УДК 378.607

**І. М. Сухенко**

*Дніпропетровський національний університет імені Олеся Гончара*

# HIGHER EDUCATION STRATEGY WITHIN CONTEMPORARY NEW MEDIA DEVELOPMENT

**Розглядаются особливості освітніх тенденцій вищої школи у контексті європейської стратегії освітньої політики на сучасному етапі фукціонування новітніх медіа.**

*Ключові слова:* стратегія освітньої політики ЄС, стратегія розвитку ЄС 2010, ініціатива «Електронна Європа», медіаосвіта, новітні медіа, ІКТ, віртуальний університет.

**Рассматриваются особенности образовательных тенденций высшей школы в контексте европейской стратегии образовательной политики на современном этапе функционирования новых медиа.**

*Ключевые слова:* стратегия образовательной политики ЕС, стратегия развитие ЕС 2010, инициатива «Электронная Европа», медиаобразование, новые медиа, ИКТ, витруальный университет.

**The peculiarities of educational tendencies of higher education in the EU Education Policy Strategy are under study within in the contemporary new media development.**

*Key words:* EU Education Policy Strategy, Europe 2010 Strategy, eEurope initiative, media education, new media, ICT, virtual university.

**Introduction.** The contemporary development of ICT and new media raises some issues towards refreshing the education policy within the information society formation. Beyond a reasonable doubt, the new media can reinforce education not only through the process of widening the scale of content but also the socialization of learners. «The construction of knowledge, the process of creating common values and the achievement of mutual understanding require a sound, structured approach in order to manage the flood of randomly accessed information through the Internet» [7, p. 553]. This situation greatly depends on the difference in access to on-line information, and results in the risk of inequity between people and countries in access to education facilities and knowledge. Such situation makes higher education dependable on prices of equipment and communication services as well as access to public institutions (school, university, library etc).

The brief outline of virtual education implementation and digital competence development in the EU context has gone through some steps. Thus, in 2000 the European Commission launched *the eEurope initiative* to accelerate Europe's transition towards a knowledge-based economy and to realize the potential benefits of higher growth, more jobs and better access for all citizens to the new services of the information age. One of the objectives was to constitute, by the end of 2001, a Virtual European Higher Education Space through extensive co-operation between universities, open and distance institutions and training facilities. *The eEurope* was not a public expenditure programme and did not make new funds available. Instead, it provided a policy framework within which existing expenditure could be better focused. The first phase of the eEurope initiative was *the eEurope 2002 Action Plan*, which focused on exploiting the advantages offered by the Internet to increase connectivity. It comprised a total of 64 targets to be achieved by the end of 2002. The majority of those were successfully completed. In June 2002 the European Council launched a second phase *eEurope 2005: An Information Society for All*, which focused on exploiting broadband technologies to deliver online services in both the public and private sector. The *eEurope 2005 plan* was followed by *i2010: A*

*European Information Society for Growth and Employment*, which was the EU policy framework for the information society and media (2005-2009). Now this program has ended and has been replaced by *the Digital Agenda for Europe* [5].

The advent of digital technologies has presented significant new opportunities and challenges for media educators. Thus, over the past 20 years, there has been a massive investment in providing information and communication technologies in higher education, where the emphasis has largely been on providing the access [1, p. 15].

D. Buckinham, a leading British expert in media education underlines the idea about «media education goes digital», while stressing the fact that «media education can provide a important critical dimension to the use of technology in education, that moves beyond a merely instrumental approach; and that it can help to bridge the 'new digital divide' between students' experiences of technology outside school and their experience in the classroom» [1, p. 111]. He focuses on three ways in which media educators need to respond to new digital media: by applying and extending existing conceptual approaches to these new objects of study; by addressing the creative possibilities of digital technologies, and the pedagogic challenges they represent; and by exploring the potential of emerging forms of participatory media culture [1, p. 112].

HEIs in the EU face not only the challenge of providing greater access to educational services but also constrained budgets and a dramatically increasing and more diverse population of students. A. Dumort, an EU education expert, says that under such circumstances the benefits of developing new online and interactive content for education are gradually being recognized as one approach to enhancing the productivity of education. This is one way to maintain or improve the quality of education, while controlling the cost of a traditionally labour intensive sector. [7, p. 456]. The use of ICTs for educational delivery in EU higher education is expected to give scope for low-cost expansion through large economies of scale within a EU 2020 Initiative [6].

Under such circumstances higher education can be regarded as an emerging and potentially enormous value-added sector in which the e-learning plays a significant role. Due to the International Data Corporation by 2010 the EU e-learning market remains small and fragmented but with a high potential for growth, given the boom in web and internet usage and the recent development of an international and European dimension in educational systems.

