

Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) Usage

Initial Report

Tampere Polytechnic/Teacher Education Centre

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| National context |
| <p>In the spring of 1999, the Finnish Ministry of Education launched a four-year period information strategy, for 2000 - 2004. This was the second of this kind. The first one was the strategy for 1995 - 2000. For teachers, this means a project called OPE.FI, i.e. studies in ICT, in the framework of which all teachers participate in ICT studies and 10 to 50% of the teachers also participate in special studies.</p> <p>In Finland, there are no national requirements stating the guidelines for institutions to select VLEs. Schools, universities and polytechnics are free to choose the VLE that suits best to their own purposes. The most popular VLE in Finland is WebCT, but LearningSpace, Blackboard and many other VLEs are also in use. We also have Finnish products to come to the VLE market.</p> <p>There are three nationwide virtual projects in the Finnish educational system: Virtual University, Virtual Polytechnic and Virtual School.</p> |
| Institution |
| Tampere Polytechnic (TAMK) |
| School/division/faculty |
| Teacher Education Centre (TAOKK) |
| Current VLE |
| WebCT (WebCourseTools) 3.7 |
| Any other VLEs in use |
| R5Generation (Finnish product) |
| Selection and Implementation history |
| <p>Popularity, price and technical reliability were the criteria in selecting the VLE for TAMK. In 1999, we compared LearningSpace and WebCT, and choice came for WebCT, due to technical and commercial reasons. WebCT was also so popular because it facilitates communication with other institutions.</p> <p>WebCt has proved to be a good choice so far, but, due to economical and pedagogical reason, we are continuously seeking for new VLE solutions (such as Moodle open source VLE and R5Generation).</p> |
| Funding arrangements |
| WebCT is funded by TAMK. The Ministry of Education has assigned some funds for the development of virtual learning but most of the funding is inside the normal budget. |

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| Hardware |
| Unix-server is Sun Enterprise 450 with two processors (UltraSPARC-II 296 MHz. RAM 2 GB. |
| Technical Support: |
| TAMK Computer Centre and eLearning Centre eEDU |
| Extent of Usage |
| All teachers (12) use WebCT to a certain degree and all students in TAOKK (over 400). In TAMK there are about 6000 WebCT usernames (ID). |
| Integration with student records |
| User ID and password are generated using LDAP and student record program WinhaPro. |
| User authentication |
| ID and password. All users have unique usernames and passwords. |
| Hardware and software requirements for users: |
| PC or Mac, Browser (Netscape or MSExplorer), modem. |
| Uploading of content: |
| HTML and most common image and sound formats are supported but one can also use other programs. |
| Pedagogical Support |
| TAMK eEDU (eLearning centre) |
| Usage within the faculty / school / department. |
| There are course materials, group and individual exercises, calendar, email, conversation forum and chat in WebCT. There are also links to intranet, useful www-sites and the student record. WebCT is used for guidance and tutoring, student administration, delivering and filing materials, and for student - teacher and student - student interaction. |
| Staff Development. |
| All the staff have been participating in basic training for using WebCT. The teachers got more training and some of them have participated in advanced courses. Most of the teachers use WebCT almost on a daily basis. |
| Student induction |
| All the students get 4-hour training in using WebCT. There is also an optional course (3 ECTS). |
| Quality control |
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| Policy |
| The policy in developing e-learning is to integrate contact and distance learning and to use different net tools in a flexible and meaningful way. Www-sites are used for external marketing and information. The materials and directions needed by every student teacher are in the intranet and course related materials are in WebCT. |

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| Support for assessment (formative and summative) |
| The teacher gives feed back to student teachers by using WebCT. Peer assessment is used, too. |
| Summary of usage within Vocational Initial Teacher Training |
| All the teacher training courses use WebCT in some way and all the teachers use it. The student teachers are expected to use WebCT to get information needed in studying. The materials and directions needed by every student teacher are in the intranet and course related materials are in WebCT. In some courses, exercises are also delivered and returned in WebCT. |