

FINNISH DIGIBUSINESS

SeO PPI

3/2007

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



EUROPEAN
eLEARNING QUALITY

DIGIBUSINESS
FINLAND GATHERS
FINNISH COMPANIES
TOGETHER



Develop professionally Diversify your education Find new hobbies and challenges

Enhance your know-how by studying at the Open University of the University of Jyväskylä in Finland. Our distance learning options enable you to study flexibly, complimenting your work or other studies. You may also find a new hobby through our study options. For those planning to complete a university degree, the studies give a good opportunity to become familiar with different subjects and prepare for possible entrance exams.

We have nearly 60 different subjects on offer, of which over 30 can be studied through distance learning. Around ten subjects can be studied in English, and this number continues to be on the rise. You can register for complete study programmes (25–55 ECTS cr) as well as individual courses (2–7 ECTS cr). Most programmes accept enrolment throughout the year. Tuition is programme- and course-specific, with basic studies beginning from 320 euros and individual courses from 70 euros onwards.

Amongst others, the following subjects can be studied through distance learning in English:

PSYCHOLOGY (25 ECTS cr)

The goal of the approbatur programme is to learn the basics of scientific psychology. The student is introduced to the central issues, concepts, theories, and research methods in several fields of psychology. The five courses that constitute the programme can be completed either by exam or with a concept map assignment and as a written assignment.

SOCIOLOGY (25 ECTS cr)

Sociology provides tools for perceiving our surrounding reality and understanding different areas of life. The curriculum content of the basic studies in sociology includes social movements, cultural studies, working life and ageing. The programme consists of five courses. The courses can be completed either by taking examinations or by completing written assignments.

GERONTOLOGY (25 ECTS cr)

The multidisciplinary basic study programme in gerontology equips the student with tools to confront the occupational challenges of aging and to better understand the process of one's own aging. The programme consists of four courses, which can all be completed by written assignments.

INTERCULTURAL STUDIES (4-20 ECTS cr)

Intercultural studies introduce the students to the fundamental principles and issues of intercultural communication from an interdisciplinary perspective. The students will enhance their analytical skills regarding communication between people from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. The courses can be completed by written assignments and/or by web courses.

For more specific information on the studies and subjects on offer, please visit on our website: www.avoin.jyu.fi or contact our study counsellor Riikka Hurri: tel. +358 14 260 3666, opintoneuvoja@avoin.jyu.fi



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.

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INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS BUILT ON THE PLATFORM OF E-LEARNING

The solutions and multiform contents of e-learning are increasingly being packaged with the multi-cultural audiences in mind. The Finnish e-learning competence is not solely pedagogically functioning smart technology, but high-quality conceptualization of new kinds of service innovations.

By compiling a common set of criteria for e-learning products and services, the Association of Finnish eLearning Centre has acted as a pioneer, promoting industrial growth and value. A comprehensive training material for quality certifiers and applicants is being created stage by stage in the quality endeavour underway. This material will later on be available also on the web. Quality assurance is leaned on to guarantee that students in the field of education receive top-notch teaching and the mobile labour acquires competitive competence. Quality assurance is used to eliminate low-quality education products and enhance an organization's chances of competing with training products, thereby creating social capital.

On an annual basis, the Association of Finnish eLearning Centre also selects the best domestic e-learning solution. The winner in 2007 was eTaitava, a mobile tool facilitating on-the-job learning. The tool leverages student on-the-job training within companies, helping them obtain preparedness for working life by providing the means of continuous feedback and interactive communication between the education institute and the workplace.

eTaitava is an outstanding example of a mobile solution that has been born out of practical needs, incorporating high-level usability and a real-time feedback channel to support the learner.

Mobile and distributed work in international arenas pose new challenges to the development of e-learning. New methods must be developed for the mobile learner to enable him or her to work as effectively as possible with the existing tools, independent of the constraints of time and location. Portable multi-use mobile devices offer a tool for the future. They enhance collective learning and sharing as well as development of expertise in various situations. They also make it possible to record one's own learning process and accumulate a rich knowledge database.

The Finnish Digibusiness cluster programme is strongly contributing to the promotion of high-quality content production and commodification of solutions, especially in the fields of e-learning, games, edutainment, entertainment industry, multi-lingual communication and social media. The competence cluster gives rise to new business concepts and international success stories in collaboration with emerging as well as already existing companies, communities and research institutes.

Join our innovative network!

EDITORIAL	3
DIGIBUSINESS FINLAND GATHERS FINNISH COMPANIES TOGETHER FOR WORLD CONQUER	4
LET'S GREAT NEW, LET'S NETEORK – LET'S LEARN	6
COUNTRY-SPECIFIC CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE PLAYS A KEY ROLE IN THE EXPORT OF E-LEARNING PRODUCTS	7
DEVELOPING E-LEARNING IN COLLABORATION	8
MOBILE FEEDBACK TOOLS	10
RECOGNIZE AND BENEFIT FROM THE EXPERTICE AND TACIT KNOWING IN YOUR ORGANIZATION	11
EUROPEAN E-LEARNING QUALITY	12
INNOSTEEL – VIRTUAL FACTORY	14
ELTRIO – DEVELOPING E-LEARNING AND NETWORKING IN TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY	15
VIRTUAL MEETINGS SUCCESSFUL THANKS TO BOTH NEW AND MORE ESTABLISHED SYSTEMS	16
THE ASSOCIATION OF FINNISH eLEARNING CENTRE	19

INTERESTED IN OUR MEMBERSHIP?

Join our network!
www.eoppimiskeskus.fi

DIGIBUSINESS FINLAND GATHERS FINNISH COMPANIES TOGETHER FOR WORLD CONQUER

The general objective of the DIGIBUSINESS cluster programme is to facilitate the development of digital content products and services. The competence cluster aims at enriching the lives of the citizens as well as intensifying corporate and public-sector operations. The DIGIBUSINESS Finland focuses on developing content business expertise in companies in the field to penetrate the international markets. The activities are intended for growth companies.

