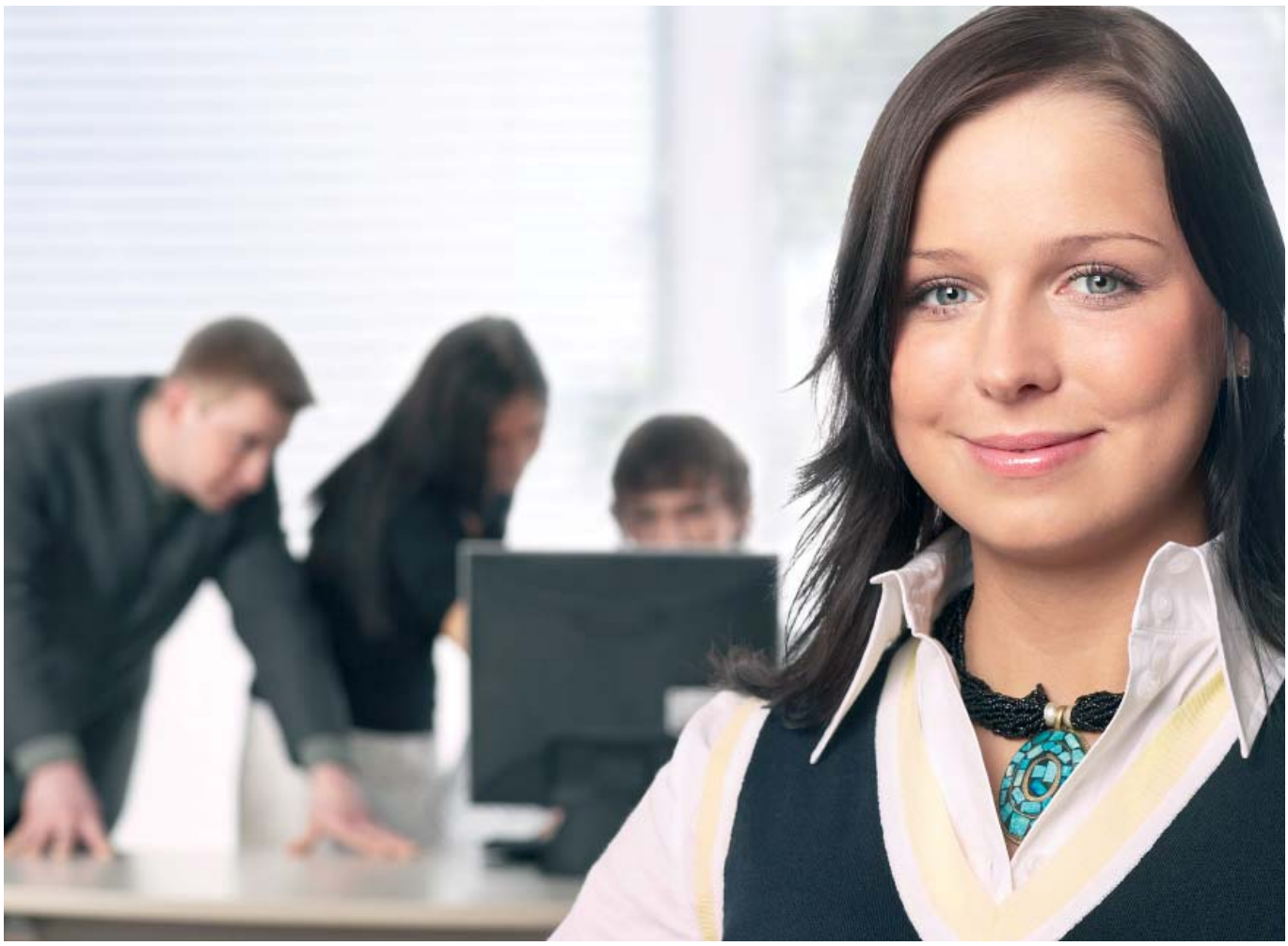
eLEARNING IN FINLAND

SeOPPI

03/2006

ASSOCIATION OF FINNISH eLEARNING CENTRE
PROMOTER AND NETWORK-BUILDER IN FINNISH eLEARNING BRANCH



WINDS OF CHANGE BLOWING THE INTERNET'S WAY

TOWARDS THE FINNISH eLEARNING QUALITY MARK

ASSOCIATION OF FINNISH
eLEARNING CENTRE

BEST FINNISH e-LEARNING SOLUTIONS

eEEMELI QUALITY COMPETITION

The Winner of the eEemeli 2006 Competition and e-Citizenship Series
WSOY Educational Corporation and the City of Espoo
– OPIT-SERVICE
More information: www.opit.fi

Winner of the Companies' Business Processes Series
Tieturi Vision Oy
– FAMILIARISE YOURSELF WITH THE ECONOMIC INDICATORS OF eLEARNING
More information: www.tieturivision.com

The Winner of the Vocational Competence and Personnel Training Series
3T Results Ltd.
– THE KAMPPI BUS TERMINAL FAMILIAR TO DRIVERS
More information: www.3tratkaisut.fi

The Winner of the eEemeli 2005 Competition
Promentor Solutions Oy
– PROMENTOR® PROTOCALL ENGINEERING
More information: www.promentor.fi

WORLD SUMMIT AWARD FINLAND COMPETITION 2006

The Winner of e-Learning Category
Melon Arbus Productions Oy
– SEITSEMANVELJESTA.NET
More information: www.seitsemanveljesta.net and www.melonarbus.fi

EUROPRIX TOP TALENT AWARD 2005

Overall Winner 2005 and the Multimedia Music Fusion Award and a victory in the Broadband/Online Category
Mika Tyyskä, Lahti Polytechnic, Institute of Design
– GUITAR SHRED SHOW
More information: www.guitarshredshow.com and www.elektrikpyjamas.com

The SeOppi Magazine is the only Finnish magazine in the field of e-learning. It is a membership bulletin for the members of, and published by, the Association of Finnish eLearning Centre.

The SeOppi Magazine offers up-to-date information about the latest phenomena, products and solutions of e-learning and their use. The magazine promotes the use, research and development of e-learning and digital education solutions in companies, educational establishments and other organisations with the help of the best experts.

The SeOppi Magazine gathers the professionals, companies, communities and practitioners in the field together and leads them to the sources offering information about e-learning.

Publisher
The Association of Finnish eLearning Centre
Vankanlähde 7
FI-13100 Hämeenlinna

Editor in Chief
Titi Tamminen
Tel. +358-3-6241-5214
titi.tamminen@eoppimiskeskus.net

Journalists
Onerva Leisti
Tiina Vepsäläinen

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Vankanlähde 7
FI-13100 Hämeenlinna
tiina.vepsalainen@eoppimiskeskus.net
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LEENA VAINIO, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD OF THE ASSOCIATION OF FINNISH eLEARNING CENTRE

DEAR READERS,

In Finland e-learning has become a part of everyday life whereas the meaning of technology has moved backwards. E-learning is one developed procedures in supporting learning and it is available for everyone. The equipment are easily available, they can and will be used creatively and when needed.

In the e-learning business in Finland, there are around 160–170 companies that provide e-learning solutions. The total turnover was around 140 million euros and it employed nearly 2000 people in 2003. This does not however reflect the digital learning solution markets as a whole, since the figures of the companies providing only partly e-learning solutions, universities and other public institutions are not included. The companies are mainly small. And a part of the companies export and take part in international development projects also.

More and more education which include e-learning is given in Finland. Upper secondary school can be passed entirely by studying in the Internet and in many comprehensive schools e-learning ensures the possibility to study also rare subjects. Different kinds of networks between schools enable producing the contents.

The projects of the Post-comprehensive school education and adult education have created dozens of good development networks. Virtual schools have been networked both regionally and nationally. In the project networks there have been developed solutions for e-learning, searched answers to problems caused by new studying methods and produced services. The technical solutions and infrastructure of the e-learning are in quite good condition except that the number of computers in upper secondary level schools needs to be increased. The context produced in the networks could be utilised more efficiently. The self provided teaching is found cheaper than one bought from the network.

Experts of e-learning are being trained in almost all units offering supportive education such as eOppimaisteri by the University of Joensuu, e-Skills by Häme Polytechnic and Ota-e by the Helsinki University of Technology.

