

**COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF EXISTING LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (LMSs)**

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Type of institution:.. Training and Education..

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Name of training manager:(Optional)...John McNamee.

LMS used:....Topclass..

URL of LMS:.....

Language of LMS:.....

Number of years in use:....4.....

Other LMSs used:..... Skills Vantage (Netg)..

Number of students in the system:..2100.

Number of courses available:.....Typical duration:..6 months.

Number of tutors in the 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 Course development tools**

1.1 *Course creation.* How satisfactory was the LMS for course creation?

Not so good. We had to create our own.

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?

*That depended on your skills with HTML and javascript.*

1.3 *Teacher userfriendliness.* How easy was the LMS to use by teachers and course developers?

*We did not design courses for teachers. All courses are open learning courses delivered over the web.*

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?

*It can support all of the above but video is very limited because Ireland has an information boreen and not an information highway.*

1.5 *Questioning, assessment, assignments.* What provision was made by the LMS for student questioning and assessment and the design of student assignments?

The system allows for testing. But because of its security deficits it is only useful for formative testing. We don't use it, we use our own because it integrated into our own Learner Interface system. We have an independent secure on-line testing system for summative (certification) testing.

## **2 Student support tools**

2.1 *Interactivity possibilities.* What provision does the LMS make for student interaction?

*We developed our own interactive routines for text. We use FLASH for animation and for the user to interact with. We are currently looking at other systems to enhance our capability in this area.*

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?

*We have discussion forum and chat room along with e-mail. We are currently working with a small company to develop video and whiteboard interaction. But bandwidth will determine how useful this will be.*

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?

The facilities are there, but we as an organisation have a lot of work to do to make it viable. It is our next big project for the year 2002.

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?

*These can be integrated but for our clientele at this stage it is not a priority. All material is supplied on the course. However, we are developing more exercises for the courses.*

2.5 *Feedback on work and assignments.* What is the quality of provision of feedback to students on their work and assignments?

*As we don't have a proper tutorial base as yet this is not an issue but as I said above it is a priority project for 2002.*

### **3 Tutor Support tools**

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?

The system we have is limited and does not meet our needs. We are coming to the end of developing our own LMS and we can customise it to suit our needs.

3.2 *Group management tools.* What facilities are provided by the LMS to the tutors for managing their group(s) of students?

*The system allows for classes, which allows you to group students into classes.*

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?

*Developing questions is not easy and its time consuming, but it must be done. Assignments are not a problem.*

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?

*This is limited and we hope our own system will improve on this. There are issues of an effectiveness as well as an ethical aspects around this question.*

3.5 *User-friendly administrative systems between tutor and institution.* What provision does the LMS make for successful tutor to institution communication?

*We haven't tried out this area, as explained above.*

### **4 Administration (student database and records)**

4.1 *Enrolment procedures and fee paying.* What facilities does the LMS provide for student enrolments, course allocations and payment of fees?

*Enrolment is OK, but does not capture fees. However, our own system will.*

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?

*This is OK. But our own system will be better.*

4.3 *Student records database.* How successful is the system's student database, especially for data storage and data retrieval.

*This is limited, but our own system will be comprehensive.*

4.4 *Examination and certification records.* What structures are provided for recording of data and results leading to examination and certification?

*This is limited, but as I've said earlier, we have developed our own on-line testing system for certification and it included a comprehensive student record system*

4.5 *Course, class and tutors database.* What facilities are provided for administration of courses, classes and tutors?

*This is OK.*

## **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?

*We have the system running on our own server, which is farmed in Esat.*

5.2 *Client - hardware and software options.* What is the quality of client hardware and software options? Does the system permit metatagging?

*For ourselves we will be using the LRN standard for metatagging. We can accommodate third party courses into our new LMS. Our existing one does not allow for it but it can be shoehorned in, its not satisfactory.*

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?

*We will be aiming for blended solutions for our clients. Our new system will allow for easy updates.*

5.4 *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?

*I am limited to 100 students to go on line at one time. But our new system will not have limits.*

5.5 *Speed of system.* How is the speed of the system and student satisfaction? How does it cope with downloading courses and high bandwidth materials?

*Bandwidth is my biggest problem.*

## **6 Price**

6.1 *Cost of the LMS (Learning Management System).* What is the cost of the LMS to the institution?

*To update my old system is prohibitive, that is why we are developing our own.*

6.2 *Annual fee.* What fees have to be paid annually for the system by the institution?

*Our own system will have no annual fees*

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?

*At present our procedures require students to fill out forms. In the new year this will change and on-line payment will be available.*

6.4 *Maintenance costs: staff involved in management, IT specialists, trainers, etc* What is the maintenance cost to the institution of the LMS and what staff resources are needed to maintain it and keep it functioning?

*We have a team of 8 catering for 2100 students on line. It's a pressure cooker.*

6.5 *Training of teachers and learners and system users.* What costs are involved in staff and student training to use the LMS system?

*We haven't done that figure.*

**Conclusion: Overall evaluation:**

**We are developing our own because we were not satisfied with what's available on the market. A lot of people think I'm mad, maybe I am but I want to have a go. It looks like we will succeed.**

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

**I'll send you a features list of our own when it is finished, OK.**