A Virtual Center for Entrepreneurship

C. Perra
University of Cagliari,
Piazza D’Armi, Italy, phone: +39-070-6755866, e-mail: cristian.perra@unica.it

T. Ward
Engineering Management, Department of Electronics, University of York,
Heslington, York, YO10 5DD United Kingdom

H. Yahoui
University of Lyon, France

Introduction

The vision of the Virtual Centre for Enterprise [1, 2] is for a place learners at any stage of their life can go to develop their competence in the knowledge, skills and to develop better behavioural practices that will be of use to them in the planning, establishment and subsequent running of their own business.

The virtual centre will connect learners of any age to a network of educators within academic institutions, business formation advisory bodies and business mentors across Europe in a way that enables skills and competence. A unique feature of the virtual centre is that learners will be able to choose to be mentored in their learning in a language other than their native language – in this way they will not only develop their entrepreneurial skills but also, simultaneously, their linguistic skill.

Learners will take small ‘bite-sized’ modules that will each be assessed and, upon satisfactory completion, credits will be awarded.

In this paper, the technical design of the VCE and the online available services are presented at first, than an experimental use case is analyzed and discussed. The objective of this paper is to present the current state of the activities within the ELLEIEC project related to the study and design of the VCE and to present preliminary experimental results.

Description

The proposed Centre would be a virtual centre with a web portal as the visible entry point. The Centre will provide training in enterprise the field of Electrical and Information Engineering. The facilities of the Centre will be open to students at all levels of their education and to individuals of all ages who wish to engage with enterprise. It will therefore provide a Lifelong Learning resource for enterprise.

The Centre will provide a pan-European resource for enterprise teaching and learning primarily contextualized to the Electrical and Information Engineering discipline areas.

Included in its provision will be:
- Teaching resources that faculty members can use freely for their own teaching purposes;
- A learning system that individuals can register onto and which will develop their skills and abilities in enterprise in elemental ‘chunks’, the learning system will provide a record of their achievement for them to reference and use to guide their continuing learning;
- A reference repository of relevant research publications in the field of enterprise in Electrical and Information Engineering and in pedagogy and assessment;
- A learning system whereby learners can develop their language skills in a chosen foreign language as part of their enterprise learning.

All partners in the Thematic Network would be the initial members of the Centre and all would agree to contribute to the available resources of the Centre.

In addition, those willing will offer their services as a mentor/tutor to individuals who sign up to take study with the Centre.

The individual learning, in addition to selecting the elemental chunks of enterprise learning would also have the opportunity to select a language in which they would communicate with their mentor/tutor.

To promote language development this would be the encouraged route for learners.

A tutor would be selected from the bank of Network member tutors in the preferred language and all support to the learner would then be in that language.
The tutor will be provided guidelines on the support they offer which will include instructions on correction of the written and/or spoken language in all communications relating to the elemental learning chunk.

**Key actors in the centre**

The key actors in the VCE are:

- **Learner** – any individual who engages with the Centre with the intention of undertaking learning;
- **Mentor** – any individual approved to mentor students in one or more modules available through the Centre;
- **Mentor moderator** – any individual approved to view the credentials of a prospective mentor and approve the individual to be a mentor;
- **visitor** – any individual who wishes to access the Centre and who has not previously visited and registered. All visitors will be directed to a login page where they are required to enter personal details so we have a record of all who have looked at our site. All new persons to the site will initially enter via the visitor route;
- **Registered visitor** – any individual who has completed the Centre registration process but who has not registered to take a learning module as a learner or who is not a mentor, moderator or administrator. A visitor can see the general form of the Centre’s website but cannot access any learning resources or register for a module. To become a learner, they must apply to become a learner;
- **resource moderator** – any individual approved to view submitted learning modules and approves them as usable within the Centre;
- **administrator** - each actor logs into the system using the same login screen. Successful login shows the use a screen appropriate to their actor type.

**New learning resource proposal and approval process**

Each new learning resource requires a number of pieces of information. These pieces of information are shown on the Module Specification shown in Fig. 1. This should be available as a web form with a submit button. It also needs to be submitted and approved. Any learning resource can also be archived when no longer available for learners to register for. A new learning resource can be proposed by any person registered within the Centre.

