

E-LiLL QUESTIONNAIRE REPORT

December 2006

Permanent University of the University of Alicante

The first task that we carried out when we began to participate in the project was to analyse the proposed questionnaire from the coordinating institution. We worked on the questionnaire in three specific aspects: content, linguistic and pedagogic point of view. Professors that belong to the University of Alicante and from different departments: computers, languages and pedagogy reviewed the questionnaire and we sent our comments to the coordinator. After that, we translated the questionnaire into Spanish in order to make it easier filling it for the Spanish institutions and also for the Portuguese ones.

Once we received the final version of the questionnaire, we established contacts with different associations and networks related to seniors in Spain and in Portugal, always bearing in mind the field of action of the survey.

Getting in touch with institutions in Spain was not really a hard work. The Permanent University of the University of Alicante is member of the Spain's National Association of University Programmes for Older Adults. So, in order to proceed we contacted with the President of the Association and ask him for permission to send the questionnaire to all the partner universities for seniors in Spain. We obtained the permission and we send it by mail. We already had all the addresses because the Spain's National Association of University Programmes for Older Adults has a web page and there we could find all the information that we required. We have received 17 answers from our partners.

INSTITUTIONS THAT HAVE ANSWERED THE E-LiLL QUESTIONNAIRE	
1	Universidad de Mayores de la U. Pontificia Comillas de Madrid
2	Universidad para los Mayores, Universidad Complutense de Madrid
3	Aulas de la Experiencia Universidad del País Vasco
4	Aula de la Experiencia. Universidad de Sevilla
5	Programa Universidad para los Mayores. Universidad Autónoma de Madrid
6	Universidad de Mayores. Universidad Politécnica de Cartagena
7	Aula de Mayores. Universidad de Murcia
8	Programa Interuniversitario de la Experiencia. Universidad de Burgos
9	Aulas Universitarias de la Experiencia. Universidad Miguel Hernández de Elche
10	Aules d'Extensió universitària per a la gent gran de la Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Tarragona
11	Universidad Senior. Título propio de la Universidad de A Coruña
12	Aula Permanente de Formación Abierta. Universidad de Granada
13	Programa Interuniversitario de la Experiencia. Universidad de León
14	Programa de Formación de Mayores "IV Ciclo Universitario". Universidad de Santiago de Compostela
15	Unidad de Atención Socioeducativa del ICE. Universidad de Lleida
16	Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación. Universidad de Cádiz
17	Universidad Permanente de la Universidad de Alicante

We demand to the Spanish institutions that did not answer the questionnaire to do it but nobody else sent it.

We must say that after analysing them, fast all the programmes have developed initiatives with ICT's for seniors, but there is a very important lack of models of good practice. For this reason, we decided also to get in touch with town halls and private institutions in order to ask them for information about their activities. However, up to now we have not received any answer. I hope that in the following weeks we receive any.

Once we receive the information we will try to make a document gathering all the relevant research in order it could be useful for further analysis and for the presentation in the website. Obviously, the gathered information should be adequate for further analysis and to be put in practice with the students.

Talking about the Portuguese institutions we must say that we get in touch with Rutis (Rede de Universidades da Terceira Idade) and with its President, Luís Jacob. We asked him to send us the mail of all the institutions that belong to the association. He refuses and asked us to send him a copy of the questionnaire and he told us that he would send it to the institutions. We have asked him several times for information but no answers have been received.

Due to the situation we get in touch also with some partners that we have met from other meetings and asked them also to help us with Portuguese institutions, but we had not luck. The different persons responsible tried to obtain the information required, but the Portuguese institutions were not able to participate.

Talking with the seniors involved, we addressed to the group of students enrolled in our university programmes for seniors and to the participants in our volunteer activity "Club EuCoNet" where some seniors with previous experience and knowledge in ICT's and also with the help of some computers teachers, help other seniors without any previous experience in computers. The Permanent University of the University of Alicante offers them twice a week a room with 25 computers and the tutorials from the teachers.

Three of the members of the UPUA project are analysing the questionnaires in order to obtain the relevant information.

We have to bear in mind that all the results obtained are from Spanish institutions.

