

# Open Courses: the Next Big Thing in E-learning?

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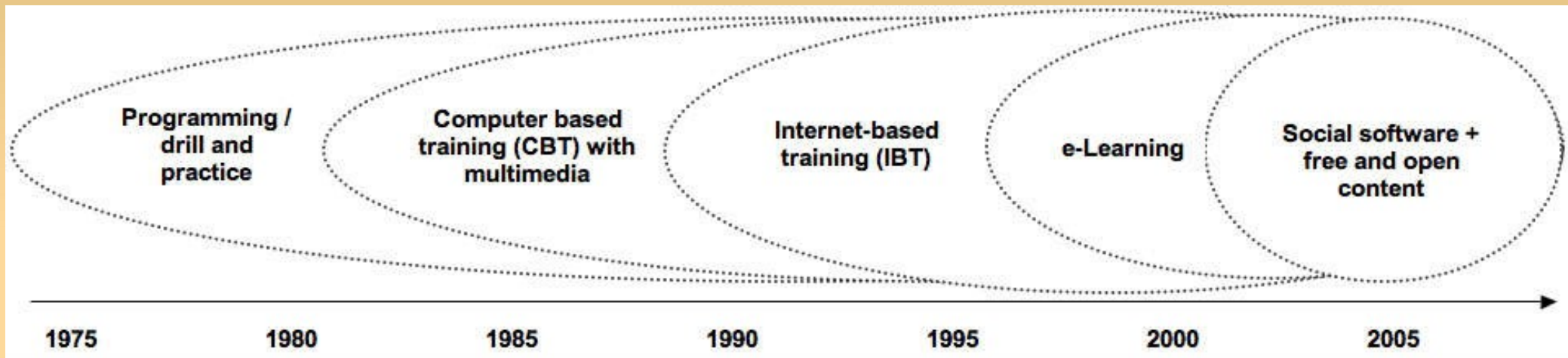


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# A view on the evolution of e-learning

- Before the 80's: pre-IT distance learning
- 80's, early 90's: computer-based learning (PC as a glorified, interactive video player), CD-ROMs, educational software, multimedia
- Late 90's – e-learning 1.0: e-mail, Web 1.0, scripts and applets
- Early 00's: e-learning 2.0: LMS (WebCT etc), later 2.5: open-source LMS's (Moodle etc)
- Today: e-learning 3.0: Web 2.0, distributed and personal learning environments, blogs, wikis

# Another view by Teemu Leinonen



Source: <http://flosse.bloggning.fi/2005/06/23/critical-history-of-ict-in-education-and-where-we-are-heading/>

# From FLOSS to OER

- Free / Libre / Open-Source Software
- Free Content / Free Culture (e.g. Creative Commons)
- 2001 – MIT OpenCourseWare
- 2002 – Open Educational Resources
- Various OER repositories: Connexions, LeMill etc
- Late 00's – MOOC: open in both environment and process (S. Downes, G. Siemens et al)

# OOC in Estonia

- Since 2008, using Wikiversity. Some examples (see the paper for the full list of courses):
  - Social Software and Network Communities (SSNC), 4 ECTS M.Sc. course with 226 participants (total for all years). Currently running with ~120 participants
  - Ethics and Law in New Media (ELNM), 5 ECTS international M.Sc. course with 44 participants
  - Ethical, Social and Professional Aspects of Information Technology (ESPAIT), a 4 ECTS introductory-level B.Sc. course with 161 participants. Currently running with ~60
  - Standards and Specifications for e-Learning Tools (SSET), 4 ECTS M.A. course with 20 participants
  - Learning Environments and Learning Networks (LELN), 3 ECTS M.A. course with 28 participants

# Two approaches

- **Wiki-centred**: the focus is at Wikiversity; blogs are used as workbooks (less for feedback and interaction); web-based forum is used for discussions; weekly text chat for community building and consulting; may have a traditional end exam or not
- **Blog-centred**: Wikiversity is used as a starting point, the focus is on the central blog; a wider range of Web 2.0 tools are used
- In testing stage: EduFeedr as a facilitating tool

# Methodology

- Action research using the framework analysis method (Ritchie and Spencer, 1994) was used to study the feedback gathered from the participants of open courses:
  1. familiarisation with collected data
  2. identifying a thematic framework
  3. indexing the repeating topics by open coding
  4. charting
  5. mapping and interpretation

# The five main themes found

1. Enlightening experience: open courses as a new way to learn together
2. The culture of sharing: daring to write in public
3. Real-time chat as a community tool: what it gives and what it takes
4. Community gravity: nurturing the social ties within the group
5. Facilitation: changing the role of the teacher



# Some more findings

- An effective quality assurance system
- Extra students: a possibility, not a liability
- Especially suitable for rapidly changing fields
- Community management and also conflict-solving skills are very valuable
- Chat size and tone must be under control
- Homework tasks with varying response cycle
- Occasional guests / outside trips are good

# Conclusions

- Our experience and findings suggest that OOC is a suitable model for a wide range of courses and is likely to become the next step in the evolution of e-learning
- There are several options within the general model, but care must be taken to construct a working setup
- The teacher's role has shifted but remains equally important