Advantages of e-Learning for Citizen Learning Community
-- A Case of "Kumamoto Internet Shiminjuku" --

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Abstract- Since lifelong learning has become important and information and communication technology using the Internet has been ubiquitous today, we established "Kumamoto Internet Shiminjuku" -- Citizen e-learning community in Kumamoto, Japan, which is a lifelong e-learning project by citizens' group. This article shows the example of practicing e-learning in "Kumamoto Internet Shiminjuku" and refers to the meaning and the possibility of e-learning use for lifelong learning. Moreover, in order to make e-learning courses more effective and efficient, we are studying and applying instructional design theories for citizen e-learning.

Index Terms- lifelong learning, e-learning, Instructional Design

I. INTRODUCTION

"Kumamoto Internet Shiminjuku" -- Citizen e-learning community in Kumamoto provides a learning square on the Internet, which connects the person who wants to learn and the person who wants to teach [1].

Using its e-learning system, everyone can readily learn the course in various fields; moreover, participants can start their own course as long as they feel "I want to teach to someone".

People who want to share their own experience and know-how can easily organize their own courses at a low-cost. Moreover, the learner can learn from home, the office, etc. at any time by their own pace just by preparing the environment in which the Internet and PC can be used.

In addition, participants will not only be able to make transcends geographic barriers via the Internet, but also be able to acquire the feeling of enjoyment by the blended type learning that combines schoolings, events, and group activities.

In the following, we will explain the meaning and the possibility of e-learning in the learning society, feature of the course, ideal way of effective study support, etc. based on the practice at "Kumamoto Internet Shiminjuku"

II. BACKGROUND -- PROGRESS OF THE LIFELONG LEARNING SOCIETY

With the recent remarkable progress of science and information and communication technology and the change in the population composition by falling birthrate and aging population, a dramatic changing of the industrial structure and a diversification of the working style has been brought to the Japanese society. In the future, it will be expected to change even more drastically. In order to correspond to such a change, the society requests people to keep learning over the life. So it is important to develop and maintain the environment to find a problem spontaneously and to acquire the new knowledge and the technology independently through keeping learning over not only the academic training but also the lifelong learning.

On the other hand, although people's desire to teach their technology, knowledge, or know-how obtained through the work, hobby, and the daily life, etc. to other people will increase more and more in the future, such opportunities are very rare for those who wish to share their own experiences. Thus it is necessary to provide chances for those people to accommodate their needs.

III. THE PURPOSE TO ESTABLISH "KUMAMOTO INTERNET SHIMINJUKU" AND THE CONCEPT

We established "Kumamoto Internet Shiminjuku" on July 2004 as an online free market for learners, by providing a LMS (Learning Management System) for citizen e-learning community, in which every member can hold courses or circles on the Internet even they don't live in Kumamoto.

Figure 1 shows an example of e-learning course on the LMS [2]. This course was originally made for the monthly face to face meeting. We have done such meetings more than twenty times until now. The content aims to learn how to manipulate digital photographs using free software. After the meeting, learners installed the software on their own PCs at their homes, and did some exercises by referring the online text, finally, they exhibited their works each other by uploading to the discussion forum. They also could ask questions to citizen lecturers or other learners through the Q&A forum. Such a course can be classified into the blended learning style.

In this project, we have been trying a new type of learning style which combines e-learning, schooling, real-experience, and communication, supported by NEXT-Kumamoto (local IT promotion organization for industrial-government-academic complex), Center for Multimedia and Information Technologies in Kumamoto University, Kumamoto Senior Net (local community for senior citizen), and so on.

Fig. 1 An e-learning course in "Kumamoto Internet Shiminjyuku".

The concept of this activity is as follows.

A. To Support a Knowledge/Wisdom provision for citizen lecturer

We will provide the place and the chance to the citizens who want to share or teach their own technology, knowledge, or know-how obtained through work, hobby, and the daily life, etc. to other people.