Target learner groups and participation data

Generally, 70% of the Spanish institutions consulted (17) have set the formal requirement concerning age, between 50 and 55 years all, in order to participate in the educational offer of the University Programmes for Older Adults.

As regards to the number of students that take part actively in their educational activities, it is of a heterogeneous nature. The number of members of the institutions asked (17) fluctuates between 50 to 2000 students. On average, approximately we can say that participate around 613 students in each institution.

Talking about the target learner groups we can say that the main age groups of the institutions asked (17) are both: 51 to 60 and 61 to 65. If we refer to the educational level of the participants in those institutions mainly we can consider that 45% of the students have secondary education level and 20% have higher education level.

We could also add that the percentage male / female in the institutions asked (17) is mainly female in the educational activities organized. Specifically, in each university the female percentage fluctuates between 55 and 100%.

Educational programmes: contents and forms

As regards to the educational programmes that the universities offer to older people, it focuses in essence on the development of educational programmes and courses especially for seniors (70.58% of the institutions asked (17)). Half of these institutions share the mentioned option with the offer of educational programmes designed especially for older people and with the organisation of the participation of seniors in already existing programmes in the different institutions asked (17) (for example, as guest students, participation in the lectures for younger students). The minority answered the option of offer educational programmes or courses for adults of all ages that are open also to older adults.

Talking about the kind of activities / courses that are offered and organized for the education of seniors at the universities asked (17), approximately 77% of the institutions have a structured course of studies (half of a year or longer in duration). From these, half of them are shared with conferences, seminars and activities.

With regard to the main focus of the subjects offered in the different institutions that answered the questionnaire (17), we could mention that there is a great and diverse offer and over all, dominate the following subjects: history, literature, music, art and architecture, politics, psychology, pedagogy and sociology.

We should mention that it is very limited the educational offer of virtual learning for adults learners and very scarce the participation in learning through research activities in the institutions asked (17).

The pedagogical principles that have priority in most of the universities asked (17) are frontal instruction and active learning. On the other hand, learning through research and intergenerational learning are not very appreciated as pedagogical methodologies for teaching seniors, according to the educational institutions asked.

In relation to the question about if the self-directed learning (independent learning or self-learning) is beneficial for seniors, 52% of the 17 institutions asked, answered that it is. There is not a considerable difference in this answer.

On the other hand, the institutions asked (17) have highlighted that the most important experiences for seniors are (following a priority order): social contacts, improvement of skills or competences and bringing in own experiences or competences. The communication on a European level is considered as a not relevant experience.

Finally, it should be mentioned that 82.35% of the 17 university programmes for seniors asked make in some way an evaluation of the activities that they do. From these institutions, 64% use a self-evaluation method. Some of these universities share it with other methods like external evaluation and quality management (i.e. ISO).

The ICTs and especially the Internet in seniors education

Other important point to consider is the use of Internet in seniors' education in the different universities. 76% of the 17 institutions asked informed us that they use Internet and new technologies in different activities of their programmes. The most important are of use is "courses on Internet use" followed by "Internet search / research".

As regards to blended learning and the use of Internet as a platform for communication in cooperation projects or activities between groups (chat, etc.), 38% of the 17 institutions asked use Internet in this way.

On the other hand, all the universities (17), without taking into account the use of Internet that they do, have facilities available for the educational development. The options most selected are: a limited number of PCs for use in courses, possibility to use the PC pools of younger students enrolled in the institution and video projector.

We should also mention that only 29% of the 17 institutions have other technical equipment that improves the access and surfing in Internet like broadband, ISDN /ADSL). The same percentage of universities has a computer room used to seniors students.

Mainly, the Spanish universities asked (17) have chosen the introductory courses with didactic approaches designed for seniors as the methodology to familiarise seniors with Internet. 25% of the 17 institutions that answered the questionnaire share this methodology with other like general introductory courses (not specifically for seniors) and peer teaching models (senior tutors).

Unfortunately this last option is not very common in these programmes, in spite of the great benefits that it provides to seniors.

Almost all the institutions that use Internet in their academic programmes have mentioned that they use Internet in teaching different subjects, mainly: computer science, Internet, music, art, and architecture and languages.

The questionnaire has shown that the most important educational activities in which the seniors used the new technologies are: creation of text, Internet search and e-mail, according to the 17 institutions asked.