There are 50 higher education institutions including 21 universities and 29 polytechnics in Finland. In all of them there are e-learning related development projects. Universities and polytechnics have both built a virtual consortium, which offer virtual studies for the students, but also a lot of information about developing virtual teaching, work of quality and research. Many fields of business are offering possibilities to study and graduate fully or at least partially virtually.

The research focuses on e-learning including media reading, multicultural phenomena, competences of teachers, usability of learning objects, usage of simulations in teaching, controlling practises of smart mobile device, usability of teaching technologies, using common educational material and management of e-learning. The studies result in thesis, articles, conference performances and also international conferences.

Please join our national and innovative network!

SeOPPI

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INTERESTED IN OUR MEMBERSHIP?
Join our network!
www.eoppimiskeskus.net

THE ASSOCIATION OF FINNISH eLEARNING CENTRE – NEW DOORS TO eLEARNING

The Association of Finnish eLearning Centre is an independent, national non-profit organisation that promotes the use of e-learning and digital education solutions in Finnish companies and organisations. It was established in 2002. Our purpose is to develop and increase the skills and knowledge of e-learning in education, teaching and business operations. We organise annual events such as meetings, seminars and briefings for our members.

The Association is a national meeting point which provides networking links for the Finnish e-learning projects and regional clusters and helps to create contacts between companies, organisations and individuals. We co-operate with the best experts and provide up-to-date information about research, development, trends and experiences from e-learning. We promote sharing of knowledge, best practices and quality in e-learning. We also distribute information and perform as a contact surface for finding partners, such as experts and service providers, on the Finnish e-learning market.

Our networks offer contacts to the producers and users of the e-learning services. We provide leading speakers in the field of e-learning in a variety of seminars and workshops. We participate in national e-learning policy making and in the work of the two Finnish e-learning programmes in the Finnish Centre of Expertise Programme.

The Association serves as a co-operation forum for e-learning interest groups, provides expert services and spreads information on e-learning. We assist e-learning professionals and other stakeholders in achieving common goals and bringing out their know-how and promote research and usability of results achieved in the branches of e-learning and e-studying.

Our expertise is based on the knowledge of our members and associates. The goal of our data service is dispersing existing, well-working practices and creating fresh information. Theme group activities promote networking and learning from one another. Discussion, learning and education seminars deliver expertise and promote networking.

News, coming events and a thesaurus

Our information services include current information about the development and user experiences related to e-learning and contact information for international organisations and experts interested in co-operating with Finnish e-learning professionals, organisations and projects. We have a website www.eoppimiskeskus.net that offers the latest news in the field of e-learning, a calendar of events and a reference database. We are also collecting e-learning terminology and vocabulary into a thesaurus called eABC. You are welcome to join us in building the thesaurus. The Association participates in the national committee of vocabulary.

Our support services include the SeOppi Magazine that we publish to serve our members and associates. The SeOppi Magazine offers up-to-date information about the latest phenomena of e-learning products and solutions. SeOppi gathers professionals, companies, organisations and individuals to the source of knowledge. The magazine can be subscribed to through the Association of Finnish eLearning Centre by anyone who is interested in e-learning.

Through our Bid Bank you are able to seek and call for tenders for executing your e-learning projects. We are also striving to promote the networking, employment and visibility of the e-learning experts through our Expert Base. Our Best practices -portal collects the domestic e-learning projects together and strives to promote the resulting practices and entities. Other support services are the eEemeli quality competition and eLearning Quality Mark.

e-Learning quality competition eEemeli

The Association of Finnish eLearning Centre organises annually the eEemeli e-learning competition for domestic e-learning products, services or policies produced or owned by the company itself. The competition seeks for domestic e-learning solutions end enhances innovation and quality of e-learning products.

The fifth eEemeli quality competition of e-learning products was organised by the Association and its co-operative partners in spring 2006. The theme of the competition was "Supporting Change". The winner of the competition was the best e-learning solution, the Opit-service, by WSOY Educational Corporation and the City of Espoo. With the help of the service they carried out the Espoo strategy according to which all students have to use information and communication technology frequently on different subjects. All the 3,000 teachers and 30,000 pupils of Espoo have had access to the Internet-based Opit-network environment from the beginning of 2005. The Opit-service is an Internet-based service consisting of basic contents, learning environment and user service.

The winners of the other competition series were Tieturi Vision Oy's "Familiarise Yourself with the Economic Indicators of eLearning" – a computer course which helps familiarise the learner with the basics of corporate economics – and 3T Results Ltd:s "The Kamppi Bus Terminal Familiar to Drivers" which is a multimedia-based e-learning solution for the bus drivers who operate in the Kamppi terminals in the Centre of Helsinki.

The Finnish eLearning Quality Mark

The Association of Finnish eLearning Centre develops the eLearning Quality Mark in Finland. The quality mark stimulates the whole branch to internal high quality work and is a kind of "internal quality movement". The Quality Mark is compatible with the previous quality projects undertaken in the field, and at the same time it is linked to the evolving European co-operation in this area.

There are two sets of criteria which consist of producer/provider -specific and product/service specific criteria. The producer/provider must first pass the producer/provider -specific criteria before it can seek the actual Finnish eLearning Quality mark for its products and/or services. The Association wants to take part in the evolving European co-operation in this field and wishes to share its experiences with other key European partners.

ASSOCIATION OF FINNISH eLEARNING CENTRE

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION,
PLEASE CONTACT: INFO@EOPPIMISKESKUS.NET

e-Learning has been one of the key development areas over the past ten years at HAMK University of Applied Sciences. All degree programmes (23) offer virtual courses on the web. The Vocational Teacher Education Unit has offered virtual teacher training programmes from the year 2005.

HAMK eLearning Centre is a research and development unit for virtual learning and educational technology. The research and development projects conducted in the HAMK eLearning Centre concentrate on developing e-Learning solutions and learning technologies which would help learning and teaching and motivate to knowledge construction.

e-LEARNING IS A CHALLENGE **TO PEDAGOGY, TECHNOLOGY AND CONTENT**

The Philosophy of Our Research and Development Projects

e-Learning practices are influenced by the pedagogical, technical and content contexts. Educators have to use different means to foster learning in networked environments (like web or mobile learning environments). Recent research indicates that there is a shift looming to more active learning, problem solving, authentic learning, and virtual teaming or collaboration online. Virtual courses will move away from being text-centred and lecture-based and increasingly incorporate hands-on activities.

There has to be a paradigm change in teaching and learning culture, because it is not only technology that counts in making e-learning a success. A further challenge is to build open learning objects (e.g. to advance collaborative learning tools) which could be even culturally adaptable and adaptive and serve as components, for example, in mobile learning games.

Formative research combining both the development of hard infrastructures (new educational technology and software) and the development soft infrastructures (new pedagogical and learning methods) is most decidedly needed in order to create and implement successful educational technologies. The emphasis is on the educational technologies (like mobile learning with SMS-messages, use of Wikis, blogs, podcasting, vodcasting) which are easy to implement in various cultural settings and contextualised learning situations. The focus is on the case studies with early phase prototypes. Laboratory studies may be needed in order to examine added value of educational technology concerning students' cognitive learning processes.

Some Research and Development Projects Carried out at HAMK:

Digital Learning Lab -research project

The aim of the DLL-project is to research e-learning both in the technical and pedagogical context as well as in the context of media skills. The main goal of this research project is to produce theoretical information and especially, to develop e-learning innovations which will become landmarks of improved teaching and learning. Project is funded by the European Social Fund (ESF). http://dll.hamk.fi/tutkimus/

Streaming Knowledge (Tieto Virtaa) Project

The HAMK eLearning Centre collaborated in this project with the degree programmes of HAMK University of Applied Sciences and regional organs such as educational institutions and enterprises. Project is funded by the European Social Fund (ESF).

We all have worked together accomplishing:

- web-based learning materials and tutoring methods
- e-learning products and models
- best practices in the field of e-learning
- new ways of working and communicating in the digital environment
- The project was a collection of 19 subprojects. Below are some examples of subprojects.

Working in virtual teams

Working in virtual teams has been one issue during the project. The guide book "How to Work in Virtual Teams" describes the prerequisites for successful virtual teams:

1. Working in virtual teams is based on shared experiences, the team members wish to learn and do things together
2. The participants have uniform objectives and sub-targets that everyone is aware of
3. The team members' actions are based on trust
4. Privacy and information security
5. Social interaction is the starting point of success
6. Beneficial value
7. Culture
8. Consciousness
9. Scalability
10. Authenticity
11. Flexibility

An Intelligent Mobile Tutoring Tool

Mobile devices will extend the learning environment and integrate it with real life environments, where learning can take place in an authentic situation and context.

