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# Virtual Work Based Learning and Management Competences: Project E-View

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Partners in E-View project [1] are developing and piloting a European Virtual Campus aimed at learners in the work place which will focus on enhancing their management skills and competences within a European context. The project begins with a needs analysis followed by the creation of the Virtual Campus Framework. This framework utilizes a customized open source delivery methodology and a work-based learning module based on the needs analysis aimed at trainee managers in European enterprises. The module with an emphasis on working within Europe is being piloted with employees in the UK, Poland, Portugal and Ireland involving four employers. Concrete outcomes from E-View include a Virtual Campus Framework for Work-based learning (WBL) with a sample undergraduate module, a pilot implementation of this course and an online handbook with a description of the experiences gained in creating and delivering this course in the Virtual Campus Framework for Work-based Learning.

The model of learning proposed was defined based on the reports produced in the surveys done by each partner in the respective country. These surveys were done with companies interested in developing WBL for competences in management, with the analysis of specialized documentation and with conclusions drawn from past experiences of WBL. A summary of these main recommendations from the reports in terms of users and employers, conclusions from the comparative analysis in terms of universities and other providers, a list of management competences



PHOTO BY MICHAEL CORNELIUS

The E-View project, which is developing a European Virtual Campus, is geared towards finding more effective and efficient ways of bringing executives back to higher education for their continuing education.

and a framework that addresses the strategies for learning virtually in WBL were combined to propose a structure that fits these diverse requirements.

The chosen structure was defined mainly as a function of the partnership research and dialogue among the stakeholders. The reasons were the updated information from partners, the focused case studies and reports on the elaboration of the model and the quality of the documents produced. Another minor contribution was the

set of documents, websites and examples obtained by the partners. The term learning model was also adopted instead of pedagogical model since the objective is to provide effective and efficient training and learning in management competences.

The list of management competences chosen and adopted as learning objectives of the learning model was obtained through the consultation of the results of the surveys and of the re-

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search done on general management courses for higher education.

To have significance at the European dimension the degree of competences adopted was at levels 5 and 6 of the European Qualification Framework. The strategic model hereby proposed is considered as the basis for the development of the pilot courses. The pilot courses will then be tested by the partnership so a fine tuning of a European proposal may be produced for wider utilization. Results indicate a spectrum of respondents – in that perceptions of study and readiness to embrace (or currently use therein) new technologies was variable to the extreme. However, there were some trends in the responses regarding types of technology preferred in the learning context and these motivated the options presented. The collection of the conclusions and orientations is made essentially through referenced transcriptions from the project reports and published documents consulted. The requirements were decided in terms of stakeholders of WBL: Employers/Companies and Users.

The model adopted has some conditions to be satisfied by the providers that are Higher Education (HE) institutions. Some of the conditions to be implemented by the HE organizations are:

**1. Sources** – It is generally considered that the primary source of providers is the sector of higher education (HE) institutions for courses on management. However the type of learning (WBL), the set of competences addressed and the form of training brings opportunities for private organizations. There are several examples of virtual campus for management that can be used on WBL environments.

**2. Example** of HE collaboration – One example that shows the collaboration among institutions to address the diversity of the sector is the UK's Learning Through Work online framework. A

government funded and driven initiative it planned to act as a hub for UK universities offering WBL resources for learning. It still provides on-line learning services for learning up to HE level.

**3. Vocational** – Most of examples of courses available are included in a strategy of professional development, lifelong learning or continuing education. These are courses that are not for academic purposes although credits may be awarded towards a degree or academic certificate.

**4. Accreditation** – This seems a major function of HE institutions concerning the one of the benefits of these courses. In fact HE can perform the role of the assessor and award credits to the competences acquired through courses of the virtual campus for WBL. HE can also validate the competences for the employers' reassurance of the return on investment. For the users HE can award the credits corresponding to the skills attained.

Taking into consideration the conclusions and options the proposed structure and operational mode are defined, for instance, by:

**1. Management competences** – The competences listed above need to be refined and adjusted to the levels of the EQF 5 and 6. This list is just a possible set of the learning outcomes for the courses without classification between levels and distribution between knowledge, skills and attitudes. The learning outcomes of each of the WBL courses should be described in accordance with EQF requirements.

**2. Modularity** – There is a concrete need to have the ability to tailor programmes to the specific needs of particular employers and employees. That can only be done by a modularisation of the courses. Each module is as short as possible with a proper set of learning outcomes. The modules have to be compatible with each other so it is possible to combine any part of the modules.

**3. VC Tools** – Tools of the virtual campus have to be as simple as possible so

the production, utilization and maintenance can be as simple as possible. If possible the VC tools have to be used to create environments that try to emulate the face to face training. It is recommended to use as many web 2.0 tools as possible to facilitate social interaction.

This is a project with practical outputs that are related with the following areas: management competences, work based learning and virtual training. Each one of these issues has been tackled in the past. Therefore, the main task of the project partners has been to articulate concepts, tools and methods to deliver a platform that will comprehend the necessary functions to satisfy the requirements. The platform is being tested and anyone interested is invited to participate and cooperate with the project partners.

## References

[1] <http://www.e-view-project.eu/>



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