

“The view from 2014”

By Herman Schimmel

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I'd never have thought of joining a course about education. No way!

And here I was in 2001 as a fresh Masters student in E-learning, Multimedia and Consultancy.

I was unsure about the Education part? But multimedia? Yes, that sounded like great fun, because I like graphic design, video editing and lots of internet applications.

At that time I worked for a large regional newspaper in the Netherlands as communication manager and thought I could use some extra knowledge about multimedia.

But education? I was nervous.

However from the beginning the whole setting grabbed me and took me in.

I liked the videoconferencing (yes, even in 2001 and with very slow connections). I also liked the international setting; talking to, and collaborating with students in England, Germany and Belgium. Even though we were all spread out, I felt part of a community.

My special interest is about knowledge management and communities of practice.

Working in with this international group motivated me to keep in touch with this community long after I had finished my Masters dissertation.

In 2005 the first ELMAC/TELIC conference took place in Sheffield and there I could finally meet members of the community face-to-face for the first time.

Since that first year these conferences were held annually and in different places in Europe. I learned a lot from the workshops and presentations during the conferences.

Being part of ELMAC and TELIC had an impact on my own work.

To give you an example, I designed an E-learning course on Social Media for staff in my office.

It was in the early years of social media and the management of the organisation I worked for, the municipal council of Overbetwue in the Netherlands, wanted staff to be aware how to use this new set of tools for communicating with the community for which it worked. At that time not many people used social media.

I took the decision to use online instruction for the course to make it more practical to deliver and it was very successful.

Something that struck me was that by doing the training and using social media more the participants also got interested in each other as private individuals and not only as colleagues, building relationships in the team.

But most of all, the insights I got from the ELMAC course helped me to improve my projects at work through the use of technologies like wikis.

In particular, the research experience of my Masters dissertation led directly to my PhD research on knowledge sharing and the implementation of ICT in education.

Back in the TELIC community, the community has grown every year.

Trust, community building and regular moderation are a few key factors of a successful community of practice. This TELIC community fits in this frame.

And that is why we can return to Sheffield to celebrate the 10th conference this year.