Mobilogi is a tutoring tool for teachers. It enables interaction and tutoring dialogue via mobile devices like mobile phones (SMSs) and PDAs. The tool contains semiautomatic and automatic guidance for learners' learning processes, enabling automatic individualization. In addition, Älykkö component of Mobilogi contains ready-made tutoring expressions and a documented tutoring dialogue for teachers' use, in order to reduce the teacher's cognitive load needed just for memorizing. http://elearningcentre.hamk.fi/hankkeet/

eFood

Hygiene and microbiology education and training are needed for everyone working or aiming at working in the food industry. In the eFood project we developed meaningful and flexible digital study materials and eLearning solutions.

The main challenge among the young student groups has been how to individualise the learning processes on the basis of personal needs in large groups. Practical work periods in the laboratory are important parts of the microbiology and hygiene course, but the time for those is limited. Nowadays the students of biotechnology and food engineering, have already, before they come into the laboratory, used digital study material produced in this project, showing safe microbiological working practices and aseptic techniques (http://www.elearningcentre.hamk.fi/tyomenetelmat/). The material includes several video clips e.g. on how to cultivate, determine and microscope microbial cultures. Using interactive animation the students can practise how to enumerate microbes in a sample by traditional plate counting techniques. This exercise has turned out to be very useful: the amount of practising time required to understand the principles of diluting and plating varies considerably between different students.

Dress to Impress

Dress to Impress is an e-learning material about dressing for situation and work. The aim of the material is to introduce the readers into the business and work wear in a versatile, enjoyable, clear and interesting way. The visually high level learning material includes information on different garments, figure types, figures and proportions of garments, clothing materials including information on fabrics and how to take care of clothes. The learning material also includes information on different dressing styles. The Dress to Impress material is targeted to various end-user groups – e.g. students, teachers, professionals, the staff members in clothing shops and offices. In addition, Dress to Impress contains interactive tests and exercises that indicate the level of knowledge achieved when completing the study of the Dress to Impress material.

We Accomplish More by Working Together

The Finnish Virtual Polytechnic

The Finnish Virtual Polytechnic is very important partner for HAMK. The teachers from different degree programmes are members or coordinators of the content production teams of the Finnish Virtual Polytechnic.

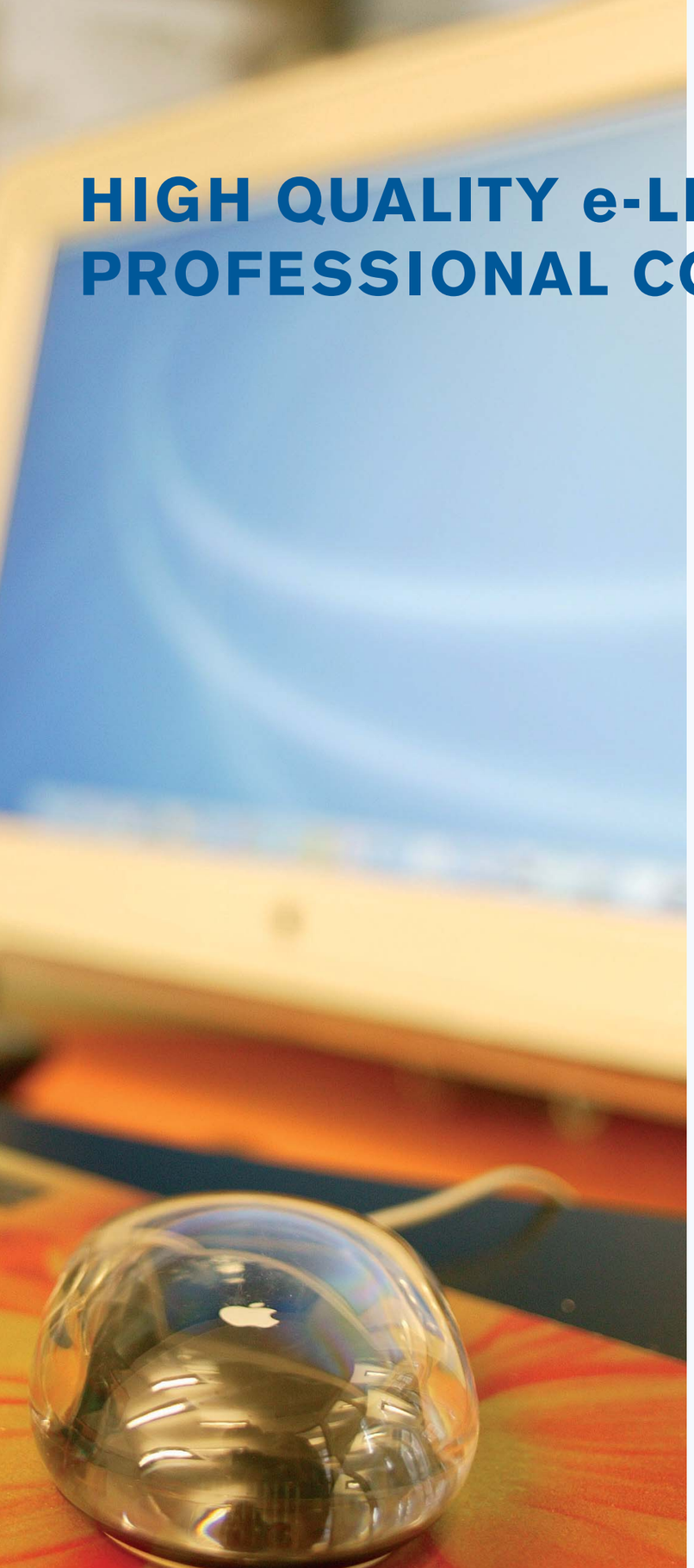
HAMK eLearning Centre and Averko (Virtual Open University of Applied Sciences of Ostra Bothnia) are coordinating The Online Pedagogy and Research project of the Finnish Virtual Polytechnic. The goal of the project is a developed mentoring model for content producing teams and pedagogical quality criteria for learning objects. The mentor is a discussion partner to be used in identifying and solving questions relating to content production, especially questions and challenges dealing with the pedagogical quality of learning objects. How to ensure the learning objects to be authentic, goal oriented and to support knowledge building? http://www.virtuaaliamk.fi/fi/index.html

The eTeacher of the Future

What kind of changes and challenges do the constantly expanding web teaching and virtual qualifications bring into the way how the teacher and the organisation work? What is a web teacher's job like and how is it to be organised in the education programme and institution? These are the issues taken up by the eTeacher of the Future project, which brings together four Universities of Applied Sciences. The aim of the project is to substantially increase the share of virtual studies in the qualifications of the participating degree programmes. One starting point in developing curricula is to take virtual teaching into account. http://www.elearningcentre.hamk.fi/eopettaja/en/index.html

HAMK
UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

CONTACT INFORMATION:
LEENA VAINIO, LEENA.VAINIO@HAMK.FI



HIGH QUALITY e-LEARNING SUPPORTS PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

AUTHOR: TIINA FRONT-TAMMIVIRTA, PROGRAMME DIRECTOR HÄME CENTRE OF EXPERTISE, TECHNOLOGY CENTRE INNOPARK LTD.

The Häme Centre of Expertise combines experts in e-learning and professional expertise to develop new competences needed in the digital world. The vision for the coming years comprises high quality e-learning methods and tools, and user friendly, customer-oriented terminals and on-demand contents that are merged in an ubiquitous society. Technological environments are transparently linked to work processes and on-the-job learning. Technology enables integration of functions controlled by sensors, RFIDs, cameras, etc., with normal living and working environments. Mobility enables learning activities independently of time and place.

Joint actions and initiatives have been taken in the Hämeenlinna region to establish forums and models of networking in response to these challenges. E-competences are becoming vital elements of working skills in most professions. This means a major break from traditional vocational training.

For example, decreasing dependency on classrooms in the educational world brings new challenges to the teacher's profession, which needs to be taken into consideration right from the beginning of teacher education. HAMK University of Applied Sciences' eLearning Centre and Vocational Teacher Education in Hämeenlinna have long invested in this sector and have trained a new generation of teachers. Personal experience with virtual studies and virtual group work provide a good base for diversified planning and implementation of one's own teaching. Well-rounded expertise also becomes a part of the teacher's own everyday life and technological solutions become a part of the learning environment.

