

Abstract

Five schools involved in the eLSA project were used as case studies in a research project. The findings reveal that at the beginning the participating schools had to face the challenge of a quick, efficient and successful implementation as well as the changes the project caused. Since e-learning had not been exercised by most teachers beforehand, the schools had to overcome obstacles partly resulting from their lack of experience and partly from the project design itself. Technical, structural and personnel resources had to be developed gradually.

During the first stage of the project, teachers who were not or hardly familiar with e-learning showed a more traditional, teacher-centred rather than a pupil-centred and self-directed approach to learning and teaching. In contrast, experienced teachers, who had already used e-learning before, started to reconsider their role as teachers, instructors and guides. They focussed more on their role in an e-learning environment rather than only on the appropriate and large scale use of diverse media in classroom. Thus, e-learning was only regarded as another additional although important element within the development of a complex learning environment, which ties in with the everyday life experiences of children.

The results of our survey show that teachers have gained a more positive attitude towards e-learning and that they overcame reservation and prejudice more and more (in) during the course of the project. Thus, eLSA has led to a more sensible and professional use of e-media in classroom and has become an essential part of both teaching and personnel development in schools.

As the results of the evaluation indicate, in the context of the project teachers more willingly attended training courses, which were offered to further develop and deepen their e-learning skills. Experience also taught that special attention needs to be paid to the organisation of extracurricular courses especially when teachers differ a great deal in their previous knowledge and experiences, otherwise teachers tend to develop a rather negative or even hostile attitude towards e-learning as such. The personal and informal exchange of experiences among colleagues turned out to be the most fruitful and sustainable way to implement the project at schools since this seemed to provide a more flexible knowledge management. The introduction of new teaching methods in line with blended learning demands, however, a new way of guidance which will have to be worked out more distinctly in the course of future projects.

Finally, blended learning/ e-learning served to open up the classroom as well as to intensify the interdisciplinary exchange among schools all over Austria. It has led to a more individual and personal approach to learning. Pupils have gained a more realistic understanding of when, where and how e-learning as well as blended learning can or cannot be useful. E-learning has increasingly been experienced as a new, exciting and interesting way of learning which can – if used reasonably – complement other teaching and learning methods. Furthermore, some interesting starting points concerning the use of ICT arose. Thus, we briefly pointed out both the possibilities and limits of ICT and digital literacy. We touched upon the question concerning the potential impact of e-learning on children's reading and writing skills and habits as well as on their changing handling of texts in interrelation with the media in use. For knowledge management purposes there is also the question of how children can learn to handle complex and strongly interrelated information, which directly leads up to didactics and the question of future scenarios in respect to the use of multimedia in teaching and learning alike. Due to an increasing digitalisation of learning environments, a paradigm shift in literacy is taking place, which, unfortunately, has sparsely been expanded into didactic discussions among teachers in practice, as the results of our case studies show.