The operating field of the cluster, digital content, does not comprise a restricted industry, but instead its operations are integrated into several industries and business areas. The competence cluster gives rise to new business concepts and international success stories in particular in

the fields of e-learning, multilingual communications and the related content management, games and entertainment business as well as social media.

Internationalization and business competence are the core points

DIGIBUSINESS Finland has selected four core points for its operations:

- Internationalization
- Business know-how and new business opportunities
- Industrial communications and reporting
- Event management and networking

The Centre of Expertise programme is a fixed-term special programme instigated by the Finnish government, directing measures to nationally significant focus areas. The operating idea of the programme is to promote the utilization of internationally high-quality top-notch competence by drawing on regional strengths. 13 competence clusters were accepted into the national programme. The activities of the Centres of Expertise and clusters emphasize internationalization and promote regional attractiveness as well as speed up the growth of competence-intensive companies.

The cluster activates SMEs to grow, among others, by enhancing their business preparedness, creating networking opportunities between various players and promoting the deployment of customer- and market-driven business concepts. Thanks to the strong R&D focus the cluster collaborates intensively with, e.g. Finnish universities and academies and the Finnish Funding Agency for Technology and Innovation.

To allow for the persistent planning of operations and gathering of foresight knowledge the cluster established the Think Tank with international and Finnish expert invitees from customer interfaces and R&D to create a common insight into the development challenges in the field. The Think Tank involves members from a dozen European countries.

Additionally, the cluster maintains the industry's leading web service **www.digibusiness.eu**, showcasing Finnish expertise in the digital content business. The latest news and events within the Finnish field, an extensive corporate register, and research data, among others, can be ac-

The vision of the DIGIBUSINESS Finland of 2013 states: "Turning digital content expertise into world-class product and service business."

cessed through the web portal. The service is directed to international companies, partner ventures and mediator organizations.

Every region has its own area of responsibility within the competence cluster

The national DIGIBUSINESS Finland is built on collaboration between five regions. The strengths and focus of the cluster's regions supplement each other, contributing to a strong national entity.

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Focus of the cluster's regions



LET'S CREATE NEW, LET'S NETWORK – LET'S LEARN!

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eLearning Centre is the most important e-learning project of Pori Adult Education Centre.

In MediaL and eVerkko projects we have carried through six vocational pilot courses. During those pilots we oriented all the six Regional Employment and Economic Development Centres of the state province of Western Finland, regional employment offices and adult educators to implement e-learning in vocational education. Now we aim to broaden our dissemination and networking.

Our central targets of development are orientation studies as well as building the roles of eTutor and eGuide to e-learning. In our educational institution the amount of vocational employment training for adults is more than a half and therefore the significance of orientation is high. In carrying out safe and successful e-learning we want to emphasise media literacy, group formation and creative problem solving as part of high-quality orientation. In successful learning the tasks of eTutor and eGuide are accentuated.

Focus on orientation in e-learning

Our learner and teaching structure emphasizes the meaning of orientation. Moreover, the development of media skills is important and challenging. We created a team of orientation teachers which has worked also as a base group in our theme courses directed to teachers. Our main product is a course series "The orientation to e-learning for teachers".

eTutor has many clients and tasks

Our pilot courses were carried through outside our own school and province. We provided orientation for the schools who realized the pilots, the Regional Employment and Economic Development Centres and employment offices in bringing e-learning into the employment training for adults. In our own educational institution the eTutor takes care that everything

runs smoothly: e-learning of the teachers, learners, project workers, collaborating schools and enterprises. eTutor starts up new eCourses, advises in pedagogical possibilities, provides guidance in using net tools, orientates in using the learning environment.

eGuide ensures learning

Good guidance in e-learning means a great deal for the learner. eGuidance makes personalisation of learning possible in an exemplary manner. Equal opportunities, maintenance of motivation as well as providing support when needed are the core functions of eGuidance. Furthermore, this means that the focus is on the participants themselves. Learning objects help in the building of a supporting net for the eLearner.

Join us in networking

The goal of the project is to valorise e-learning as part of employment training and train e-learning experts through theme courses. The focus of our activity has been the state province of Western Finland and the Employment and Economic Development Centres of the region. We have organised development seminars to the representatives of these target groups. We wish to extend our work to include new co-operating partners. Therefore, if interested, we wish that you would contact us and we will find shared interests to develop together.

eLearning Centre – in favour of adult education

- > to disseminate and valorise experiences and practises concerning realization of e-learning for adults
- > to work out e-learning models for employment training in the state province of Western Finland with the aid of pilot courses.
- > to develop orientation into e-learning as well as the eTutor and eGuide models in vocational adult education
- > to offer orientation and development seminars and theme courses to the Regional Employment and Economic Development Centres, employment offices and adult educators.
- > to carry out this project which was granted by the Satakunta Regional Employment and Economic Development Centre as a supra-regional realization.

**Contact us – let's cooperate –
we will develop and progress together!**

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COUNTRY-SPECIFIC CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE PLAYS A KEY ROLE IN THE EXPORT OF E-LEARNING PRODUCTS

The SeOppi magazine interviewed Mikrolinna CEO Veikko Visala about the export of e-learning products to foreign markets.

Would you begin by telling us about your company and its product range?

Mikrolinna Oy dates back a good 15 years, specializing in learning software. The software products are primarily targeted at comprehensive schools and vocational institutes. Our personnel consists of 5 permanent employees, in addition to which the staffing of our different projects relies to some extent on company-external resources. In Finland our sales are mainly managed by means of independent representatives. We supply learning software in mathematics, physics, chemistry and basics in Finnish.