The importance of quality thinking will be emphasized even more in the future, when various types of digital content products, especially in the area of learning and development, are produced as cooperative efforts of many different actors. In Finland, actors that provide digital learning and competence products and services form a large sector, but still not a clearly defined separate industrial cluster. The digital learning and competence product and service business is a sector that is based on network-like cooperation. The reason for this is that providing high quality products and services requires various competences that supplement each other, like pedagogical knowledge, media know-how, software expertise and business competence. Companies that produce content more and more often form value-chains that are able to meet the growing demand in both Finland and elsewhere.

Häme Centre of Expertise

Häme Centre of Expertise is to utilize the high-standard knowledge and expertise in line with the specific strengths of the Hämeenlinna region to benefit business life, to create jobs, and to promote regional development. Häme Centre of Expertise is focusing on the development of vocational competence and learning and e-learning. The programme recruits the regional partners in vocational competence to collaborate with the University of Tampere, HAMK University of Applied Sciences and local companies.

The penguin is searching for a school

ALTERNATIVE SOFTWARE SOLUTIONS FOR SCHOOLS

Open Source software (OSS) is ordinary software that most of us have used. Open Source-based software and/or tools are used in a majority of Finland's educational institutions. They differ from proprietary (closed source) software in their licensing procedure; while a closed source license limits the possibilities of using or copying the software, an open source license provides these rights without license payments. The most well known open source software is the Linux operating system.

In practice, the decision to choose an OS solution is often influenced by the cost benefit more than other criteria, like the freedom to choose a service provider, information security issues, the possibility of tailoring the software, and the ease of licensing. An open source license provides the possibility of freely copying, revising and distributing the software, so a school's staff and students can install software used at school in their own home computers without limitation.

The **EduCOSS** organization was set up to spread knowledge and experiences about ongoing teaching and education-related OS projects in Finland. EduCOSS is a forum where existing education-related OS projects can compare experiences, and anyone interested in the topic can receive reliable information about the sector's actors and suppliers through peer support.

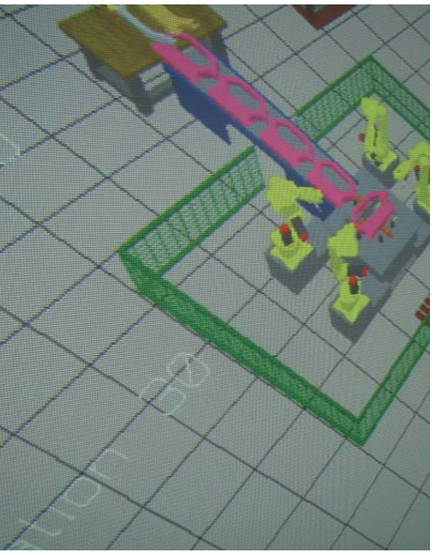
EduCOSS's research project has gathered material about open source-based solutions implemented in Finnish schools, and particularly about server-based systems (LTSP = Linux Terminal Server Project). In the LTSP system all the software and files are located on a server where actual data processing takes place. The server sends an image to work stations that are called thin clients, which replace conventional PC workstations. The open source software-based LTSP system is cost effective and easy to maintain. The use of OS software in schools may also increase students' knowledge and skills in information and communications technology.

EduCOSS is part of Finland's nationwide Centre for Open Source Software (COSS), which is a nationwide business development organization that utilizes and supports OS software. EduCOSS operation is coordinated by the Häme Centre of Expertise at Technology Centre Innopark Ltd., and EduCOSS research is implemented by the Open Source researcher team of the hypermedia laboratory at the University of Tampere.

TECHNOLOGY CENTRE INNOPARK

EduCOSS

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT EDUCOSS'S OPERATION, SEE EDU@COSS.FI AND WWW.EDUCOSS.FI.



AUTHOR: JUSSI HORELLI,
INNOSTEEL VIRTUAL FACTORY

Innosteel

– NEW WAY OF LEARNING IN METAL INDUSTRY

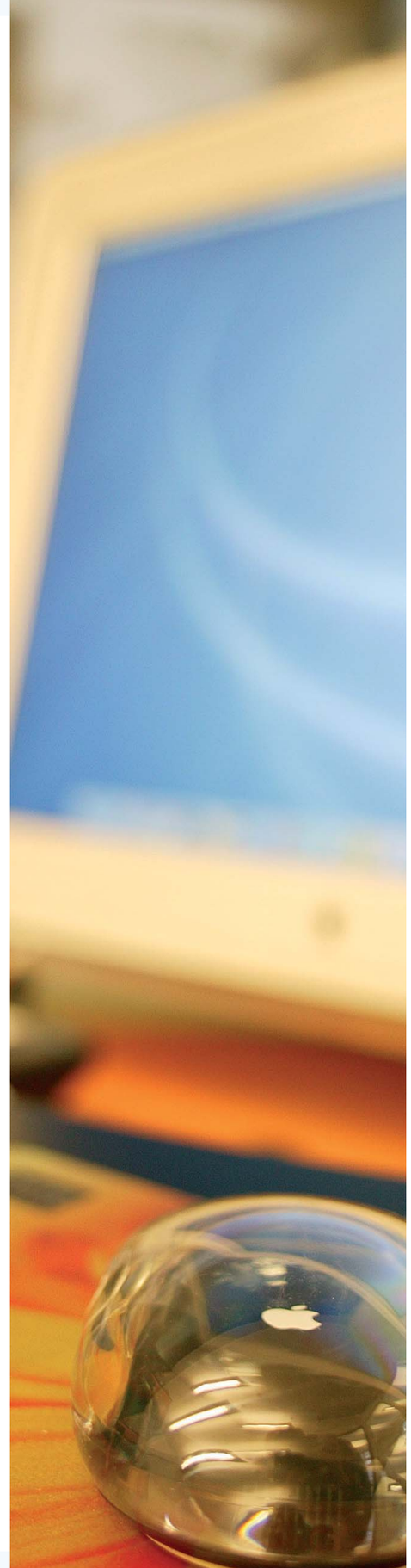
InnoSteel is a co-operation network based on public-private relationships. It consists of a group of projects which contain support for product development and new learning methods and equipment useful for educational institutes and small or medium size companies. There are over 40 companies and educational institutes participating in InnoSteel-projects managed by the key actors of the network – HAMK University of Applied Sciences and InnoSteel Factory Ltd. The main goal of the InnoSteel network is to increase know-how in companies and educational facilities related to the metal industry especially in Häme region. The network works in both ways: it is not only about schools providing services to companies but also the companies participating the training processes of educational institutes.

The training factory operated by InnoSteel Factory Ltd is the physical heart of a diverse research- and learning environment, with the factory being a modern metal engineering workshop with training-, research-, and production capabilities. InnoSteel Factory Ltd is owned by educational institutes, cities and companies.

InnoSteel-projects cover various issues, such as designing and implementing new training programs for steel construction so that they promote the service offering of higher education institutions and vocational institutions for businesses in the metal industry and steel construction located in the region in the best possible way. On the other hand companies are encouraged and helped to improve the profitability and to increase the turnover of participating businesses with the help of successful innovation processes and new innovations.

With a project called Virtual Factory, which is included in the same project consortium, an e-learning environment based on simulation and modeling. It is being built next to the training factory. The central operating model for this environment is that studying should be, at least within reasonable limits, possible over the internet making studying independent from place, even though this can prove to be difficult to accomplish in a technical field of study. InnoSteel offers an ideal platform for creating simulation based learning environment since it contains also real production line. This combination enables the verification of simulation models and – of course – the skills achieved by studying in simulated environment.

In general InnoSteel network offers services in many levels covering issues from traditional school based educational functions to customized training programs for companies or co-operation in creating new products or business models.



OILI-model

STUDENTS PROVIDE ICT TRAINING FOR SMEs

Typically, small and medium -sized enterprises (SMEs) have limited resources and have difficulties taking part in commonly available ICT courses. However, often the need for ICT related training exists. In Central Finland, OILI-project have created an educational model, Oili-model, to respond to this challenge. The project is coordinated by Information Technology Research Institute, University of Jyväskylä, Finland. The aim of Oili-model is to create regional, self-sustaining cooperation networks between educational institutions and businesses in the area.