B. To promote a Knowledge/Wisdom Circulation

Even a busy person or working mother with small children can participate in the learning community using LMS via the Internet. Knowledge and wisdom circulation will occur between the senior and the young generation.

C. To create and promote a Learning Community by citizens

We create and promote a "Lifelong-learning community" by which the people in various standpoints happily support it cooperating each other.

IV. MEANING AND POSSIBILITY OF USING E-LEARNING IN LIFELONG LEARNING SOCIETY

"Kumamoto Internet Shiminjuku" provides a Moodle based LMS (Fig. 1) for citizen e-learning community on the Internet. Using the Internet, people who want to join the course can apply for attending and participate in the learning activity, from home, the office, the school, and so on. Lecturer can also make and maintain their web-based learning contents from home, the office, the school, and so on. In some courses schooling or internship are required at some point. Making/setting up the learning contents and guidance become possible anytime anywhere through the Internet.(Fig. 2)

On the other hand, the learners can also join and learn anytime, anywhere through the Internet. By using the Internet, participant can not only exchange and make the companion which transcends the region, but also study more effective with blended e-learning while experiencing the happiness of learning.

V. INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN APPROACH FOR CITIZEN E-LEARNING

It is not easy for citizen lecturers to design e-learning courses, and there is almost no instructional design examples specialized for citizen e-learning community. We are therefore studying and applying instructional design theories for citizen e-learning in order to make courses more effective and efficient without expertise.

In the "Kumamoto Internet Shiminjuku"-- citizen e-learning community, what kind of course is held and is popular? We have researched many courses that have been held in Japanese community based learning and classified them into the four types according to learner's participation purpose [3].

We are now trying to analyze them using the Kajita's taxonomy framework based on the Bloom's one, and Instructional curriculum maps developed by Briggs and Wager, and obtain generic characteristics for each type in
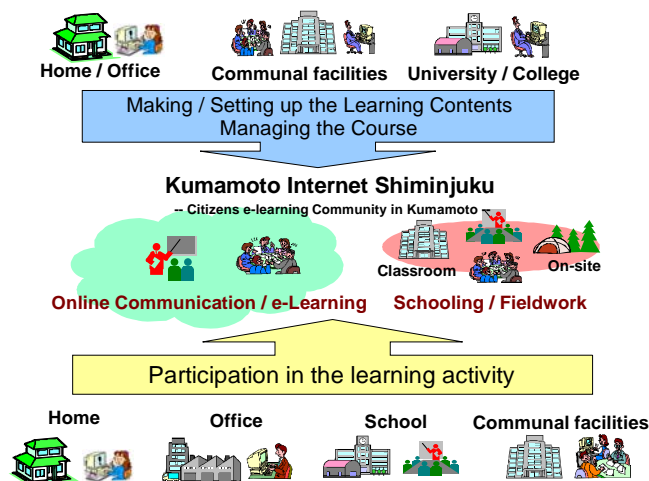

Fig. 2 Concept of "Kumamoto Internet Shiminjyuku".

order to make qualified instructional design (ID) course templates for citizen lecturers [3].

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND FEATURE WORKS

In this article, we have explained about the progress of the lifelong learning society in Japan as a case of Kumamoto citizen e-learning community "Kumamoto Internet Shiminjuku", with the meaning and possibility of using e-learning in lifelong learning society.

In the lifelong education, most courses still consists of lectures by instructor mainly in a classroom. In the future, however, it seems that e-learning will become more important because it is not restricted by time and place.

If the instructor lectures in a classroom, flexible and improvised guidance in the place is still possible, so strict course design is not demanded. On the other hand, it is difficult to design and develop e-learning courses for citizen lecturers who are not specialists of education, thus this is one of the obstacles which prevents the spread of e-learning in this field.

We are now trying to make ID course templates based on ID principles. The ID templates are expected to make citizen lecturers easily arrange and assemble the learning contents, and we will try to verify the effectiveness by making actual courses using the templates in our citizen e-learning community "Kumamoto Internet Shiminjyuku".

VII. REFERENCES

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