With regard to the support (materials) that the universities (17) offer to seniors for Internet use, basically they are provided of support materials developed especially for seniors, mainly brochures.

Effectiveness / sustainability of educational activities in seniors education with the use of the ICTs

All the universities (17) coincide that they do not receive any support from the state in the use of ICTs in lifelong learning activities or information campaigns about the use of new technologies.

If we talk at local level, 53% of the 17 institutions asked have answered also that they do not receive any support from local institutions. The help that they receive is the provision of PCs by the educational institution, provision of PC pools by the educational institution, provision of technical support by the educational institution and free of charge software.

The praxis of ICTs in the university programmes for older adults implies some disadvantages and advantages both for the institutions and for the senior's students.

If we refer to the main problems that the university programmes for seniors (17 institutions asked) find we could mention first of all the inadequate technical infrastructure and technical support, the lack of financial support and the difficult to get qualified teaching staff. They also mention some problems related with the previous knowledge of the students and also with the interest towards the subject.

On the other hand, the seniors students from the institutions asked (17) also go through some difficulties when they have to learn about ICT. They have mentioned above all the fear to get in touch with new technologies and the lack of technical skills in that area. Other reasons that they have written down has been the lack of interest, learner's inner reluctances to technical issues, reduced number of e-learning proposals, non qualified teaching staff, lack of technical infrastructure and computers in their houses and inadequate information about the benefits of the ICTs.

As regards to the advantages and benefits that the institutions asked (17) find when they use the ICTs in their programmes with seniors we should remark the following: widening the knowledge of the students, social networks and also the information, improvement of the motivation towards the self-learning system, improvement of the communication between institutions, widening of the field of activity to other regions and the possibility to find new sponsors.

The main benefits that the seniors' students of the institutions asked (17) have found when they use ICTs in their academic programmes are: easy way of communication and the opening of new fields of activity. Other benefits are learning independently on time and place, approach to the problems and current technologies, improvement of self-learning, additional source of information and students also consider that it helps to provide new experiences and perspectives, personal satisfaction and contribute to social scope.

Finally, the most interesting difficulties that the students of the institutions asked (17) found when they took part in a learning Project based on the use of Internet were the lack of access to Internet outside the institutions and in some cases the lack of financial support. Other disadvantages were the lack of technical support, inner reluctances against the new technologies and the lack of specific didactic materials for seniors.

CONCLUSIONS

After analysing the questionnaires sent from the University Programmes for Seniors in Spain that have contributed to the project (17 institutions), we could infer the following conclusions:

- These institutions (17), generally speaking, use not very much the ICTs methodologies and Internet (virtual learning / on-line learning or blended learning) and they do not participate in projects or cooperation activities in which these technologies are used.
- The peer teaching models (senior tutors) is also not very used, although the enormous benefits that this methodology implies for seniors: adaptation of contents, of explanations and of teaching methodology to their characteristics, needs, difficulties and concerns.
- The lack of grants and financial support from national institutions and the limited collaboration in the local field.
- The problems observed when using ICTs in their educational programmes, both for institutions and students.

That is the reason why it would be interesting to carry out some proceedings that will contribute to the gradually and continuous incorporation of ICTs and Internet to the field of senior's education. Among all, we could mention:

- Sensitizing, approach and dissemination of ICTs and their benefits for older adults.
- Optimization of technical equipments and taking advantages of their use.
- It would be also interesting an improvement or increase of the current infrastructures and technical equipments.
- Necessity to produce didactic materials or adaptation of the already existing for teaching ICT to seniors. It should be adapted to the special characteristics of this target group: easy to use, attractive, in different format (paper, CD, on-line tutorials, ...) and motivational for using them in the teaching of this subject area.
- To work in the production of courses in which virtual learning or blended learning could be used.

In that way, seniors will familiarize with new technologies and Internet, their use will be increased and the students will take advantage of its benefits. The senior's students with previous knowledge could go more deeply in contents up to now unknown to them or without interest.

Generally, in Spain we are in an introduction phase of ICT in teaching of seniors and there is already a long way to follow in this matter. In order to make this possible it would be required a joint effort of governmental institutions, university programmes for seniors and the own students.