The idea of OILI project is that IT education is provided to SMEs free of charge by local students during their practical training period in the companies and by using a teaching method called side-by-side training. Side-by-side training is individualized and tailored training designed for a trainee's special needs.

Side-by-Side training and eLearning support the model

In the Oili-model ICT guidance is provided to SMEs free of charge by local students during their vocational training periods in the companies. To provide the guidance, the students use a training method called Side-by-Side training, which is a form of ICT training where the trainee uses the computer and the trainer is actively involved in the situation by giving guidance. Ideally the trainer and trainee are alone in the situation, and the content covered is determined by the trainee's skills and interests.

To gain the skills necessary for becoming a Side-by-Side trainer each student completes an online course on Side-by-Side training, which outlines the skills necessary for a trainer and the issues the trainer is likely to encounter during the training.

From the entrepreneurs' point of view, Oili-model provides three levels of ICT education. The first level, Basic ICT skills, gives employees in SMEs the basic skills necessary for using ICT. The next level, Information security, is designed to increase the employees' awareness of security issues and give them tools to improve the level of information security in their workplace. The third level, Supporting business with ICT, contains information of how ICT can be utilized in business, starting from what benefits can be gained from basic office tools to giving information about eBusiness solutions. This promotes increased awareness of how ICT can be used in business environment and what advantages can be gained. Each of these levels is supported by an online course. All courses can be accessed through a web portal used to support the coordination of the model. English language versions of the courses are available at www.oili.fi.

A little thing can make a big difference – experiences of Side-by-Side training

The experiences from the early application of Oili-model have been positive. Individuality of Side-by-Side training got positive feedback from the SMEs since it enabled tailoring learning contents according to the learner's needs. Exercises based on learner's current needs were found beneficial since the learner is able to immediately apply the skills in real life context.

The students have also found the experience of acting as Side-by-Side trainers encouraging. Giving Side-by-Side training has provided new, meaningful content to their vocational training periods, increased their usefulness and given more employment opportunities. The experiences indicate that Side-by-Side training integrates well in the traditional vocational training and increases its value for both students and enterprises.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY RESEARCH INSTITUTE

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:
SENIOR PROJECT MANAGER
PETRI LOUNASKORPI
PETRI.LOUNASKORPI@TITU.JYU.FI

THE IDEA OF THE GLOBAL UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

AUTHOR: PROFESSOR TAPIO VARIS
UNESCO CHAIR IN GLOBAL e-LEARNING
UNIVERSITY OF TAMPERE, FINLAND

The vision is a society, which develops and utilises the opportunities inherent in the information society to improve the quality of life, knowledge, international competitiveness and interaction in an exemplary, versatile and sustainable way. These ideas have been used to develop the Global University System (GUS) within the UNESCO Chair in global e-learning at the University of Tampere.

The Global University System (GUS) is a worldwide initiative to create satellite/wireless telecommunications infrastructure and educational programs for access to educational resources across national and cultural boundaries for global peace. The GUS helps higher educational institutions in remote/rural areas of developing countries to deploy broadband Internet in order for them to close the digital divide and act as the knowledge center of their community for the eradication of poverty and isolation. The GUS has task forces working in the major regions of the globe with partnerships of higher education and healthcare institutions. Learners in these regions will be able to take their courses, via advanced broadband Internet, from member institutions around the world to receive a GUS degree. These learners and their professors from participating institutions will form a global forum for exchange of ideas and information and for conducting collaborative research and development. The aim is to achieve "education and healthcare for all," anywhere, anytime and at any pace. *(Varis – Utsumi – Klemm 2003.)*

The mission of GUS has three specific thrusts, to:

- Identify, test, and facilitate the deployment of broadband Internet and related technologies that are affordable and accessible for underdeveloped areas of the world,
- Coordinate the delivery of content and rich educational experiences leading to a GUS degree,
- Provide a global infrastructure for collaboration among faculty, students, graduates, and policy makers in universities, healthcare institutions, corporations, and governments.

The highest priority of the GUS is to launch a transcultural, globalwide initiative (using modern techniques of communication) to promote the kinds of global education that will advance peace, justice, understanding, and human wisdom. The GUS has no intention of dictating morality to its participants. It will encourage free and open dialog among those with differing opinions and outlooks. But, in view of the challenges confronting humankind at this critical juncture in its history, it behooves us to demonstrate moral leadership in the various activities we undertake.

In a world now fragmented by hosts of competing special interests, a globe endangered by the tribal rivalries of the nation-states, we affirm our university as a place where teaching and thinking are given free reign to be truly ecological – to address problems and crises global in scope. The GUS will place an emphasis on quality in all its programs and courses of instruction. It will draw its curriculum from known centers of learning around the world and seek to identify new centers of excellence and creative scholarship. The undertakings of the GUS will include the most up-to-date research and methods, the most recent developments and insights in its various fields of study, and will be supported and enhanced by the latest advances in communication technology. To respond to the immediate needs of its students, the GUS will offer culturally relevant educational experiences not readily available in local institutions, perhaps not available through any other means but an electronic university, that is interactive in nature and global in scope.

At the same time, the GUS will remain cognizant of the ***collective*** needs of the globe. Recognizing that the welter of newly generated information and technologies can itself constitute a significant problem for humankind as a whole, the GUS will seek to temper the fragmentizing effects of contemporary innovation. The GUS will encourage curricula in which the latest facts and newest techniques are grounded and integrated with the wisdom of our ***oldest*** traditions, holistic and ecological approaches found at the core of every native culture on the globe. Accordingly, the GUS will define a ***"quality education"*** as one that promotes an integration of the social, economic, political, and spiritual insights of East and West, North and South, masculine and feminine - encompassing the wisdom of the past, the richness of cultural diversity and the transformative potentialities of the present and future.

The GUS partnership of universities, businesses, governmental, nongovernmental, and community organizations will be guided by, and remain fully responsive to, the felt needs and stated aspirations of students, workers and individual citizens around the globe. The GUS will work diligently to help make it possible for researchers in significant fields of study to collaborate across national boundaries, engaging in joint research projects facilitated by computer, telecommunication and information technologies. A rich new interplay of disciplines and schools of thought is possible through such electronic cooperation and interchange. By bringing many minds together through computer networking and conferencing, our ***"collective intelligence"*** can be brought to bear in exploring fresh approaches to global issues.

The GUS endorses the precept of unrestricted access to all information and educational resources at its disposal. The GUS is committed to the goal of counteracting the depersonalizing effects of mass technology. But rather than limiting itself to the aim of meeting the purely personal needs of its participants, GUS hopes that its educational programs will encourage a sharing of minds and hearts across personal, disciplinary, scientific and cultural barriers. Both in the formal courses of instruction and in the postgraduate networks of colleagues that emerge from a GUS education, we hope to promote awareness of cultural diversity without encouraging either cultural fragmentation or cultural homogenization, as performing a dynamic ***synthesis*** of unity and diversity, a transcultural ***unity-in-difference.***

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Winds of change blowing the Internet's way

TEXT: ONERVA LEISTI, THE ASSOCIATION OF FINNISH eLEARNING CENTRE

Winds of change are blowing on the Internet, entailing communality, openness, peer collaboration and social software. Scientists at the University of Tampere can enlighten us on some of the future trends, which can already be detected as phenomena. Web 2.0 is an umbrella term for new types of software and platforms, as well as for new ways of working and interacting. The use of the web is expanding from computers to mobile devices, learning methods are becoming more intensive, and more and more parties are getting involved in the production of media contents.

Users participating in social media

Web 2.0 requires interaction from the users, explains **Tere Vaden**, senior assistant of the Hypermedia laboratory. The contents of new Internet services are created together, as with e.g. wikis, blogs or picture distribution services. The services require participation from the users in content production, and the users form communities. The service provider offers the technology or the platform on which the community bases the contents. The participants run the risk of creating a service for which no-one is interested in producing contents. Also, the reliability of a community-effort encyclopedia can be questioned. The information offered is incorrect unless an expert in the field has rectified the mistakes.

The reasons behind an individual bothering to participate in the open Internet services can be divided into individual and communal motives. Those driven by individual motives expect to be compensated for their participation with money, better job opportunities, or then they participate for some other instrumental reason. Those participating for communal reasons get inspired by communal software development, sharing of knowledge or helping people, and for them it is a way of earning respect and having fun.