Lipponen L., a Finnish media education expert, suggests that new media, the Internet in particular, could revitalize the processes of teaching and learning, when coupled with innovative pedagogical thinking. He and his colleagues in the researching group stress, that since educational technologies are used in most cases to enhance rather than replace existing modes of small group teaching, they tend to add rather than reduce cost, which further limits their diffusion. [10, p. 25].

Within the 'information society' paradigm, described by Lehtinen and Sinko, education should be «inevitable, socially progressive, and cost-effective within» [9, p. 32]. They stress these new educational components, including the following ones:

1) new, student-centred, pedagogical thinking that envisions learners playing a much more active role;

2) decreases in the cost of technologies and services, along with special conditions for educational institutions (such as low at-rates or large discounts in telecommunication tariffs and internet access fees);

3) rapid diffusion and advancement of internet technologies;

4) growing political commitment at national and EU levels to promote the widespread use of educational technologies through partnerships between HEIs and business sector;

5) new investments in campus information infrastructure to keep EU HEIs attractive and competitive;

6) new thinking on the mission and 'core' functions of universities;

7) developing new opportunities in the corporate and adult training market [9].

A whole new sector of higher education is emerging alongside traditional, national and state-regulated systems, through branch campuses, franchising and most recently by electronic means [7, p. 549]. Newly- appeared educational organizations – so-called «virtual universities» – provide their educational services online, without any campus-based activities.

Tracing back to 1999, A. Dumort mentioned that the development of the virtual university was ignored by most public authorities and universities of Europe then. For example, he stressed on the action plan towards a European area of higher education, proposed in 1999 by education ministers of 29 European countries, which did not even mention this issue (A joint declaration signed in Bologna in June 1999). One reason for the EU's comparatively slow response, due to A. Dumort survey, is that almost all European universities are publicly funded. Moreover, as a public institution in Europe, education is expected to play a central role in ensuring social equality. Higher education cannot therefore be as easily discussed as a business-as-usual market, where profits can be pursued as a primary objective. Universities might have greater autonomy than many other public institutions in determining how to fulfill their mission, but they also face more severe budgetary restrictions [7, p. 549].

On describing the contemporary situation in EU on-line education, S. D'Antoni, an EU education expert, underlines that «ICT offers the university both an opportunity and a challenge. By using ICT the university can provide increased flexibility to students while reaching students beyond the usual catchment area. However, institutions need to develop and apply appropriate policies, and to plan and manage effectively for a new mode of teaching and learning». She keeps saying that the virtual university warrants examination as it represents an important development in the use of ICT to increase flexibility and extend provision of higher education in both developed and developing countries [4].

The virtual university can be seen as «a metaphor for the electronic, teaching, learning and research environment created by the convergence of several relatively new technologies including the Internet, computer mediated communication», according to Van Dusen's statement [4].

When defining a virtual campus, the European Commission stresses cooperation among higher education institutions in the field of e-learning, especially regarding joint curricula development by several universities. Indicators may include agreements for the evaluation, validation and recognition of acquired competences, subject to national procedures; large-scale experiments of virtual mobility in addition to physical mobility; and development of innovative dual mode curricula, based on both traditional and online learning methods [13].

The research in the frame of the Re.ViCa project has confirmed that there is no common understanding about the term «virtual university». Different names are applied to similar activities in different countries, and in some countries the term has fallen out of use altogether – or has never been really used. Often terms such as *e-learning, distance learning, blended learning* and *open learning* are more commonly used to indicate smaller *virtual campus* projects, programmes or activities within a university, or even course offerings in the context of on-the-job or professional training. However, these terms are often no clearer than *virtual university* Thus for all its faults and difficulties, that the term *virtual university/campus* does provide a useful, if interim, basis for analyzing the worldwide phenomenon of e-learning initiatives in higher education institutions [13].

Not only existing universities have launched their online programmes, but also new virtual projects were initiated by EU. Thus, the *Collaborative European Virtual*

*University* (CEVU) was funded the European Commission (DG Education & Culture, Training & Youth under the eLearning initiative). As noted in the project description: this project is aimed at the development of validated e-learning models and ideas for a European virtual university, based on regional and transnational collaboration between existing European universities [3].

*Open Education Europe* (http://openeducationeuropa.eu) – another EU key education project – stresses the effective use of the Internet and social media tools and their embeddedness in a communication strategy which are becoming fundamental to the success of cross-border cooperation projects, such as those subsidised by the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) of the European Commission. [12] This project resulted from the strategy of the Open University, initiated in 1970, when five countries have created a national Open University, including Germany (Fern Universitat), the Netherlands (Open Universiteit), Portugal (Universidade Aberta), Spain (Universidad Nacional de Educacion a Distancia) and the UK (Open University).