Currently our products are exported to Sweden, Norway and Lithuania. In addition we offer one product in English and have drawn a contract with the Norwegian ABC-Company on the provision of a version in Sami language.

Why did you decide to pursue foreign markets?

More than 70% of the Finnish comprehensive schools already use our products. Since we designed our products in an easily translatable form to begin with, export is a natural continuum to the domestic markets. Also, the feedback acquired from the domestic markets has encouraged us to export.

Which countries have been your targets and where have you been able to establish your operations?

Currently our exports are directed to Sweden, Norway and Lithuania, with Sweden being the most significant target country presently. During the coming year we at-

tempt to obtain 2-3 new targets.

Where have you found the best business partners?

We have liaised with our partners mainly in foreign fairs. Some contacts have been made through the Internet and personal interaction. We have also used an export consultant with whom we have visited and got familiar with the operations of our partners on site before signing a contract.

What do you find the major challenges and obstacles in the foreign export of e-learning products?

The biggest challenge in export is product marketing. Just like with any other product, a substantial amount of money and time is required before the product is well-known enough to sell itself. In marketing the identification of the most appropriate marketing channel is a great challenge. In the order phase we always attempt to find out where the customer has heard of us.

One significant challenge related to export is that in different countries people advance at different paces in various subjects, meaning that the learning material within the programme has to be transferred from one grade to another. Sometimes it is extremely strenuous trying to locate this type of information, but usually our partner has the required knowledge. Previously also the special characters used in different countries and e.g. the Cyrillic letters necessitated their own special solutions. The new web versions leaning on the Unicode character set have made these types of problems obsolete.



What kind of country-specific differences have you encountered? And in your opinion, to what extent should the provision of learning material take into account country-specific and cultural differences?

In Finland the majority of our sales traverse through representatives. Our reps visit schools to introduce and exhibit our products. In our other export countries we do not have similar policies.

In learning software products we must also consider the various conditions and circumstances prevalent in the diverse countries. There is reason to convert currencies and statistics used in the assignments to the local systems of the target country. In overall, the verbal drills in the learning materials often require localization.

What kind of investments has the pursuit of foreign markets necessitated in your company?

For a small company kicking off export operations is often a giant leap. We chose to proceed in small steps. And yet the translation and localization of the products, as well as marketing and identification of partners required a great deal of time and money.

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e-Learning is an area where companies, institutes of higher education and other public-sector organizations collaborate in research and development projects. Since 1997 the Häme University of Applied Sciences has been the cradle of various e-learning research and development projects, and starting in 2000 the activities have been coordinated by the eLearning Centre operating within the Häme University of Applied Sciences.

In this article we will showcase two projects that depict well the cooperation: DLL (Digital Learning Lab) and the eTeacher of the Future. The projects have mainly been implemented in the University of Applied Sciences (UAS) environment. The DLL project consisted of nine sub-projects, one of them researching how e-learning projects carried out in an UAS support corporate activities and how project cooperation should be elevated. In the eTeacher of the Future project, then, the objective was to increase the amount of virtual education in degree programmes and degrees included in the project, and to create a model of a well functioning virtual implementation of University of Applied Sciences degrees.

DIGITAL LEARNING LAB (DLL) – FROM RESEARCH TO INNOVATIONS

DLL is an extensive and versatile e-learning venture (2004–2007), comprising of nine sub-projects: eLeadership and strategy work, eTeaching competences and their development, audio and video technology as well as collaborative web based tools, e-learning models and tutoring practices, learning objects and mobile learning, media literacy, impact of applications in education technology on learning processes, multi-disciplinary research methods of education technology, and productisation and project cooperation with organizations, presented in more detail in this article.

The DLL project investigated e.g. how

the e-learning project cooperation would serve corporate and organizational operations even better. 18 representatives of the local corporate and public sectors were interviewed for the research in early 2007. The interview revealed that companies and organizations consider cooperation significant with institutes of higher education and wish to improve it.

The research identified two areas of improvement: the operations should be developed in a way that would facilitate the location of potential partners and common interests, and secondarily, the organization of the projects should focus on a win-win outcome. According to the research, in an ideal project collaboration translates into working together, based on trust, openness and constructive interaction. It is similarly important that the operators pursue to understand their partners' different ways of working and to find a common language. Versatile competence gives rise to synergy that the operators could not achieve alone. Upon termination of a successful project, all the parties have got good returns on their investments.

A productisation research finding is an area where institutes of higher education cooperate with companies, in particular. The DLL project focused on the productisation of research findings by establishing what type of competence is required. Productisation of research findings involves the translation of the language of academics into a business language. Upon commodification the research data are packaged into a form that facilitates their utility. In the process the activities

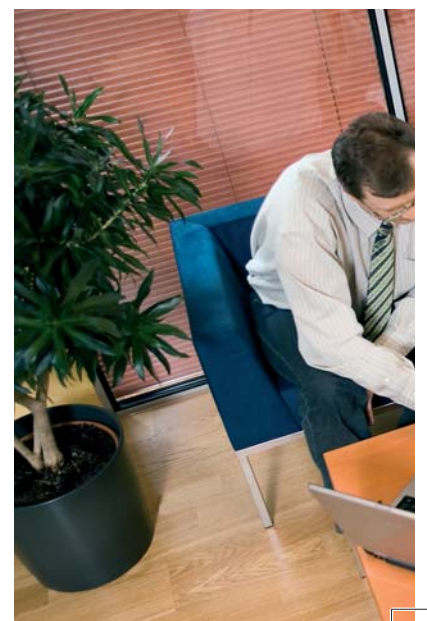
are transformed from research activities through product development into business operations. As an outcome of the DLL project, seven different e-learning products saw the daylight, and their interestingness was evaluated by companies and organizations. (The products can be seen at <http://dll.hamk.fi/research/results> under sub-project 9.) Based on the interviews, the products might have potential in the commercial markets.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT
[HTTP://DLL.HAMK.FI/RESEARCH/RESULTS](http://dll.hamk.fi/research/results)

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A PUBLICATION ON THE RESEARCH FINDINGS OF THE DLL PROJECT WILL BE ISSUED IN DECEMBER 2007 IN ENGLISH.