When examining interfaces between customers, communities and companies, one starts to wonder whether it is possible to create open innovation through cooperation; or how do markets dealing with ideas and innovations function on the web? As examples of open as opposed to closed innovations can be mentioned corporate blogs and wikis. Stating to external parties what the company is focusing on is a way for the company to receive feedback and new ideas. In case the new idea is not, however, suited for the company's R&D product range, it can be sold to others. Closer inspection of the Web 2.0 culture raises the question whether it is possible to adopt the policies nurtured by the social media in organisations, for example, for learning or communication purposes.

Do-it-yourself media encountering journalism on the Internet

Researcher **Esa Sirkkunen** from the Journalism Research and Development Centre uses the Mansetori project that was launched in 1998 as an example of a web service that offers local, citizen-driven journalism by means of volunteers. In the beginning, media houses were interested in publications of this type, but the interest dropped at the beginning of the 21st century.

– Currently the situation has altered thanks to the speedy rise of blogs. The media world shows true interest in these phenomena and, at the same time, in the re-evaluation of the entire web journalism concept. I'd prefer not to limit myself to only journalism, but treat also blogs, wikis and other forms of publication driven by user activeness in this context, Mr Sirkkunen comments.

– The traditional mass communication has required centralized production facilities and deliveries. The field has not been characterized by interaction nor decentralized cooperation together with the audiences. The traditional journalism emphasizes facts and the adoption of a critical approach, whereas in blogs subjectivity is an end in itself. Contents that cannot be controlled beforehand are poorly suited for the traditional media world. Bloggers do not tend to regard themselves as journalists. One could also provoke discussion about publicity and the way it is created.

– Publicity mediated by the media is partly being re-created. There are approximately 40 million blogs in the U.S. 12 million people, i.e. 8% of the adult population, have a blog, and 57 million or 39% of them read them.

– The MySpace service had 95 million users registered in July 2006. The YouTube service that is primarily dedicated to showing amateur videos contains 70 million videos and 100 million downloads per day. These figures are tremendous, probably causing the traditional media to envy the newcomers. Also, in Finland, e.g. the Irc-gallery has for long kept its position on the TOP 10 list of the most visited web sites. The growth of these services has been boosted by the development of the Internet culture.

Prominent search engines such as Google, Yahoo and Microsoft have started to adopt the policies of traditional media houses, e.g. by selling advertising space on the search sites. Google paid a huge amount to be chosen as the search engine for MySpace. The service is beginning to sell also TV series. Thus, services based on the Do-it-yourself philosophy are beginning to be commercialized.

The Do-it-yourself media facilitates the equal distribution of information and that is why it makes a difference for e-learning. Mr Sirkkunen would like to see networking and peer publication activities also in the future. They involve collective learning and create great achievements, as can be seen e.g. with the Wikipedia.

Information retrieval moving from the desk to the pocket

Researcher **Tomi Heimonen**, who is finalizing his dissertation on mobile user interfaces at the Tampere Unit for Computer-Human Interaction notes that only recently has the technology developed enough to turn mobile information retrieval meaningful.

Previously the mobile phone used to have a service menu through which one could buy services. As the technology progresses, it is possible to produce mobile-friendly contents, Mr Heimonen points out.

Already, the number of mobile phones is bigger than that of computers in the world. In spontaneous information retrieval, the mobile phone is preferred to the computer. Information needs and requirements differ. The screen of the mobile phone is tiny so the users require smaller amounts of search results, offering more accuracy and correspondence with the search criteria, e.g. when searching for a bus schedule or pizzeria phone number.

Mr Heimonen has perceived progress in the mobile search engines. Services are being modified to better fit into the mobile phone screen. Search engines have been launched for mobile phones, specializing e.g. in pictures, blogs, schedules, or TV programs. Among the new innovations can be mentioned search services based on the Web 2.0 technology, combining various contents. Mobile search is challenged e.g. by fitting advertising into the small screen and by the pricing of services.

– The greatest benefit provided by mobile e-learning is its ability to reach student groups that could not be reached otherwise. The young are one of the largest user groups of mobile technology. The possibility of mobile participation can make studying even more interesting and motivating compared with traditional learning methods, Mr Heimonen maintains. Mobile devices do not require as much IT competence as computers do, and e.g. text and multimedia messages can be utilized to create one's own learning contents.

According to Mr Heimonen, mobile e-learning does not replace the traditional learning methods, but rather complements them. Mobile products could be harnessed to increase learning opportunities in the current learning systems e.g. by the deployment of SMS-messages as a feedback channel, or by offering lectures in the podcasting form through the mp3-player. Software supporting mobile e-learning should be modular enough to allow modification for diverse learning situations.

Web-based information retrieval and information literacy to enhance learning

Web-based information retrieval, learning and information literacy are key questions in the Web-SeaL project, which concentrates on learning processes characterized by intensive information retrieval in the years 2006-2009, professor **Eero Sormunen** from the Department of Information Studies reports. Information scientists and educationalists form a cross-disciplinary group of scientists. Searching information on the web and high-quality learning form an interface offering plenty of more material for future research.

– Education has begun to rely more on material accessed through the web. In addition, we are on the verge of a transition to learner-centred forms of teaching. How can the learner him/herself adjust the learning process electronically and manage information retrieval by means of various tools? The aim is to understand how the information retrieval process related to learning could be enhanced, Mr Sormunen continues. We are also attempting to identify a method that could best facilitate information literacy. Information literacy relates to the basic skills of the human being. It enhances one's ability to manage situations where one has access to information not only when it comes to learning situations but also in work-related problem solving.

– How to limit information needs, identify information sources, search for information successfully, evaluate critically the information acquired, benefit from the information, and assess one's own information retrieval processes? How to define something that is unknown? Some people are more efficient in digging deep into a problem when learning something new, professor Sormunen ponders.

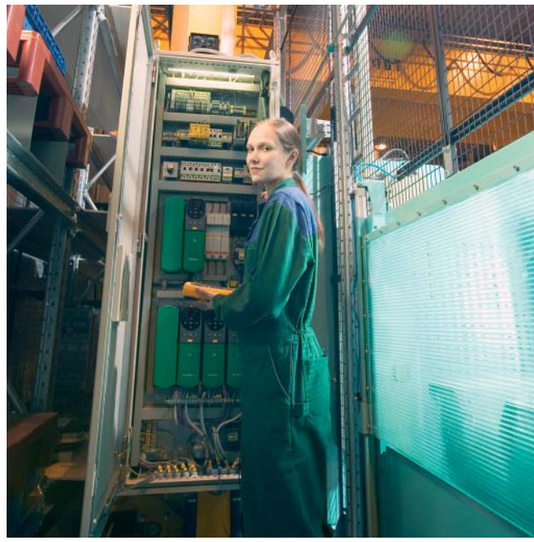
According to Mr Sormunen, e-learning is giving rise to the same phenomena as the traditional, institutional education. When studying in the web environment, the learning-related processes are connected to one's own work surroundings. If no ready-made teaching material exists, turning to the information retrieval resources offered by the web pays off. That is why information literacy should be covered when planning training.

Both documentation created by the learners themselves and stored retrieval processes are used as research material for the project. In addition, traditional interviews are used. The teacher naturally plays a key role as the assessor of the learning processes.

– The purpose is to acquire intermediary results and to raise topics essential for fine-tuning the practical aspect as early as possible.

e/TRIO

DEVELOPING e-LEARNING AND NETWORKING IN TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY



The web-based learning network elTRIO within the technology industry assembles learning institutes and companies within metal industry into a cooperation network dedicated to web-based learning. The network benefits from the top expertise gained nationally in the areas of pedagogics and information technology. The objective is to develop and provide training material and education to meet the needs of both companies and learning institutes, as well as to develop rules of the game, ways of working and tools to facilitate a more flexible and efficient cooperation.

The endeavours of elTRIO network focus on brainstorming new models for educating student groups in companies and educational institutes and on piloting new innovative forms of education, e.g. mobile learning, games and simulations, communal learning and on-the-job or on-the-project learning. The network experiments with various learning environment platforms aims at creating best practices that will be applicable to any material, independent of the platform used. This will enhance the reusability of learning materials.

