

CASE STUDY:

Introduction of a Web-based Course-management System at the Language Centre of the University of Cyprus

Stefan August Schlaefli Fust, Cyprus

SUMMARY OF CASE STUDY

The introduction of the web-based course-management system WebCT obeys to different purposes. First it offers the instructor the possibility to organize and plan his lessons, assessments and evaluations. It is also a powerful communication tool with e-mail, discussion forum and different chat rooms. It offers the instructor the possibility to communicate individually with the learners, to correct their written production and to publish the activities of the course participants on the discussion forum. He can also place course related material (audio, pictures, handouts, interactive exercises etc.) in the contents folder. The students can access this material from wherever they are if they have access to the Internet. Student and teacher reactions have been very positive until now.

DESCRIPTION OF CONTEXT

The Language Centre at the University of Cyprus offers different language courses to students of all the faculties and departments. The groups have a maximal size of 25 students and meet twice a week for 80 minutes.

WHAT WE NEEDED TO DO AND WHY WE DID IT

We wanted to concentrate on oral expression and group work in the classroom and had to little time for individual assessment during the lessons. We wanted students to work also outside the classroom with authentic material. We needed a system to stay in contact with students outside the classroom.

MAIN PURPOSE

To manage different aspects of the language courses in an efficient way

ACTION TAKEN

- 1) The University of Cyprus had acquired the program WebCT and used it for other than language courses.
- 2) A pilot course was started
- 3) The language instructors of the Language Centre were trained in a course organized in the computer lab.
- 4) In the fall semester 2006 all the courses began to use WebCT as a management tool..
- 5) The instructors put content, activities, syllabus and other related materials on their course websites and the students post their results to the discussion forum. The instructor can assess them individually or for all the learners. The students can consult the calendar and keep themselves informed about the course-programme.
- 6) The first results are encouraging. Many students react positively and make good contributions to the discussion forum. The webpage has formed a learner-community because students can see each other's work and if the instructor wishes so also the assessments.

MAIN OUTCOMES:

1. Good reaction of many students. They work about the language outside the classroom. They use the new technologies to gather information in the second language.
2. For the instructor the organization of the activities, the distribution of written, audio and graphic material is much easier. He can also transmit easily information (about the course content, about last minute changes etc.) to all course participants.

MAIN CONCLUSIONS:

The introduction of the course management system has been a success improving the involvement of students, facilitating the administration for the teachers and allowing a more individual assessment.