THE PUBLICATION IS FREE OF CHARGE AND IT CAN BE REQUESTED THROUGH
HEIDI.KERKOLA@HAMK.FI



DEVELOPING E-LEARNING IN COLLABORATION

IN COLLABORATION TOWARDS THE FUTURE eTEACHER

What kind of changes and challenges will the constantly expanding web-based teaching and virtual degrees entail for the activities of the teacher and the organization? What is the work of an eTeacher like and how is it organized within the degree programme and the education institute? These issues were contemplated on in the joint project of four University of Applied Sciences (UAS), Häme, Laurea, Kemi-Tornio and Turku. The eTeacher of the Future was a project funded by the Ministry of Education (2005–2007). The objective of the project was to substantially increase virtual studies in the included degree programmes and degrees as well as to create a model of a well-functioning virtual implementation of UAS degrees.

During the project the annual workshops, common training sessions as well as the close collaboration within the project team served as the tools for sharing

experiences and expertise. Workshops were arranged on a yearly basis and the themes proceeded from the planning and starting points of eTeaching to the sharing of everyday practical solutions and best practices of eTeaching, all the way to the joint compilation of project outcomes and examination of future eTeaching in University of Applied Sciences.

The common training sessions were real-time e-implementations, enabling both interaction and distance attendance. The sessions were open without need for registrations, user IDs or passwords. The sessions were recorded and published on the project web portal. The experiences from successful training encouraged the teachers and UAS staff to organize web-based get-togethers and meetings as well as to lean on diverse ways of working in web-based teaching. The training sessions were an encouraging example of a new way of implementing personnel training in a virtual network.

The close collaboration of the project team and regular web meetings made it possible to share experiences and expertise between the Universities of Applied Sciences. During the project, UAS systems and applications were opened for the partners to test and experiences were exchanged. This promoted the development of individual practices rooted in UAS

web based teaching.

The activities of the project have been introduced in various forums in the field by several operators, both teachers as well as project team members. In the Online Educa Berlin conference the project will provide its contribution to the exhibition department.

The project has succeeded in developing degree programme practices as well as in sharing web tools, expertise and best practices. The challenges are posed by the maintenance and enhancement of network-like ways of working and the expansion e.g. in the direction of educational collaboration and international cooperation in upper university of applied science education.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT
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Mobile feedback tools

MOBILETOOLS MAKES OUT-OF-CLASSROOM LEARNING EXPERIENCE VISIBLE

When learning goes out of classroom, the emphasis on effective communication gets stronger. There is a huge need in monitoring the effects of out-of-school learning to guarantee successes in students' motivation and learning.

The teacher's role is strongly changing from the "magistro-centric" universe of being the only authority in front of the classroom towards a more collaborative style of guiding and steering the student in cooperation with other parties (e.g. workplace instructors, advisors).

To ensure quality in this paradigm shift, many institutes and pedagogues have applied strategies of investing to elaborate and costly PDA systems. What hasn't been realized is that the technology is already in our pockets - sophisticated systems are available to virtually any modern mobile phone. Using the students' own mobile phones offers massive enhancements on making the system sustainable and truly on-the-go.

Besides technological viewpoints, the issue of making learning mobile concerns a great deal with the content of these

technologies. Again, many have made their systems with a universal caress - a concept of a state-of-the-art mobile learning system is offered, but no content to it. When the users (i.e. teachers) are given a blank system, they are suffocating from the overwhelming vastness of endless possibilities.

Mobiletools provides an easy and structured way to communicate between the student, the teacher and other parties involved in students' curriculum. Mobiletools mobile query and analysis system is an easy way for the teacher to take a glimpse into the student's learning process and react with guidance if needed.

The system is based on ready-made and timed questionnaires and an easy user interface, paired with a learning diary built on the camera-phone multimedia capabilities. These solutions offer straightforward ways to data collection and evaluation together with hassle-free and open communication.

The deal with daily questionnaires is very simple: to see how the students are learning when they are out of the classroom, one needs to communicate on a

frequent basis. If the teacher is responsible for a group of students, the notion of one-to-many communication is demanding, and automation is needed. With structure (i.e. questionnaires) and repetition (i.e. daily feedback), the communication is measurable.

The Mobiletools mobile feedback solution has been successfully used with the eTaitava (eSkillful) system in Finnish vocational and polytechnic on-the-job studies. The eTaitava system is the winner of the eEemeli 2007 prize for the best e-learning solution in Finland.



www.mobiletools.fi

The significance of knowledge and expertise is increasing steadily both in the public and private sectors. The operating environment is undergoing constant change, forcing organizations to identify new sources of competitive edge. The situation is challenging organizations to benefit from the knowledge their staff have acquired along the years. Expertise and knowledge have turned into the most vital organizational factor securing competitive edge and capital instead of tangible resources. In Finland as well as in other European countries tacit knowledge is a topical issue as the retirement of the large age cohorts will affect a multitude of organizations.

- Organizations are pondering on the sharing of tacit knowledge in order to prevent the undocumented knowledge and experience acquired along decades from walking out the door as the large age cohorts retire. In order to be able to share tacit knowledge, it must first be recognized. That is why organizations should be aware of what kind of tacit knowledge its members possess and which aspects of this knowledge are vital for organizational operations. By means of recognition also the out-dated or even destructive ways of working can be identified and the best practices shared with everyone. The surfaced tacit knowledge can then be shared and utilized in everyday activities, Ms Virtainlahti describes.

