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**Crowd-learning as a method of improving vocational skills  
in the Information Society by the example of Poland**

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## Summary

### **Crowd-learning as a method of improving vocational skills in the Information Society by the example of Poland**

The thesis consists of the introduction, three chapters, conclusions, the summary and the bibliography. In the introduction the author presents the main problem, research hypotheses and methodology of the research. The first chapter points at processes that shaped the Information Society, which we are and how these processes transformed education and learning. The second chapter discusses the idea of lifelong learning as a precondition of development in the Information Society. In the third chapter, the author describes the new technological paradigms of learning. There is a subject of crowd-learning explored with its benefits and shortcomings and world's crowd-learning platforms presented as well as research conducted by the author. In further steps, the author describes conclusions and verifies the hypotheses.

The development of human civilisation is divided by researchers differently, however, the stages and their characteristics are undoubtedly the same. We could call them eras, epochs, waves, societies or ages. The terms do not matter, but changes do. Whatever we call them, human civilisation had been living in the agrarian era for several thousand years, evaluating into industrial society and living for several hundred years in order to become the Information Society.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century has experienced the most radical changes in all the centuries recorded in history. New means of mass communication, from radio-station, film and television to computers and the internet, prepared media revolution, which along with the process of globalisation shaped the Information Society which we are today and which we are going to improve much more in the future. The analysis of different definitions of the Information Society led to a statement that the term of the Information Society is still evaluating as the society is still improving and the situation stimulates the development.

The globalized and mediated world is the natural environment of the Information Society. Thanks to new means of mass communication, the term “distance” has alleviated its meaning as the distance stopped to play a significant and obstructing role. Possibilities of unlimited distance communication also improved business and education. Anyone has got an opportunity to choose any place of work or education around the world as

globalisation unified skills, requirements and resources. Ways of communication between people and institutions in the Information Society changed convertible by new media. Communication is no longer one channelled without feedback, but there are many senders and receivers who give immediate feedback. Initial communication models are no longer enough to apply them to communication in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, communication on the Internet. Today we should pay attention to many-to-many communication model. The author proposed own model applied to communication during crowd learning. What is innovative in that model is that mass sender sends messages to mass receivers, but a part of receivers give feedback. Some receivers remain passive, meaning apart from receiving a message, they do not react, they are only and still receivers.

The digital economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century based on Web 2.0 transformed the way people work and the skills they need at work. Digital technologies are used in all types of jobs. We experience four paradigm shifts happening in the IT world today, which influence the digital workplace: mobility which implies that people connect with others and with data anywhere, any time, and on any device, the data itself, the Cloud, which provides access to a broader service catalogue with a variety of levels of service and the collaboration meaning methods and tools allowing people to connect in a network manner – and co-create the information.

Not only business and work have transformed. Education has also undergone changes involving new means of organizing teaching and learning as well as many practices in education, including pedagogy, curriculum, and assessment. It is vital to say Web 2.0 gave people something revolutionary- open access. It allows to use of resources and recycle them for free. It made access to knowledge more manageable than ever before. It is a part of A. Toffler's concept of the third wave -the disappearance of a gulf between producers and consumers creating prosumers economy.

The most characteristic feature of our society, which is the Information Society, is fast technological development and omnipresent media. Every day 4.5 billion of people around the world connects with the internet and 3.8 billion of them are social media users. It equates more than 100 days of connected time per internet user, per year<sup>605</sup>. It means that more and more aspects of human life moved into online, develops online and through the media. Set of essential literacies and skills has changed. Traditional professions are

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<sup>1</sup> We are social (2020): *Digital Report 2020*. <https://wearesocial.com/blog/2020/01/digital-2020-3-8-billion-people-use-social-media> (visited 27 February 2020).

passing away in order to give place new ones, and any of them are strictly connected with IT environment.

Lifelong learning has never been as important as it is today. It is vital for maintaining good health, remaining active in the community and being fully included in all aspects of society, but also for improving and developing skills, adapting to technical developments, advancing a career or returning to the labour market. Lifelong learning is what business, education and economy have in common. Life-long learning is a crucial element of all job profiles. The society receives economic and non-economic benefits from lifelong learning, connected with the Social Capital Theory.

The Education and Training 2020 (ET 2020) framework includes the benchmark to increase the share of adults participating in learning to 15%. We have already reached 2020, and unfortunately, the progress towards the EU's goal turned out to be insufficient. Without Great Britain, which left the European Union, it is 10.7%. Poland's score is very low, only 4.9%, and it belongs to the lowest ones<sup>606</sup>.

