GUEST EDITORIAL

DIGITAL INNOVATIONS IN TEACHER EDUCATION

Schools are changing, as is the Western education system. These changes reflect substantial new demands from society and the economy, which primarily mirror the need for increased availability and greater transparency of information. The transformation from a traditional (industrial) society to the so-called "Information Society" that is expected to drive the anticipated "Knowledge Economy" requires new skill sets. To participate fully in a changed and ever-changing environment, the modern Westerners need to be able to continuously retrieve, evaluate and process vast amounts of different types of information. Education and schools in particular are seen as a major vehicle for changing this transition and that requires teachers to have a comprehensive set of competencies in order to further develop the skills of the next generation.

Teacher education and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) play a vital role in this scheme of emerging trends. ICTs and especially new learning technologies are on the one hand a tool for finding information and for producing and sharing knowledge, while on the other hand they themselves require new competencies from those that want to apply them successfully. At the University College of Teacher Education Vienna (www.phwien.ac.at), Austria, the research team takes this challenge very seriously and aims not only to use technology as a matter of daily routine, but to research and evaluate the challenges it poses to the next generation of teacher educators and teachers. A dedicated research centre (Centre for Learning Technologies and Innovation, http://podcampus.phwien.ac.at/zli/) has been set up to advance our knowledge in the area of educational technology and new methods for teaching and learning, especially focusing on teacher educators and in-service teachers.

This special issue emphasises digital Innovations in teacher education considering the societal and curricular relevance of technology-enhanced learning (TEL), especially in the field of teacher education within a scientific and practical context which solicits original (research) papers framing pedagogic and didactic considerations, applicative scenarios or taxonomies in the field of technology-enhanced learning and teaching within the context of teacher education/development. It supports a critically-reflective discourse about technological developments and their implementation in teacher education/development curricula.

In their contribution, Gemma Tur, Jane Challinor and Victoria I. Marín present an analysis of digital reflective narratives of identity constructed by student teachers in their first year at university. Focusing on the possibilities of digital artefacts, as OER, their research examines the importance of scaffolding approaches to the development of teacher identity through reflective practices.

As playing digital games has become part of their everyday life for many young people, Sonja Gabriel is convinced that digital game-based learning can be a useful way of teaching today's children and teenagers. Therefore, in her article she discusses some factors to be taken into account before a teacher can effectively implement digital games in a classroom. With that in mind, she also presents the initial results of her research project carried out with the help of student teachers. Her intention is to show that it is of utmost importance to grasp the potential of digital games in order to be able to use them effectively in class, i.e. to transfer skills, facts, and attitudes from the game to real life situations.

In their article, Simone Atzesberger, Evelyn Dechant-Tucheslau, Michael Steiner and Petra Szucsich present the Austrian KidZ project, which aims to make learning with ICT part of regular school life. The basic rationale behind the project is to explore ways of developing more sustainable solutions in the process of developing innovative teaching methods and learning through digital media in the context of schools.

Andrea Ghoneim and Bernhard Ertl provide an overview of the European project *EUfolio. EU classroom ePortfolios* (2013-2015) that pursues the aim of implementing ePortfolios in lower secondary schools in Cyprus, Ireland, Lithuania, Slovenia and Spain. In doing so, their main objective is to illustrate the experiences and lessons learned.

Bridging the gap between theory and practice in a meaningful way is one of the major challenges facing teacher training today. In their paper, Julia Drexhage, Dominik Leiss, Torben Schmidt and Timo Ehmke examine the potential of video-based learning to engage student teachers in school–university partnerships using video conferencing technology.

Karin da Rocha focuses on visual literacy with regard to teaching English as a foreign language (EFL). Her contribution sets out to bring together various approaches to the term 'visual literacy'. The focus is on preconditions that have to be met for the effective use of

digital innovations. Moreover, the study deals with the implementation of visual literacy training within EFL student teacher training and in class.

In the context of a teacher-training seminar, Denis Weger promotes the use of various technological tools among an international group of teachers of German as a foreign language. His intention is to show that group tasks, such as the collaborative production of a seminar blog and a digital story, should link experiences from "outside" with the digital world and give seminar participants even more opportunities to extend their digital literacy. In his paper, he also discusses some data examining the potential impact of such seminars on the participants' perception of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL).

It is a nationwide endorsed recommendation in Germany for schools to qualify and establish school crisis prevention teams who could effectively prevent targeted violence and crisis. Kathrin Herbst and Nadine Nagel report on the instructional design of one component of the *KomPass* project - blended learning qualification programme for (future) members of crisis teams at schools.

The guest editorial board would like to thank the authors for their professional and truly valuable contributions. Furthermore, we greatly appreciate the meticulous work of our international reviewers and our assistant Izabela Kulhanek. Finally we would like to thank Norbert Pachler for giving us the chance of publishing a wide range of interesting contributions in this high-quality journal. His expertise as editor-in-chief has been an invaluable help.

Thomas Strasser, Klaus Himpsl-Gutermann, Reinhard Bauer, Wolfgang Greller, Ruth Petz (guest editorial board, all University College of Teacher Education Vienna, PH Wien)