Ms Sanna Virtainlahti heads her own company TacitPro Oy as the CEO. Tacit Pro Oy is specialized in consultancy and education services related to expertise and tacit knowledge. Ms Virtainlahti,

tise and knowing in the form of methods meeting the needs of diverse customers. mNavigator is an exercise book –type application by means of which individuals or groups can collect and store their expertise and knowledge. The exercise book is formed of a practical theory section and more functional web-based assignment material.

The expertise and tacit knowing stored in the mNavigator exercise book can be utilized in induction, orientation, sharing of expertise and knowledge e.g. in situations of employee turnover (retirement, maternity leave etc.) and development of expertise.



RECOGNIZE

AND BENEFIT FROM THE EXPERTISE AND TACIT KNOWING IN YOUR ORGANIZATION

TEXT: SANNA VIRTAINLAHTI, TACITPRO OY

What is tacit knowledge and why to share it?

An example of tacit knowing is one team innovating better and faster than another one, one welder being more skilful than the other, or one sales representative closing 20% more deals than the colleagues. Why is this? What do they do differently? How to promote this type of activity? 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.

Licentiate in Economic Sciences builds her products on the integration of academic research and experience acquired through practical endeavours. Ms Virtainlahti is currently conducting doctoral research on Managing Tacit Knowing as a continuation of her licentiate research.

Products built on expertise and knowledge management

Tacit Pro Oy has developed diverse products to assist the customer organizations in recognizing, storing and sharing tacit knowledge. In addition to an education supply, the product range includes practical tools for the management of exper-

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EUROPEAN E-LEARNING QUALITY

TEXT: ARI-MATTI AUVINEN, SENIOR PARTNER, HCI PRODUCTIONS OY

The quality and development of e-learning in the background

In Europe several endeavours relating to distance and multi-form education can be found in the background of work accomplished to promote the quality of e-learning. These ventures were launched especially at the end of the 1980s and beginning of 1990s both with the support of EU funding (especially in diverse education curricula, e.g. the COMETT programme at the time) and national financing (in Europe in the Great Britain and Norway, in particular).

The first genuinely more comprehensive publication on the monitoring and development of European distance and multi-form education was the "SATURN Quality Guide" published by the distance education consortium SATURN in 1992.



In various European endeavours e-learning has proven to be a central issue both in terms of education curricula and research on learning. Similarly, the quality of education has played an important role in various European programmes and ventures. But what are the measures through which the quality of e-learning has been monitored and developed on the European level?

The quality guidelines in question were based on the Code of Practice definitions drawn for the diverse actor groups, used as a starting point for checklists categorized by means of “before education – during education – after education” philosophy. The objective of the SATURN guidelines was the common “instigation of a quality movement” in the extensive field of distance and multi-form education – thereby accounting for the relatively extensive scope of the guidelines

Also other endeavours focused on the quality of distance and multi-form education were accomplished during the 1990s, subsidized mainly by the EU. Simultaneously, guidelines for the total quality development of the above-mentioned institutes were designed on the European level (the AECS at the time) within the traditional distance and multi-form education institutes (especially so-called correspondence institutes).

With regard to universities relying on distance and multi-form education (and later also e-learning) the development work performed in Europe was particularly active in the Great Britain and Norway. The Quality Assurance Agency in the Great Britain designed directives for university education built on distance teaching, and correspondingly in Norway the SOFF project was launched by focusing on the quality manual in particular and other quality tools in the 1990s.

From projects towards a more stabilized way of working

After the beginning of the 1990s the next more important phase in quality development was experienced at the beginning of the 21st century when especially the philosophizing and development related to e-learning quality became accentuated. Three special ventures dedicated to the quality of e-learning were kicked off as a result of a particular European commission initiative at the start of the 21st century, in other words

- **EQO – European Quality Observatory**
- **SEEL - Supporting Excellence in E-Learning**
- **SEEQUEL - Sustainable Environment for the Evaluation of Quality in E-Learning.**

The purpose of all these ventures has been, for their part, to develop sets of criteria for European e-learning as well as

ways of working aiming to concretize and develop quality thinking in the field of e-learning.

The most crucial step in the collaboration of these endeavours has been the establishment of the “European Foundation for Quality in eLearning” in December 2004. This community operates as a foundation, with universities, schools, institutes, work communities and companies as its members. The most decisive motivation for the establishment of the EFQUEL was the understanding that persistent quality work and development cannot be obtained through project-type operations but instead it requires a more permanent organization. This provides prerequisites for the long-term monitoring and development of the quality of diverse organizations as well, instead of individual “quality interventions”.

Presently the EFQUEL has over 40 communal members from the various European nations – in Finland its members comprise HCI Productions Oy (since 2006) and the Association of Finnish eLearning Centre (since 2007). Mr Ari-Matti Auvinen was elected in summer 2007 to the EFQUEL board for the next 3-year term. More information about the EFQUEL can be found at <http://www.qualityfoundation.org>.

The EFQUEL has instigated two important European-level ventures, in other words, the development and granting of the European eLearning Quality Mark.

European eLearning Quality Mark complements national quality marks

The development of the European eLearning Quality Mark is an ambitious challenge. The field of European education and learning is vast and multi-dimensional. At the same we should remember that the eLearning Quality Mark does not necessarily possess any European market value, but instead the markets of learning and education are still strongly national. When foreseeing the future development in Europe, we can predict that the nature of these markets will continue to remain firmly national.

In other words, a European eLearning Quality Mark should be developed for this particular operating environment. The two national and strong quality mark ventures already underway are, in fact, operating on national terms, comprising the “BLA Quality Mark” project carried out by the British Learning Association and

the quality mark endeavour driven by the Association of Finnish eLearning Centre. In other European countries the operations are only in their infancy or have not reached the same national status as in the Great Britain or Finland.

We can assume that common criteria and ways of working will be established as the foundation for the European eLearning Quality Mark, but the mark itself must always be granted by a national operator and also the evaluation is made on the national level. The underlying philosophy is to develop a common quality framework along with the related set of criteria, based on which the units and communities authorized by the EFQUEL will grant the eLearning Quality Mark.