As examples of the new learning environments that have been created as outcome of the elTRIO cooperation can be mentioned the elTRIO network game and the FMS driving licence training.

elTRIO network game

The Finnish corporate life has come to a turning point. The globalisation of work has put pressure on focusing on core competence and on outsourcing corporate functions, and this has lead to a tighter cooperation between companies. Thus, the production of an end-product or -service requires contribution from a multitude of organisations, which, as a network, create and produce the product or service concept. The same challenges are faced in the development of expertise, where networks have started to develop between educational institutes, research organisations and companies.

Playing the elTRIO network game will not only benefit entrepreneurs and companies contributing to the network, but also educational institutes. The game can be used to adopt concepts of network-like operations and to acquire an overall understanding of how networks function. Students or teachers within educational institutes can play the game also as part of a more comprehensive course entity. The game is also an interesting form of learning.

FMS driving licence training enhances automation expertise in engineering

Finnish factory and production automation is extremely qualified even when measured against international criteria. The FMS (Flexible Manufacturing System) Training Center developed in cooperation by Fastems and an educational institute from Tampere has since 1997 been actively used by companies and educational institutes in the field.

FMS Training Center contributors from Tampere, Machine Technology Centre Turku Ltd, and Innosteel Factory from Hämeenlinna joined forces to create a new type of FMS driving licence, which is a training entity developed for educational institutes and companies.

The training consists of web-based remote education and classroom sessions in the FMS education centres. The achieved level of driving licence clearly indicates what can be expected of the course participant.

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CONTACT INFORMATION:
ELTRIO COOPERATION
TIMO RAINIO, TECHNOLOGY CENTRE HERMIA LTD., TIMO.RAINIO@HERMIA.FI
CONTENT PRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF EXPERTISE
TIMO OVASKAINEN, JYVÄSKYLÄ UNIVERSITY/ TITU, TIMO.OVASKAINEN@TITU.JYU.FI
DEVELOPMENT OF CORPORATE NETWORKS
TUIJA KORPELA, INDUSTRIAL LEARNING SPACE LTD., TUIJA.KORPELA@METSOPARTNERS.COM

E-learning to facilitate change in the eEemeli competition

The Association of Finnish eLearning Centre together with its partners arranged the eEemeli competition this year for the fifth time, and as the chairman of the jury acted **Yrjö Neuvo**, who has vast experience in the field of information technology. Mr Neuvo describes serving on the jury as a unique experience.

– I learned so much! Working on the jury was a truly refreshing experience. It made me realize what a big business e-learning has become, and how it can be used to teach various subjects, ranging from the use of bus terminals to economic indicators. The field covers a vast area, and the jury consisted of members with diverse backgrounds.

The theme of the competition in 2006 was "Supporting change". Mr Neuvo finds the theme well suited.

– The corporate world and the world in general are facing constant change both in economy as well as in other areas.

The competition sought for such ways of learning and e-learning products that would support corporate business and interaction within organisations. In addition, the competition attempted to find public-sector services related to e-citizenship and products as well as solutions for expertise and personnel development. Mr Neuvo found the categories appropriate. As to the quality of the contesting entries, he states that the competition truly opened his eyes to see how professional a level the solutions succeeded in reaching. The products were not only impersonal information technology, but they were characterized by usability and naturalness.

- Information technology was integrated into the learning process; it was not an isolated tool, but a crucial element supporting and enhancing learning.

According to Mr Neuvo, the competition was well organized and the contesting entries were reviewed in several phases. The top entries were even, as there were plenty of high-quality masterpieces. Mr Neuvo reviewed the winning work of three different categories, that is, the Opit service, the "Familiarise Yourself with the Economic Indicators of eLearning" and learning material on "The Kamppi Bus Terminal Familiar to Drivers".

- The Opit service integrated the service smoothly into everyday school activities and succeeded in involving teachers and parents in the school world. I was especially fascinated by the fact that the feedback from children was extremely positive. In today's society it is essential to enhance interaction between the home and the school. In the entry involving key economic indicators, Mr Neuvo was interested in the concretization and visualization of cash flows.

– I'm personally not very competent with finances, and the way the work presented economics was fascinating.

– The Kamppi terminal excelled in combining the real world, physical building and e-learning material.

Human interaction plays a key role in learning

According to Mr Neuvo the advantage of the eEemeli competition is, e.g. the transfer of best practices.

– Competition enhances the visibility of the field. Before membership of the jury I did not understand how significant this business is in Finland. The eEemeli competition is a significant event, which assembles experts in the field.

– From my perspective, the competition exploded in significance the more I was involved and had the chance to observe the enthusiasm aroused by e-learning.

– The field will probably grow in its own pace. The road to electronic learning is one-way, with no return to old traditions. Software and technologies develop continuously, so the field will eventually make progress, Mr Neuvo believes.

He believes the future contestants may find benefits, e.g. through the development of the field, which is making progress as new contents are being produced, information technology enhances and people get familiar with utilizing it.

However, Mr Neuvo emphasizes the importance of human interaction in learning.

– An electronic method can never replace encountering with another human being to discuss and to make human contact. On the other hand, there are situations where e-learning enables the actor to acquaint himself/herself with the topic and to process it in more depth at his/her own time. E-learning is a handy, supplementary aid, but the ultimate learning always takes place in practice.

At its best, e-learning is an experience offering more than a book, as issues become concretized, various pieces of information are accommodated to each other and adjusted to the rhythm of the user's life. E-learning then becomes a means of putting one's soul to what he or she is doing, instead of just staring at a screen.

– E-learning does not replace one's own thinking, but at its best, it activates it.

According to Mr Neuvo, e-learning as a field has already acquired considerably visibility. It has established its position as credible business and activity developing education. Both larger and smaller companies are involved.

– Finland has reached a good international level. Exports could also be achieved, and obviously already has.

– E.g. the Opit service could have a good chance of being exported. Also the other e-learning programs have potential; creating them is tedious, but once the work has been finalized, there will definitely be opportunities for more extensive distribution.

Learning and expertise as a basis of competitive edge

– The Finnish competitive edge lies on competition and expertise, and e-learning forms, in this respect, the core. Expertise and learning support the national strategies for their parts, Mr Neuvo returns to contemplating the essence of learning.

– Learning involves information, pain, ability to inspire, but also hard work. Real learning means that one has repeatedly been forced to process an issue and to tease his/her brain. The computer can be used to achieve a lot, but the involvement of the human being is important. This could also be seen in many pieces of work participating in the competition. Mr Neuvo regards learning as a conservative field not characterized by hasty, dramatic changes.

– Learning takes place through traditional means. E-learning has, however, brought added value to the learning toolkit, and it has been possible to top e-learning products with pedagogics. Looking to the future makes Mr Neuvo curious.

– Today's pupils surf on the web and use the computer with absolute ease, as they have done since their infancy. It is interesting to see how much e-learning is developing in the next couple of decades. I am sure the uses will have expanded considerably.

Will e-learning also become part of the ubiquitous society?

– Information technology will integrate into a tool for human use more and more profoundly. Ubiquity is a suiting term, Mr Neuvo comments.

eEemeli is a quality competition in the field of e-learning

The Association of Finnish eLearning Centre with its partners arranges the annual eEemeli quality competition, which focuses on finding domestic e-learning solutions and on enhancing product innovativeness and quality. The objective is to encourage companies to create and develop new e-learning solutions and to identify new practices and success stories.

The competition is open to domestic companies, which own or have created their own domestic e-learning product, service or policy. It is also possible to take part in the competition with a solution created as a result of cooperation, e.g. by a supplier or user company or company and learning institute together.

The competition is being launched again. The theme of the 2007 is "Doing together". The registration period starts 1.1.2007 and terminates 31.1.2007.

The winner of the eEemeli competition is published on 18.4.2007 in the gala dinner of the Interactive Technology in Training conference organized in Hämeenlinna. The jury will reward the winner with a sum of money as well as the eEemeli trophy. In addition, the jury may reward contestants with honorary mentions and special prizes.

TOWARDS THE FINNISH eLEARNING

Quality Mark

AUTHOR: ARI-MATTI AUVINEN,
MANAGING DIRECTOR, HCI PRODUCTIONS OY

The provision of various eLearning products and services on the market has increased rapidly during the last few years. With the growth of provision on the marketplace, also the variety in their quality has increased.

eLearning as an industry is still very young and unstructured – and it also has a large number of various actors. The Association of Finnish eLearning Centre started in 2005 a project to develop the ""Finnish eLearning Quality Mark". The objective of this development work was to emphasize the importance of the quality approach in developing the eLearning business, and it had also as a central aim to initiate the "internal quality movement" within Finnish eLearning actors.

