

COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF EXISTING LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (LMSs)

Name of institution:	- prefers to remain anonymous
Type of institution:	Training Body (mixed body private-public)
Address:	prefers to remain anonymous
Telephone:	prefers to remain anonymous
Fax:	prefers to remain anonymous
Email:	prefers to remain anonymous
URL:	prefers to remain anonymous
Name of training manager: (Optional)	prefers to remain anonymous
LMS used:	<i>Esperienze</i>
URL of LMS:	www.esperienze.net
Language of LMS:	software Learning Quest®.
Number of years in use:	Less than one year
Other LMSs used:	Wbt, Docent, Intralearn
Number of students in the system:	150 (but our objective is to reach 1000)
Number of courses available:	1° edition of one course ¹
Typical duration:	4 month (all on-line)
Number of tutors in the system:	Increasing gradually according to the number of course editions. Generally speaking 5 tutors for every geographical group + 1 tutor for technical assistance. This tutor is unique for the whole system ²

This analysis is divided into six parts.

- 1 Course development tools
- 2 Student support tools
- 3 Tutor support tools
- 4 Administration (student database and records)
- 5 Technology (quality of software)
- 6 Price

¹ The course we deliver is an ODL course commissioned by the Ministry of the Public Function to implement at regional level a national act for the introduction of the "*Sportello unico*" (a multifunctional help-desk for citizens and enterprises aimed at speeding-up and facilitating administrative procedures. Since every region implements the act according to regional legislation, course content is variable and leads to a specific course edition.

² Our interviewee is in charge with this function

1 Course development tools

<p>1.1 Course creation. How satisfactory was the LMS for course creation?</p>	<p>Our courses at the moment are developed via two media: - paper - CD-Rom Course creation is difficult to handle since the transformation into econtent is done by the technical assistance of <i>Esperienze</i> producer. To do this job one has to know “Dream river” as a programming language. This process is time-consuming if one wants to guarantee accuracy.</p>
<p>1.2 Structure and didactic flexibility - openness. In the creation of course materials did the LMS permit didactic flexibility? Was the structure open to differing didactic possibilities?</p>	<p>The course structure is open for 1/3 of the course the rest is fixed and mandatory for all participants. The “open” part is for advanced learners who want to improve their knowledge in some specific subject areas.</p>
<p>1.3 Teacher userfriendliness. How easy was the LMS to use by teachers and course developers?</p>	<p>We distinguish content expert and tutor. There is no “Teacher” in a traditional sense. Content expert participate in course development following a top-down approach. They supervise content and reply to answers posed in the forum but all their in-put is mediated via the tutor. It is the tutor who uses the LMS directly not the content expert.</p>
<p>1.4 Support for graphics, audio and video, moving image. Did the LMS support the provision of graphical materials, moving images, audio and video in the course content?</p>	<p>We use them all: slides (power point), pdf, links, video³, graphics. We need all these modes since course content (legislation) needs permanent up-dating.</p>
<p>1.5 Questioning, assessment, assignments.</p>	<p>We use test batteries with</p>

³ in this first pilot phase we experienced that videos a well accepted. This quick –time files show several basic help desk functions students have to learn and apply in the work environment.

<p>What provision was made by the LMS for student questioning and assessment and the design of student assignments?</p>	<p>automatic reply (true-false). Personally I consider these questions quite undemanding. Exercises were deleted from the system. The results are copied by the system to the tutor too who can decide to comment on them if necessary.</p>
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2 Student support tools

<p>2.1 Interactivity possibilities. What provision does the LMS make for student interaction?</p>	<p>Internal email, open forum⁴</p>
<p>2.2 Online student to student communication (synchronous and asynchronous). What facilities does the LMS provide for student communication to other students and how successful is it? Is both synchronous and asynchronous communication between students supported?</p>	<p>none</p>
<p>2.3 Online student to tutor/institution communication (synchronous and asynchronous). What facilities does the LMS provide for student communication to the tutor ion to the institution's administration and how successful is it? Is both synchronous and asynchronous communication supported? Are these support services available 24 hours a day?</p>	<p>Email Fac (students can pose a question which will be added (if relevant) to the FAC part which is visible to all but remains anonymous. The local tutors can be contacted according to their availability which is communicated to all students. Feed-back is provided asap. The technical tutor (1 for the whole system) can be reached from 10 am to 1 pm excluded weekends.</p>
<p>2.4 Resources, library, references. What facilities does the LMS provide for student acquisition of resources required by the course, especially library resources and references to required readings?</p>	<p>We consider FAC a resource. We set-up links since our course content is changing rapidly.</p>
<p>2.5 Feedback on work and assignments. What is the quality of provision of feedback to students on their work and assignments?</p>	<p>We monitor the results of self-testing. We rely very much on the mature of learners. Their commitment is fundamental. If the tutors notices difficulties in working</p>