European eLearning Quality Award

Another significant form of quality work started up by the EFQUEL is the European eLearning Quality Award, granted in January 2007 for the first time. The purpose of the quality award is to inspire various European actors to compete against each other with their carefully manufactured and high-quality e-learning services and products.

Similarly to the Finnish eEemeli award, also the European eLearning Quality Award has involved a versatile and high-rate jury evaluating the products and services registered in the contest. The first quality certificate contest had two series, in other words, one for the suppliers and developers of e-learning and another for those benefiting from and utilizing e-learning. In the coming years it might be possible that the series are modified, but for the EFQUEL it was, however, important to instigate this quality award work which in the coming years will serve as an annual affair.

And indeed, it is interesting to observe that in Finland we can take pride in the long-standing tradition of the eEemeli quality contest and in being at the forefront of developing the e-learning quality award. This is a solid foundation also for our contribution to the European collaboration.



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INNOSTEEL - VIRTUAL FACTORY

HAMK - University of Applied Sciences in co-operation with industry and with public funding is developing a new way to improve the know-how in metal branch. The whole "package" - Inno-Steel - consists of several projects containing support for product development of innovative companies and new learning methods and equipment useful for educational institutes and small or medium size companies.

One of the main projects in InnoSteel is InnoSteel Virtual Factory, the heart of a InnoSteel's diverse research- and learning environment, with the factory being a modern metal engineering workshop with training-, research-, and production capabilities.

With a concept known as Virtual Factory, which is included in InnoSteel's project consortium, an e-learning environment based on simulation and modeling, has been 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.

Virtual Factory is based on simulation

models of the real equipment in InnoSteel's training factory and together with this real production environment it forms a versatile and stimulating learning environment.

E-LEARNING

e-Learning materials have to justify their existence by offering clearly something more than the traditional, text based contents. This means naturally that useful e-learning environments can not be created just by transferring the information from books to computer screens. E-learning has to offer experiences and clarifying examples to students to motivate them to continuously develop their skills and knowledge.

Even though e-learning is often an efficient way to study dependent on time and place, it does not offer a solution to all challenges. It is always useful for the learner to have contacts to the other learners or teachers of the course. This, of course, can be offered virtually via the internet, but for some learners a face-to-face contact is the optimal solution. The same way the learner may use different kinds of equipment via the internet up to a certain skill level but still the final evaluation of the learning process is more reliable, if at least at the end of the training

period, real equipment can be used.

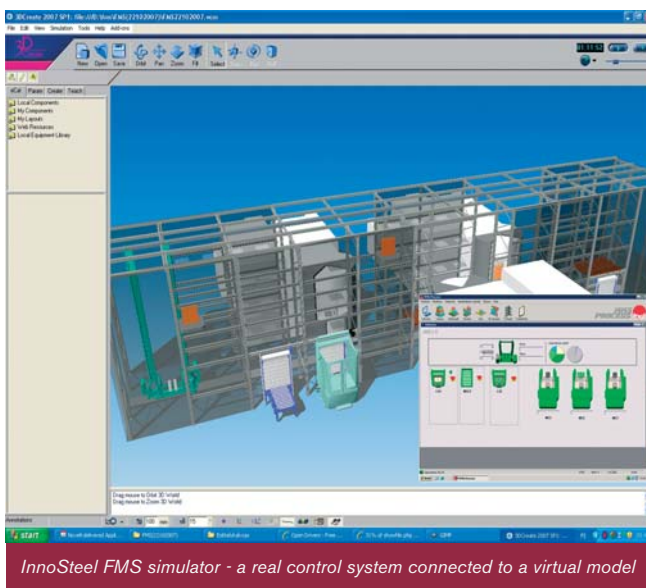
Using face-to-face approaches combined with e-learning is often called blended learning. Virtual Factory is based on the principles of blended learning: virtual approaches are used at the beginning of the learning process and towards the end of courses learning is more and more based on the real machine environment.

WHY SIMULATE?

Using simulators instead of or in addition to real processes has some major benefits. One of them is naturally money. By using simulators instead of real production equipment, the student does not waste energy or raw materials. In case of a failure, no actual harm is done and no machine gets broken. On the other hand the latter sentence contains one of the main benefits of e-learning: things can be tested without the performance stress, dummy questions can be asked and difficult things can be repeated all over again. In addition to cost saving, simulation based learning can be much more efficient than working with real production equipment: idle times can be avoided and training can easily concentrate on some special sections of the manufacturing process and those sections can be repeated without looping the whole process.

CONCLUSIONS

InnoSteel and its' e-learning environment – Virtual Factory – form a versatile and flexible infrastructure for training. Since it contains various mixtures of real equipment and simulation models, the possibilities of utilizing new educational methods are wide.



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ELTRIO -

DEVELOPING E-LEARNING AND NETWORKING IN TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY



The web-based learning network eTRIO 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 the eTRIO network focus on brainstorming new models of 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 and 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.

The EITRIO network has managed to establish its position as a forum for users and developers in the technology industry. Now it is time to climb to the next level:

Common ways of working, tools and processes, and the development of services and products built on them

So far the EITRIO cooperation has been concretely visible in the everyday work of the players as the opportunity to attend

various meetings and seminars biting into issues commonly deemed important. In addition, shared learning environments have been developed e.g. in the following sub-areas:

- eTRIO network game
- FMS driver's licence training
- e-Learning material in welding
- Paper machine learning environment
- e-Learning environment for forest-machine drivers and installers
- Corporate occupational safety education and induction leaning on e-learning

These experiences serve as the starting point when getting organized even more intensively upon pursuing to create for the EITRIO network an earnings logic and common processes that support the business operations of those involved and merge into a natural and integral part of their operational processes.