Although formal education is very significant and necessary at some stages of human life, we are not able to learn the whole life in the formal system. In adult life, informal learning becomes more appropriate. Development of media changed the communication model and influenced new kinds of learning. Crowd-learning as a new informal way of upskilling appeared thanks to social media. It gives many opportunities for professional and personal development as it is the most flexible and personalized of all types of learning. It makes learning easier and more available to everyone. For busy professionals who want to learn quickly, for novices adapting to a new profession, for young women who share their time between work and family duties, for country's dwellers or for those who live in remote areas but above all, it is for open-minded who are eager to share their expertise with other similar to them and for those who want to develop themselves.

Crowd learning is the 21<sup>st</sup> century's way of lifelong learning. Based on wisdom of the crowd it gives unlimited possibilities to learn in any time and place, adjusting to adults' needs. It is the most personalized way of education. As it is informal learning, a kind of certification or confirmation is desired.

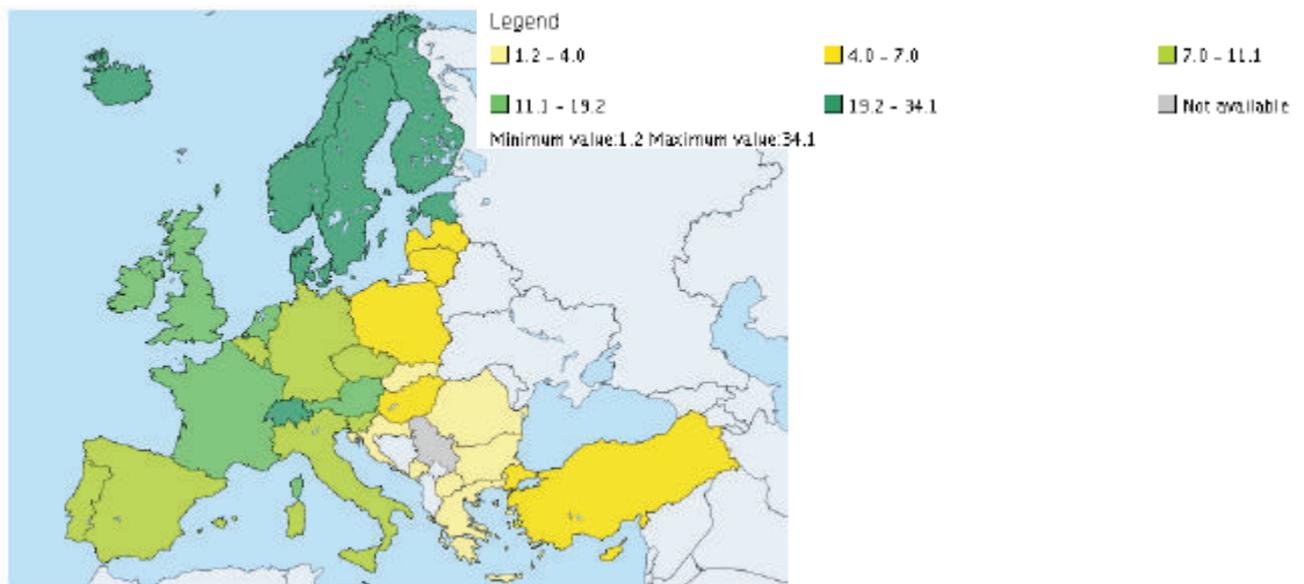
The author conducted a series of research (desk research, quantitative research and qualitative research) in order to know the educational activity of Polish society and to find

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<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/web/\\_svg/Eurostat\\_Map\\_sdg\\_04\\_60\\_27053745691\\_tmp.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/web/_svg/Eurostat_Map_sdg_04_60_27053745691_tmp.pdf) (visited 27 February 2020).

out about possibilities of introducing crowd learning platform in Poland as well as set up basic and advanced functionalities.

From the very beginning, the author assumed that Polish society participates in lifelong-learning more and more and follows the world's trends in education. That hypothesis was disproved. Level of participation of Polish society in lifelong learning is very low for years in comparison to other European countries. As a result, the author changed motives and the direction of development crowd learning platform. Instead of introducing a tool for numerous adults lifelong learning, the author focused on the tool shaping lifelong learning behaviour aimed to improve lifelong learning in Poland.



Picture 1. Adult participation in learning. Eurostat.

The term of crowd-learning is entirely new to Polish society which is not aware that what they do in social media is learning. Only during the individual-depth-interviews particular crowd-learners realized how much they had learnt from each other, without a plan and a certificate. There are many experienced, disinterested and open-minded people in Poland who might contribute to adult learning increase, however, they need a special tool which is a crowd-learning platform.

Conducted qualitative research present the essential features and functionalities of the platform proposed by active crowd-learners. The author hopes the start-up of the platform

would gather people of varied professions and be the first noticeable step in improving adult learning and lifelong learning in Poland.

The crowd-learning platform proposed by the author would help to increase the level of adult learning, lifelong learning and level of participation in vocational training, develop social capital, popularize science and the latest scientific research, foster cross-generational cooperation, promote and learn lifelong learning behaviours, and help companies to find qualified workers.