Thus, facing an increasing demand, EU HEIs have new opportunities resulted in the growth in virtual university activities, many of which allow traditional universities to expand their reach and increase the flexibility of the educational offer. Blended learning, which combines classroom and online study, offers new learning methods, while open source software and courseware facilitate sharing of resources and reduce costly duplication of effort. Under such circumstances there is evidence of an emerging global marketplace and a growing spirit of competition in higher education as traditional universities expand their reach through the Internet, and new actors, such as corporate universities and other private companies, due to R. Mason [11, p. 8].

Despite these features of virtual education, the risks would be great, including the loss of pedagogical credibility in the new networked environment and, therefore, the prestige of educational institutions, as well as the loss of market opportunities in the continuing education and training segments, which could be highly profitable [7, p. 549].

The use of ICTs in higher education is under rapid development. The contemporary HEI provides the amalgamation of on-campus and off-campus (Internet-based, distance, digital, on-line) courses in order to respond to increasing need for accessibility, diversity, flexibility and affordability of education services.

Due to A. Dumort, one of the critical success factors for the universities lies in their ability to address the lifelong learning market in collaboration amongst themselves but also with private partners. New media can enrich educational choices on a sustainable and cost-effective basis, if new business-academic partnership models can be developed. All actors need to move beyond current lines drawn between software and telecommunication companies, broadcasters and publishers, for-profit educational organizations and academic providers. These boundaries are too distinct and they are blurring rapidly [7, p. 553].

**Results.** Education models within new media can refresh educational services by developing the key competencies with the help of collaboration and competitiveness. A variety of partnerships, including joint projects, between HEIs (providing curricula, course content, student admission, learning assessment, diploma recognition) and entrepreneurs (providing ICT facilities as well communication infrastructures) can not only develop the digital competences in EU communities and implement the instrumental approach of ICT training but also bring the educational benefits of new media to all categories of learners. This direction aims to reboot EU economy and help EU citizens to get the most out of digital technologies, which undergoes the initiative of Europe 2020 Strategy to deliver smart sustainable growth.

## References

1. **Buckingham D.** Beyond Technology: Learning in the Age of Digital Culture / D. Buckingham. – Cambridge : Polity, 2007. – 224 p.

2. **Buckingham D.** Media Education: Literacy, Learning and Contemporary Culture / D. Buckingham. – Cambridge : Polity, 2003. – 219 p.

3. Collaborative European Virtua University [Електронний ресурс]. – Режим доступу: http://virtualcampuses.eu/index.php/Collaborative_European_Virtual_University

4. **D'Antoni S.** The Virtual University Models and Messages / S. D'Antoni. [Електронний ресурс]. – Режим доступу: http://www.unesco.org/iiep/virtualuniversity/home.php

5. Digital Agenda for Europe [Електронний ресурс]. – Режим доступу: http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/digital-agenda-europe

6. Digital and Virtual University / Digital Agenda for Europe [Електронний ресурс]. – Режим доступу: /http://ec.europa.eu/digital-agenda/en/digital-and-virtual-university

7. **Dumort A.** New Media and Distance Education // Information, Communication and Society. – 2010. – № 3 / 4. – P. 546–556.

8. eEurope Initiative: an Information Society for All (Communication for the Special European Council of Lisbon, 23 and 24 March) // European Commission – 2000 [Електроний ресурс]. – Режим доступу: http://europa.eu/legislation_summaries/information_society/strategies/l24221_en.htm

9. **Lehtinen E.** The Challenge of ICT in Finnish Education / E. Lehtinen, M. Sinko. – Atena: Sitra edition, 2005. – 252 p. [Електронний ресурс]. – Режим доступу: http://www.sitra.fi/julkaisut/sitra227.pdf.

10. **Lipponen L.** Learning through the Internet: a review of networked learning', Report to the European Commission / L. Lipponen, M. Lakkala, K. Hakkarainen // European Researcher. – 2012. – Vol. (30), № 9/3. – P. 24–52.

11. **Mason R.** The University – Current Challenges and Opportunities / R. Mason. [Електронний ресурс]. – Режим доступу: http://www.unesco.org/iiep/virtualuniversity/media/document/Ch2_Mason.pdf.

12. Open Education Europe [Електронний ресурс]. – Режим доступу: http://openeducationeuropa.eu.

13. Reviewing Traces of European Virtual Campuses. Report Definition of Virtual Campuses [Електронний ресурс]. – Режим доступу: http://revica.europace.org/files/results/What%20is%20a%20Virtual%20Campus_definition.pdf.

14. What is the i2010 Initiative? [Електронний ресурс]. – Режим доступу: http://www.ecdl.org/index.jsp?n=895&a=1902.

*Надійшла до редколегії 08.06.14.*