Learning to be adopted in work stations as part of industrial working routines

Products and services should be developed in collaboration so that when viewed from the employee perspective, learning merges smoothly into an integral part of the routine chores.

In its most commonplace use, e-learning in the technology industry should evolve around educating the personnel or clients by benefiting from the opportunities offered by the information technology. Those involved already have a myr-

riad of experience from the implementation of these education sessions. e-Learning should also provide support for planning systems as well as the everyday activities of the users of industrial machines and devices so that in case of fault, a solution could be found as soon as possible and even flexibly from within the pool of software used and interfaces of the machinery and systems.

Collaboration across the boundaries

eTRIO ties the entire operator network and various operating models, methods and tools together in pursuit of the development of a clearly focused field, the technology industry. And good experiences from the power of e-learning exist already. Next we have to turn the success stories into more customary reality and concretely transform e-learning into an integral part of the routine activities in the technology industry. In order to meet this challenge in the future, eTRIO will network internationally with the developers and users of e-learning and serve as an e-learning forum where the international developers of e-learning within the technology industry can interact with the Finnish experts in the field.

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VIRTUAL MEETINGS

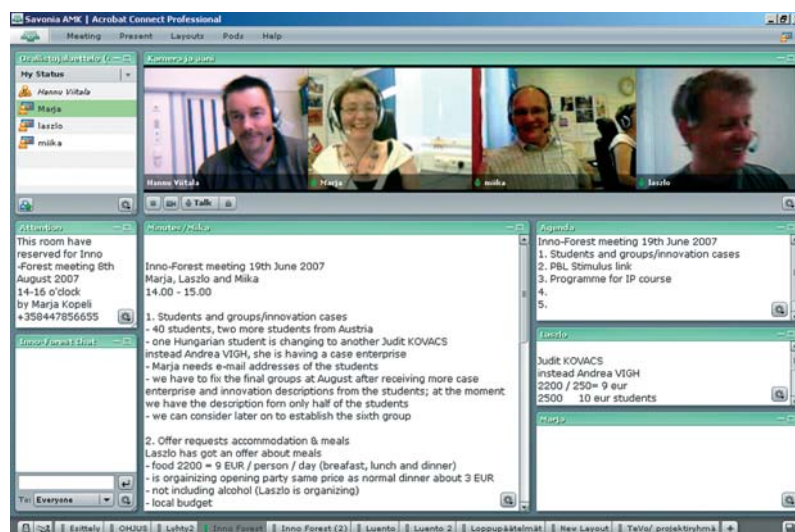
SUCCESSFUL THANKS TO BOTH NEW AND MORE ESTABLISHED SYSTEMS

The SeOppi magazine collected user experiences related to the systems used in e-education and virtual meetings. What the users have in common is that web-based lectures and meetings pay off especially in terms of savings in time, travel and costs. Those having attended virtual meetings have found them so useful that the systems are already considered indispensable. Which system is regarded as the best one depends a lot on the user needs.

SAVONIA FOLKS DEPEND ON Acrobat Connect Pro

Mr Hannu Viitala from Savonia University of Applied Sciences operating in Iisalmi reports that during the course of last spring Acrobat Connect Pro kept its promises with flying colours as a web lecture tool. Its testing started at the end of 2006. "Already in the demonstration phase the tool seemed promising, but that's how they always seem in expert hands", Mr Viitala reveals his first impression.

"I tested Connect Pro in a multi-form student group of agronomists studying taxation. Being adept at integrating study and work, the students reacted positively as they understood that web lectures facilitate studying. As the lecturer I used both picture and voice but the students participate through a voice connection without their own web camera picture and ability to comment. However, they could contribute through the Connect Pro chat forum. The arrangement worked well and the chat flooded with questions and comments during the presentation. At appropriate intervals I dealt with questions



The management team of the Inno-Forest endeavour Ms Marja Kopeli, Mr Mii-ka Kajanus and Mr Laszlo Jager as well as Mr Hannu Viitala as technical support – having a meeting in Connect Pro that offers versatile opportunities of shared document draw-up in the online mode.



Ms Marja Kopeli and Mr Miika Kajanus are satisfied users of Connect Pro.

and comments during the presentation, which also periodized the lecture."

Everyone found the experiment successful. Especially encouraging were those student comments according to which they immediately bonded with Connect Pro. And the system was valued even higher once the students acquired a link to the lecture recording where e.g. the assignment solution could repeatedly be viewed. "Web lectures enhance the circumstances impacting studying in multi-form groups. Intensive contact periods can be eased up by transferring part of the lectures and assignment instruction sessions to the web. This clearly intensifies studying and learning. In addition, periodizing distance education makes studying more systematic", Mr Viitala lists the benefits.

Connect Pro has also been used for negotiations and meetings at Savonia University of Applied Sciences. "Already during the testing period it saved us hundreds of kilometres in work-related travel. Considering all the international meetings, the savings amount to thousands of kilometres and of course dozens of hours of travelling. Foreign partners have considered it an excellent tool and it immediately established its position as a communication channel abreast e-mail."

The circumstances of multi-form groups improve

According to Mr Viitala the advantage of web lecturing derives from the fact that

it spares additional time for learning. Previously the intensive contact periods of multi-form groups were characterized by haste in covering certain issues in order to leave sufficient time for providing instructions for assignments to be completed during distance periods. Since part of the activities have been moved from contact to distance sessions, it has been possible to dedicate a larger portion of the contact periods to discussion and introducing topics. "For the students this change implies a relief with regard to the heavy contact periods and it has alleviated my own workload as well."

"I have tried also other video lecture systems, but with poor results. The high usability level of Connect Pro relies on several aspects", Mr Viitala points out. Among the most important benefits could be mentioned the fact that the application can be run on the user's own computer, and subsequently the web lecture can be given and attended through work or home computer, as long as it is connected to the Internet and speakers. The software does not require installation, but instead, all that is needed is a web address. Only brief introduction is needed to get you started. Firewalls and other protection problems are scarce as the software leans on so-called normal ports.