Particular attention should be given to copyright principles. Copyright and ownership of content submitted to the VCE shall remain with the Author at all times. Content submitted to the Centre shall be considered by any person accessing this content from within the Centre as being the property of the Author and shall respect this ownership. This statement should not affect the statutory rights of any author in respect of content they have produced and used within the VCE. As a general rule, by submitting content to the VCE the author agrees that any person authorized to access the VCE, through its registration and login, has the rights to access the content for the purposes of personal learning and development only. For copyright identification purposes all content within the VCE shall carry the name of the author at the bottom of every page, illustration or document as appropriate. The use of the copyright symbol and date is optional as the fundamental copyright principle of the VCE is that the author automatically retains all rights over content they submit.

The author may edit content they have written that is currently being used within the VCE at any time by giving notification of the need for an edit to the VCE. The introduction of changes will be made taking into account the impact the change has on learners currently enrolled in modules that are affected by the change. Should the VCE administrator or management team consider that changes are needed to a module, the author will be given first rights to make the changes. In the event the author declines the invitation to make changes, the VCE Administrator reserves the right to request other suitably qualified persons to make changes to the content. In such circumstances the nature and detail of the change will be communicated with the original author for their comments, which may be taken into account in the change process but may be ignored if the comments are nor deemed to be in the best interests of the VCE.

The author may withdraw content from the VCE at any time by giving notification of the need for withdrawal to the VCE Administrator. Authors are respectfully reminded that learners may well be part way through undertaking a module containing content they wish to withdraw and actual withdrawal will only be put into practice when all learners undertaking the module within which the content lies complete that module. No new learners will be eligible to register for the module from the time the notification of withdrawal is accepted within the VCE.
Pre-requisite modules (if any)
List any modules from the Centre a learner should have taken before undertaking this module (if any).

Module aims
Broad statements of the nature and purpose of the module (Bullet point list)

Module learning outcomes
What a student should know, understand, or be able to do at the end of the module (Bullet point list)

Module activity structure
Indicate the division of the notional workload of the module (on the basis that 1 credit equals a learner workload of 25–30 hours, into lectures (these could be pre-recorded streamed lectures or synchronous teaching events), online discussions, directed reading, private study, formative and summative assessment activities, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Total hours</th>
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<tr>
<td>Lectures</td>
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<td>Online discussions</td>
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<td>Directed reading</td>
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<td>Private Study</td>
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<td>Formative assessment</td>
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<td>Summative assessment</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (please specify):</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Module learning resources
List of all the learning resources including assessment activities that make up the module.

Module teaching and learning plan
Indicate the division of the notional workload of the module (on the basis that 1 credit equals a learner workload of 25–30 hours, into lectures (these could be pre-recorded streamed lectures or synchronous teaching events), online discussions, directed reading, private study, formative and summative assessment activities, etc.

Communications strategy
Please describe the interaction between the learner and the mentor if this is not described in detail in the Module teaching and learning plan above.

Communications strategy
Fig. 1. Module Specification

Graphical user interface
The Graphical User Interface (GUI) is one of the standard available Moodle interface [3].

As shown in Fig. 2, the home page is very neat with a Welcome page summarizing the objectives of the VCE and current state of the project.

In order to reach this page users must be registered to the ELLEIEC project through the project website [1].

Fig. 3 shows an overall concept diagram for the Centre system functionality. Functionality is focussed on the student journey and a small number of supporting Processes.

The Learner database is attached to and part of the Record Keeping System. Access to the Centre is through a login page.

The Centre is currently in the developmental stage at this address through the ELLEIEC Website [4] after a first registration.
In this paper the technical design of the VCE and the online available services have been presented. The objective of this paper is to present the current state of the activities within the ELLEIEC project related to the study and design of the VCE and to present preliminary experimental results. It has been also described how the student journey will be implemented in the Virtual Entrepreneurship Centre during the launch of the first experiment between the University of York, UK and the University of Valence, FR. Through these actions the EAEIEE association (which will ensure the sustainability of the result) will provide a gateway to European Learning offer. The entrepreneurship centre could contribute to the attractiveness of European and non-European students and applicants in the lifelong Learning programme to favour the excellence of European Research and Education Area.

Acknowledgment

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References