⁴ Success is very much a question of being able to create a team, a feeling to belong to a group as it is in traditional classroom. What we experienced over the last years is that users often misuse the virtual communication space (especially the synchronous one) as a sort of “complain room” where to “deposit” your personal problems affecting teaching. In these cases, we strongly advice our tutors to “cut-short”. Black-sheep or rhetoric problem makers will get access denied and the password disabled

	with some tests, these tests will be revised.
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3 Tutor Support tools

<p>3.1 Tracking students - database questions. How user friendly is the LMS for tutors wishing to track their group(s) of students and retrieve data from the student database?</p>	<p>The LMS does not have no tracking possibilities. The only way to partly monitor students, is the connection time which is recorded by the system but this input is not telling relevant about learning styles.</p>
<p>3.2 Group management tools. What facilities are provided by the LMS to the tutors for managing their group(s) of students?</p>	<p>All students log-in at the campus site. From this page they can enter their geographic group (e.g. "forum Tuscany") and are introduced to their local tutor (identity card displayed) who is not the expert.</p>
<p>3.3 Preparation of questions and assignments by tutor. How successful is the LMS in providing tutors with user friendly and didactically successful tools for the design of student questions and assignments?</p>	<p>Assignments or other initiatives can be launched via the forum rarely via email</p>
<p>3.4 Course planning for students (monitoring pace). What tools are provided by the LMS to tutors to enable them to monitor and plan student progress?</p>	<p>Automatic test batteries</p>
<p>3.5 User-friendly administrative systems between tutor and institution. What provision does the LMS make for successful tutor to institution communication?</p>	<p>All administrative issues are not managed via the LMS.</p>

4 Administration (student database and records)

<p>4.1 Enrolment procedures and fee paying. What facilities does the LMS provide for student enrolments, course allocations and payment of fees?</p>	<p>All our courses are commissioned and financed by the interested Ministry. There are no fees to pay. The tutor responsible for technical assistance receives a list of participants and provides them with the password and instructions for use.</p>
<p>4.2 Passwords and security. How successfully does the LMS handle student access to the system and the security of all student interactions with the system?</p>	<p>The password is known to three persons:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learner • The local tutor • The tutor responsible for technical assistance
<p>4.3 Student records database. How successful is the system's student database, especially for data storage and data retrieval.</p>	<p>Very basic</p>
<p>4.4 Examination and certification records. What structures are provided for recording of data and results</p>	<p>We do not release a diploma but a simple certification of</p>

leading to examination and certification?	attendance. We have to better understand how to make assessment more effective. We want to avoid rigidity but on the other hand we experience that without some mandatory parts, learners often simply “rush” through units.
4.5 Course, class and tutors database. What facilities are provided for administration of courses, classes and tutors?	None

5 Technology (quality of software)

5.1 Server - hardware and software options. What is the quality of server hardware and software options? How is the system integrated with existing software?	I do not know. I can only say that the system is very stable.
5.2 Client - hardware and software options. What is the quality of client hardware and software options? Does the system permit metatagging?	Pentium 133 Mhz; 23 Mb, 64 RAM, Modem 28,8 Windows '95, Internet Explorer 5.0, quick time
5.3 Flexibility of didactic structure; updating, adaptability. Is the didactic structure flexible or is it determined by the technology? How adaptable is the technology to updates and to new technology that becomes available to the market?	Adaptability and up-dating is difficult since it need the intervention of the somebody who knows the programming language. For this every revision needs to be done twice: input form us-implementation carried out by the Experience staff – revision from our side etc..
5.4 Standards. What is your opinion about the standards for e-Learning?	Since our courses are country specific, standards are not yet relevant.
5.5 Limitation of size (number of students, courses, tutors..) How satisfactory is the LMS for handling varying numbers of students, courses, tutors? How does it cope with 100, 1000, or 10000 students and large course databases?	No limitation
5.6 Speed of system. How is the speed of the system and student satisfaction? How does it cope with downloading courses and high bandwidth materials?	Speed depends on the client facilities.

6 Price

6.1 Cost of the LMS (Learning Management System). What is the cost of the LMS to the institution?	This is an information I can not provide
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<p>6.2 Annual fee. What fees have to be paid annually for the system by the institution?</p>	<p>This is an information I can not provide</p>
<p>6.3 Student Enrolment fee (100 students, 1000 students, 10000 students.) How do fees to use the LMS vary when the student base is 100 students, 1000 students, 10000 students? Is online invoicing available?</p>	<p>This is an information I can not provide</p>
<p>6.4 Maintenance costs: staff involved in management, IT specialists, trainers, etc What is the maintenance course to the institution of the LMS and what staff resources are need to maintain it and keep it functioning?</p>	<p>This is an information I can not provide</p>
<p>6.5 Training of teachers and learners and system users. What costs are involved in staff and student training to use the LMS system?</p>	<p>This is an information I can not provide</p>

Conclusion: Overall evaluation:

Our prime target (public officers) do not have the right means to benefit from the system facilities.

What features would you like to see included in this LMS in the future?

I would like to include: db students, further group management tools to better divide users, better articulated statistics (one per class, alphabetic order); the possibility to work directly on course development without the need of using dream river.