SUMMARY

The presented doctoral dissertation was an attempt to reflect on the learning of young adults who experienced digital space in the process of formal university education. Its theoretical part covered issues related to the emergence of digital space, the development of information and communication technologies in education and the gradual emergence of social media. Followingly, considerations on the so-called digital generations and young adults (who are participants of the conducted research) were presented. The theoretical part also focused on the presentation of the assumptions of various learning theories, of which the most important for this project were: connectivism, generativism, and the transformative learning theory. The core concepts underlying the aforementioned theories were at the same time an interpretative frame for the categories emerged from the collected empirical material. The end of the first part was devoted to the rationale for conducting research in the chosen area.

In the second part of the dissertation the methodological aspects of the research were introduced. The project was carried out in qualitative research approach and it was embedded in a constructivist paradigm. The qualitative methodology allowed understanding the observed phenomenon from the perspective of meanings given by its participants. It was assumed in the project that reality is socially constructed (Mertens, 2010). Hence, its creation is the result of reconstructing the multivoice narration of research participants, who provided knowledge about experiencing the digital space in the learning process as well as the voice of the researcher who was a 'passionate participant', in the sense of facilitating the multivoice reconstruction (Guba, Lincoln, 1994, s. 112).

The research procedure was carried out in the case study strategy (Stake, 1994). It was an instrumental and collective ethnographic case study on experiencing the digital space in the learning process of University students, based on the educational-goaled discussion groups in social media. The selected strategy made it possible to capture the complexity and dynamics of two studied cases, and their analysis and interpretation allowed for a contextual understanding of the phenomenon. The choice of the ethnographic case study allowed for exploration in the natural environment of the participants. For this reason, the data collection procedures were very similar to those used in classic ethnography. A few methods of collecting data were used in the project. In both cases these were: participant observation of educational-goaled discussion groups on Facebook, netnographic interviews with the University students, and document analysis that included reflective writing techniques. Additionally, in the second case

the fieldwork journal was used. It contained of researcher's personal notes created during study. Triangulation of methods and data supported the process of achieving research objectives, which were: understanding of individually constructed versions of experiencing the digital space in the learning process and reconstruction of those different versions of reality experienced by scholars and the academic teacher during education at a University level. The research participants were young adults – students of Pedagogy (mainly females but also males) who were at the same time members of educational-goaled discussion groups on Facebook established in the frame of a University course. The issue of experiencing the digital space in the learning process of young adults, drawing attention to the meanings given to technology-enhanced university classes by its attendees, was beyond the area of research conducted at the time.

The third part of dissertation presents research findings. The two empirical chapters shows the process of data analysis and interpretation in each case. As a result of this process it was possible to show main conclusions of the study. First of all, the analysis portrayed some situations related to the digital space during University classes that were perceived as valuable by young adults. These situations were, i.e., involvement in educational-goaled discussion groups, collecting and sharing educational materials in electronic version there, collective creation of the electronic mind map, using mobile applications, and digitalizing 'sketchnotes'. Accordingly, some of participants indicated the need of mixing traditional classes with the elements of ICT. Secondly, the educational-goaled discussion groups were seen as a space for sharing information, learning materials and for maintaining contacts with other group members. These groups were also supportive in the process of integrating members of new students' groups. Thirdly, some of participants perceived relations between them and the academic teacher, maintained through social media, as less formal and partnership-oriented. As a result of this they experienced the disorienting dilemma that affected their individual frames of reference and triggered transformative learning process. The experiences of young adults also showed that delivering University courses with the elements of the digital space (such as collaborative electronic mind mapping, sharing learning materials, i.e., books and articles in PDF files) may trigger learning. For example, as a result of collaborative work on the electronic mind map young adults were learning the cooperation, and what is more important they were learning due to cooperation. The most surprising was the fact that young adults (especially participants of the second case study) perceived learning in a colloquial way. They associated it with memorising particular parts of subject-matter knowledge and passing examinations at the University. The research conclusion showed that technology-enhanced learning at the

University gave participants the chance to collect new, valuable experiences. That kind of learning was perceived as innovative and absolutely necessary nowadays. This draws attention to the need of reflecting on adult education process which is focused on: efficient communication, maintaining relationships with fellow students and academics, sharing learning materials, and cooperation. All of aforementioned elements may be currently provided by the use of the digital space.