo da Vinci, Comenius, Grundtvig and Jean Monnet. They all enable individuals at all stages of their lives to support, foster and improve their learning, and all consider social inclusion and activities related to disabilities.

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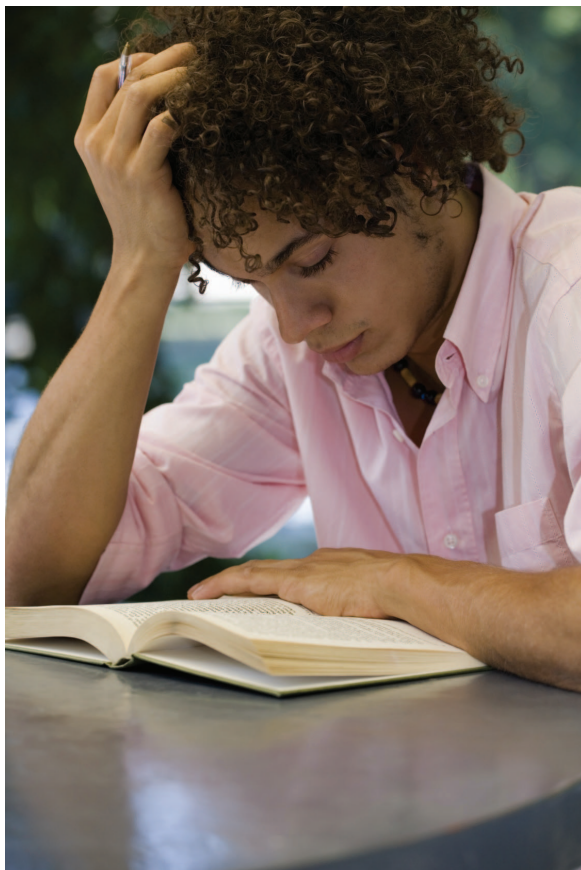
Furthermore, lifelong learning is highly related to employability, self-employability and sustainability, especially in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) context. Since ICT evolves quickly and has introduced many changes in both personal and business communication, lifelong learning needs to cope with this changeable context and make the most of it. With this aim, effective integration of ICT into lifelong learning must be supported by psycho-pedagogical assistance, along with technical assistance. ICT in lifelong learning goes beyond the provision of devices or the need



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for a quicker learning process. It means tools and devices. However, it also means personal and group support, social inclusion, and context-based help.

The lifelong learning paradigm recognises that, in a knowledge-based society, education and work are integrated throughout people's lives. All citizens need ongoing access to learning to enable them to work. In this context, technology has to play an increasing role in mediating this learning. However, there is a risk



that technology is inappropriate or introduced with insufficient support. If that happens, disabled people, in particular, will face even further exclusion from the interlinked worlds of education and work.

In this context, the EU4ALL project (www.eu4all-project.eu) provides a technical framework, along with psychopedagogical foundations and supporting actions, to improve lifelong learning for every citizen in Europe, regardless of disability. The project follows three key strategies: accommodate the diversity of ways people interact with technology; use technology to provide support services; and provide technical infrastructure for

educational institutions to offer their teaching and supporting services in a way that is accessible to disabled students.

Since ICT is embedded in our personal and professional daily lives, the required lifelong learning policies and strategies must come along with them, and must be embedded into education and training policies to support students with disabilities and older students. Lifelong learning must support and be supported by ICT. In this sense, ICT in lifelong learning can help to narrow the digital divide, and will help create equal learning and job opportunities for people, regardless of age or disability.

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