

COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS OF EXISTING LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS (LMSs)

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Type of institution: Upper Secondary School

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LMS used: First Class + Internet

URL of LMS: www. tes.mi.it/sofianet

Language of LMS:.html, Java Scripts, Asp

Number of years in use:.2 years.

Other LMSs used:.....

Number of students in the system:. About 1000

Number of courses available:.3 .Typical duration: two courses: 15/20 hours – one: 60 hours

Number of tutors in the system: 8

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?

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?

It provides the opportunity to have: e-mail, chat, webcam, materials prepared by the tutors, conferences for the different areas of discussion/work, and forum open to any public.

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

Easy; it requires knowledge of First Class and HTML language.

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?*

Formats: graphical materials, moving images, audio and video

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

On-line questionnaires, exercises to be solved and to be delivered to the tutor, track of the time and work of the user's connection.

Self-check of the activities performed

Portfolio

Log file of the system

2 Student support tools

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

Full interaction

One-to-one interaction – collaborative work

Each user can e-mail messages and edit web pages

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?

Synchronous communication (chat, videochat with webcam) among students and asynchronous (forum, e-mail)

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 students can enter the system 24h/24 both in a synchronous and asynchronous mode.

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?

The system contains self-learning course, on-line manuals, exercises.

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

Immediate Feedback provided by the system (structured exercises) or in an asynchronous mode-

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?

Different types of databases: general log of the system, detailed log of the different actions, the results of specific programmes and activities aiming to collect information among the students.

In general no specific competencies is required to insert data, while their interpretation is a complex problem.

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

It exists a system of permits for each user, groups of users and several targets.

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?

Our system allows an open use of specific programmes for planning and developing questionnaires

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?

Hot potatoes, for instance, and log files

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

We can't understand the question

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?

Our system is completely free, thus we didn't have to organise any payment of fees.

It doesn't imply any secretarial work as it is up to the tutor to make students fill in a form for the enrolment.

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?

The security of the system is good.

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

It is good as it doesn't allow unauthorised people to enter it.

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

The official certification is managed by the secretary on the basis of data provided by the tutors (taking them from log files and from the other tools used during the on-line activity)

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

There is a staff in charge of the management of the system and of courses.

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?

Hardware: PC – Mac

Software: Windows 2000 – MAC-OS

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

PC or Mac

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?

It is quite flexible, in fact even if technology is always changing, our structure can cope with it.

What has been developed with previous hardware and software, can be adapted

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?

At present our on-going pilot phase has had about 60 students.

According to us the system can cope with more than 1000 students.

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?

If we use Intranet the speed is excellent, if we use Internet the speed for video and audio file is not satisfactory

6 Price

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

Internet: 8000€/year

Hardware: 3 servers per complessivi 8.000€

Software: complessivi 2500€

Staff: 24 hours a week

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

It is included in the software (see above)

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?

1000 students, 100 teachers, 300 external users

No vocal system

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?

3 teachers for 24 hours a wee, 50 hours a year for the technician

Part of the work is carried out by the students themselves.

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

Very little for staff training. The system is totally free.

Conclusion: Overall evaluation:

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

The possibility to be trained on evaluation and certification matters