Interaction is successful

"A video lecture presentation does not necessarily require any special features of the presentation, since a PowerPoint presentation can be shown by means of

Connect Pro. Similarly, assignments accomplished by utilizing Excel can be presented in Connect Pro through application sharing functionality. During the presentation students can comment on it and pose questions in the chat forum."

>>

IMPORTANT: TESTING, TESTING, TESTING

Before system acquisition it is crucial to focus on testing in order to identify an alternative that best meets the organization's own user needs. In both Savonia and HAMK the testing phase helped surface differences that cut down the number of suitable alternatives considerably. The criteria included, among others, suitability in terms of educational use; start-up, acquisition and usage costs; training support; joint purchases with other education communities, and all the features related to usability.

Testing is a way of making sure there are no bad user experiences. "The first bad experience can be managed if things run smoothly the second time around", Hannu Viitala reminds us.

WebEx has kept its promises at HAMK



Mr Jorma Saarinen and HAMK University of Applied Sciences rely on WebEx web conference system

Principal research lecturer Jorma Saarinen from HAMK reports that their organization deployed the WebEx web conference system in January 2006 after a testing period in the previous autumn. From the very beginning the deployment was intended for distance education but in the trial period it was used also for internal meetings and info shots.

"The eLearning specialisation studies group that kicked off in January 2006 was the first group to fully exploit the system. All the contact teaching was conveyed to the audiences as virtual recordings by means of WebEx and they were also stored on the server for later viewing. As other virtual environments we utilized the Moodle learning platform, virtual IT class and TeamSpeak – Internet phone calls. At least one student completed all the studies and teamwork assignments with howling success without even once showing up in class physically."

"With encouragement from the previous experiences the eLearning specialisation studies group launched in January 2007 was designed, to begin with, as a web implementation. Although even then physical attendance was allowed in the long Saturday sessions. However, only few students took advantage of this possibility. In practice almost everyone participates through the WebEx connection. Weeknight lectures can be attended solely through WebEx. The students have been extremely satisfied with this arrangement as it has facilitated studying. The students come from a wide geographical area, the farthest corners being Oulu, Kuopio, Lappeenranta, Helsinki, Turku and the west coast."

In autumn 2007 the HAMK University of Applied Sciences launched two polytechnic degrees (information processing and business economics) where studying is accomplished almost entirely through the web. Interactive contact teaching is carried out through WebEx. The conclu-

sive selection criterion is their correspondence with the needs dictated by the synchronic online teaching context.

Updates have enhanced product quality

In summer 2006 the WebEx system was updated with functionality that drastically enhanced sound quality and practically removed disturbing voice delay. "Before this upgrade we sometimes had to use WebEx side by side with the TeamSpeak voice system in order to be able to insert sufficiently high-quality real-time voice in the teaching context. However, this made the recording a bit more challenging.

After the upgrade the comments and feedback from both teachers and students have been outstanding. This is a real opportunity to enhance availability and reduce unnecessary travelling. At HAMK University of applied sciences we have equipped two permanent classroom facilities where the sound system is integrated so that the speech of the teacher and students present can be heard by the remote students, and correspondingly the speech of remote students can be heard in the classroom. In addition, in the DLL research project a mobile eJames prototype was built of equipment by means of which any classroom can be turned into a distance education facility where the sounds between those present and those attending through a connection travel both ways."

Real-time functionality earning points

"The major advantages of the system have to do with this real-time functionality that operates both ways, and the possibility to import any application document, even an entire screenshot to be viewed by distance learners. Similarly, shared view-

ing and editing of documents is possible by means of WebEx. This is a handy feature e.g. in guidance where the student and the instructor take turns in editing the same document and finally store the outcome for each other. Also the possibility to work in small teams is a big plus. Furthermore, an optional feature welcomed this year is the simultaneous use of several microphones instead of the previous two. Now a maximum of seven microphones can be used at the same time."

The greatest challenge posed on system utilization is familiarizing the teachers with it. According to Mr Saarinen, the usability logic is somewhat "engineer-like" but on the other hand, quite clear. And this is why he finds it necessary to involve an assistant in the lectures to support the teacher and also manage the recording.

According to Saarinen, international meetings have not yet been organized, but HAMK staff have participated in both meetings and WebEx University training as participants.

"Several good improvements have emerged during the use. Perhaps there is still room for improvement in chairman and teamwork functionalities and well as need for increased reliability."

"According to the vision of the coming years, virtual meetings will increase significantly. Face-to-face meetings will diminish and be limited only to the essential get-togethers, and the actual work will be accomplished by means of virtual systems. The experiences so far indicate already that web-based work is more intensive and fast-paced than in personal encounters. This is why increasing requirements for efficiency enhance the increase in virtuality in routine work as well."

TEXT: EDITED BY SEOPPI EDITORIAL TEAM,
OILI SALMINEN

THE ASSOCIATION OF FINNISH eLEARNING CENTRE

Promoter and Network-builder in Finnish e-Learning Branch

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 Finnish Digibusiness Cluster 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 stake-

holders 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.

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. The Association wants to take part in the European co-operation in this field and wishes to share its experiences with other key European partners.



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eEemeli

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 and enhances innovation and quality of e-learning products.

The sixth eEemeli quality competition of e-learning products was organised by the Association and its co-operative partners in spring

2007. The theme of the competition was "Doing Together". The winner of the competition was the best e-learning solution, eTaitava – mobile feedback and diary tool, by Jyväskylä Vocational Institute and Jussi Rautalampi Oy. With the help of the service students, teachers and employers can keep up the contact via mobile phone during the student's on-the-job-learning period. Read more about this product on page 11.

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