Work process in developing the Finnish eLearning Quality Mark

From the very start it was decided that the development of the Finnish eLearning Quality Mark must be a participatory process within the Finnish eLearning Centre. The centre has more than 30 organizational members, and it was seen important that they would grow into ownership of the eLearning Quality Mark and also thus commit themselves to the deployment of the eLearning Quality Mark in practice.

The actual work consisted of the written reports (authored by Mr. Ari-Matti Auvinen), work of the expert panels (based on an open invitation to the members and stakeholders of the association) and the work of the steering group of the project.

The work was divided into four parts, which were the following

- benchmarking of general quality systems and quality marks and eLearning quality work (What can we learn from others?)
- definition of eLearning quality mark criteria (How do we define quality?)
- definition of eLearning quality mark processes (How is the Finnish eLearning Quality Mark awarded?)
- business plan for the Finnish eLearning Quality Mark (How can this work be also financially sustainable?).

During the work Mr. Ari-Matti Auvinen produced of each theme a written report, which was delivered one week before the expert panel to all participants. The expert panel work was based on introductory remarks and discussion on various themes. The expert panels usually took one afternoon each; after each expert panel the report was edited and supplemented based on the discussions in the expert panel. The whole work process took four months, which meant that the expert panels met every three weeks. All the reports were published on the web site of the association.

This work process was fluent especially due to the fact that the work was done in "digestible chunks" – in other words: only one key issue was discussed in each expert panel and report. This division-of-work into smaller entities enabled also a more analytical discussion both in the reports as well as in the expert panels.

Benchmarking work

The key objective of the benchmarking work undertaken was to understand the various quality approaches and quality management systems. In the work we concentrated on three specific aspects:

- generic quality management systems, quality awards and quality assessment practices
- specific quality work in the training and education area
- specific eLearning quality assessment, quality awards and quality systems.

The generic quality systems and awards benchmarked included, among others, the International Organization for Standardization's (ISO) 9000 standard, the European Foundation for Quality Management's (EFQM) Excellence Model and the Malcolm Baldrige award.

The benchmarking exercise taught us, that the criteria of any quality management system or quality award must be open and transparent. The development of the transparent criteria also emphasized that the most important use of the various quality criteria is in the self-assessment process or companies and organizations. It was also understood through the benchmarking exercise, that the implementation of quality must be linked with the financial success and financial sustainability of organizations.

However, during the expert panel discussion it was also highlighted that large corporate-wide quality management systems (such as the ISO 9000 standard family) are not suitable for most of the eLearning companies and organizations, which usually are relatively small in size.

Furthermore, the key quality approaches benchmarked in the human resources area were the IIP (Investors in People) standard and the Finnish HR Quality Award (which is based on the EFQM model). Also the special version of the Malcolm Baldrige Award for educational institutions was discussed. The generic trend highlighted in the expert panel discussion was the growing importance of the human resources area in the general quality criteria. Thus it was questionable, whether in the future there would be separate HR quality approaches or whether the HR issues would be more and more central in the quality management systems.

Finally, also various distance learning and eLearning quality awards and marks were discussed. These included European projects of the late 1980s and early 1990s (such as SATURN Quality Guide and EQUAL), the Quality Mark of the British Learning Association as well as the outcomes of the recent European projects (EQO, SEEL, SEEQUEL). The general remark in the discussion was that

these various approaches are not yet mature (with the probable exception of the British mark) and that the work has mainly so far been based on various projects, which are not yet providing required sustainability for the quality work. However, it was also notified that large distance learning and eLearning organizations (such as well-established open universities) have their strong internal quality system already in place – their quality system is, however, hardly applicable to smaller entities.

After the benchmarking work undertaken, the need for the Finnish eLearning Quality Mark was still obvious, as in early 2005 we did not yet see a European eLearning Quality Mark in the nearest future. However, throughout the work it has been emphasized that the Finnish eLearning Quality Mark should be compatible with the future European eLearning Quality Mark – and the best way to ensure that is the active Finnish participation to the definition work on the European level.

Definition of the quality criteria

The work in defining the quality criteria for the Finnish eLearning Quality Mark was based on the Finnish eLearning business scene. Typical features in Finland for this industry are the relatively small size of the eLearning companies and other actors, the collaboration and co-operation between various partners, and also the concentration on organizational customers (thus not on the consumers).

Thus it was decided that the Finnish eLearning Quality Mark should have two different sets of criteria. These are

- company-specific criteria (later in the text the term "company" describes also other organization, such as educational institutions)
- product-specific or service-specific criteria.

By accepting these two sets of criteria, we wanted to communicate to the various actors in the eLearning field, that we want to develop this area with a long-term view, which requires also sustainable, well-performing companies. Only if a company can pass the criteria of good business conduct, can it produce and maintain good products and services.

The company-specific criteria were largely based on the benchmarking work undertaken of various quality management systems. The key criteria to be assessed would be:

- strategy and operating principles
- financial and economic viability
- working principles with the customers
- working principles with the suppliers and subcontractors
- personnel and human resources management
- quality policies and quality documentation
- pedagogical expertise in eLearning
- technological expertise in eLearning
- media expertise in eLearning
- working principles in intellectual property rights
- reliability and ability to deliver.

As one can see this set of criteria owes much to the ISO 9000 standard and Malcolm Baldrige Award criteria. The important message this set of criteria is sending to the eLearning community is the vitality of sustainable business practices. The eLearning business is doomed to be marginal, if the customers can not rely on the longevity of the eLearning providers.

It was also agreed that the assessment of the company-specific criteria could be undertaken by various business consultants and other developers of corporate activities. Any eLearning provider should in the Finnish model first pass the company-specific criteria to be able to apply for the actual eLearning Quality Mark for its products or services.

The product-specific or the service-specific criteria were defined more according to the "quality cycle" approach and thus based on continuous improvement of quality. The criteria here were describing the work process in developing an eLearning service or product. Thus these main criteria in this section were defined as:

- needs assessment and needs analysis
- setting of (learning) objectives
- planning the solution (including the pedagogical, technical and media design)
- implementing the solution
- launching the solution
- collecting the feedback and assessments / methods for continuous improvement.

In these criteria we wanted to highlight the right process to plan and implement various eLearning products and services.

How can you get the Finnish eLearning Quality Mark?

The important work in defining the criteria can assist the Finnish eLearning field only, if we publish and distribute widely the various criteria, as the main use of these criteria is in the self-assessment within companies and organizations. Thus in actual work the awarding of the quality mark is an important factor, but not the only one.

The awarding of the Finnish eLearning Quality Mark will always be based on application by the company. As stated above, first the company must pass the company-specific criteria. First after this, the company can apply a Quality Mark for its products or services – the Quality Mark is awarded to a well-defined product (such as a web course) or a service (such as tutoring). After the company has passed the company-specific criteria, it can apply several Quality Marks for its various products and services, and the assessment of the company-specific criteria will be done only once.

It was useful, however, also to define the period of validity of the Quality Mark. Thus it was discussed that the company assessment would be valid for five years (before it should be renewed) and Quality Mark for a product or service would be valid for three years.

The Finnish eLearning Centre has started also to plan the next steps in the implementation of our quality work. This means refining and polishing of the criteria as well as fine-tuning the actual application and awarding process.

A critical success factor is the training of the various assessors, which is planned to be started in early 2007. The trained assessors can then start their actual work, and it is expected that we could also start the training sessions for the actual applicants during the year 2007. Thus we can expect that we will have the first full applications for the Finnish eLearning Quality Mark by late 2007 and then start the awarding process.

THE ASSOCIATION OF FINNISH eLEARNING CENTRE
Promoter and Network-builder in Finnish e-Learning Branch

THE ASSOCIATION OF FINNISH eLEARNING CENTRE

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Leena Vainio
Chairman of the board
leena.vainio@hamk.fi

Markku Markkula
Chairman of the Consultative Committee
markku.markkula@dipoli.hut.fi

Titi Tamminen
Project Manager
titi.tamminen@eoppimiskeskus.net

Tiina Vepsäläinen
Project Coordinator
tiina.vepsalainen@eoppimiskeskus.net

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