ICT bridges the gap between formal and informal learning

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Abstract: Traditionally formal learning is the process delivered at schools. It is directed by well described and clearly defined objectives for knowledge and competences, and in examination syllabi. Formal learning is part of institutional education, highly structured and curriculum driven. Informal learning is defined by Coombs (1985) as:

"the spontaneous, unstructured learning that goes on daily in the home and neighbourhood, behind the school and on the play field, in the workplace, marketplace, library and museum, and through the various mass media, informal learning is by far the most prevalent form of adult learning" (Wikipedia).

This panel session will discuss the way we can link formal and informal learning.

The theses will stimulate discussion about the value of informal learning, about the way informal learning could be used to improve formal learning and about the desirability of incorporating informal learning into traditional formal education. In addition the panel discussion will consider whether the growing uptake of ICT and the new ways in which the net-generation learns, is influencing these statements.

Theses for discussion in this panel will be:

1. The outcome of the formal education process is highly improved by using informally gained knowledge and competences.
2. In measuring the outcome of institutionalized education informally learned knowledge and competences should be taken into account. In other words: the traditional curriculum should recognize the informal learning of pupils outside the school.
3. Using ICT in order to achieve formal learning objectives automatically implies the recognition of informal knowledge and competences as outcomes of the educational process.
4. The net-generation, using all kinds of ICT, learns in a greater variety of ways. So schools should take account of these new ways of learning in their planning and teaching. This puts extra pressure on the need to incorporate more informal learning in the learning process.
5. Informal learning and its acceptance as part of a person’s whole education leads to a better preparation for lifelong learning.
6. A major review of assessment measures and methods of measurement is needed to take account of the outcomes of informal learning as part of the whole educational process.

Panellists: Robert Munro, (UK - Scotland), Wing Lai (New Zealand), Mary Webb (UK), Marta Turcsanyi-Szabo (Hungary)

Chair: Pieter Hogenbirk, Netherlands