Using Sakai as a collaborative learning environment to support higher education activity

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The University Fernando Pessoa

- Small university located in Porto, Portugal
- Another location in Ponte de Lima (north of Portugal)
- Still young institution (first students in 1989/90 school year)
- Three faculty: Health, Science and Technology, and Social Sciences
- Offers 18 undergraduate courses, and 30 post graduate courses (including Master and Doctorate programs, with around 10% of the students enrolled)
- Near 5,000 students and 260 university staff, being 60% PhDs
- The Bologna process is set for all the university offer, next year
Higher education challenges

• Globalization
• Education as a commodity
  – means higher education as a business?
• Information society issues
  – Security, mobility and knowledge change
  – Information overload, information and communication technology
  – Digital culture, level of integration in information systems
  – New media, digital rights, new skills
  – The quest for interaction and the ever growing network society
  – Issues as big science and small science rediscussed
  – ... many others, depending in the perspective!
Higher education challenges

• The need for strategy and leadership (as always!) – major challenges:
  – Global level
    • Globalization
  – European level
    • The Bologna process
  – National level
    • Negative demographics
    • Economic restrictions

• News ways to reinvent higher education practices are urgent
  – funding, partnerships and even activities
  – new publics, alternative approaches to knowledge and society
The virtual university UFPUV
UFPUV – what it is

- The UFP Virtual University provides electronic mediation to support education community interaction, in order to reinvent space and time notions and to allow innovative approaches to the teaching/learning process, opening the university to new publics.
A little of history

June 2003

**e-learning initiative**

December 2004

**UV-UFP pilot project**

October 2005

**UFPUV project**

Setember 2006

**UFPUV**
Lemma
Knowledge and proximity
UFPUV – what it is

- It is the most visible face is the platform http://elearning.ufp.pt
Sakai (sakaiproject.org)

• Collaborative learning platform
• Open software initiative, started in 2004, founded by a number of North American universities
• It is now a foundation that counts with the official support of HP, IBM, and Oracle
UFPUV support

- Presental support restrict to week days from 10h00 to 13h00
- Contact with UFPUV team:
  - using email ufpuv@ufp.pt, regarding functional issues as general questions, proposals and pedagogic issues
  - using email ufpuv-suporte@ufp.pt, regarding operational issues as the platform use and technical support
- Consulting and contribute to the UFPUV blog
  [http://ufpuv.blogspot.com/](http://ufpuv.blogspot.com/)
Elearning and distance education

- Taking a “high high level” bird eye...

The traditional distinction between:

- **presencial** teaching (face to face),
  (area available in the UFPUV platform)

- Blended teaching/learning, **b-learning**
  (area plus a number of additional services in the UFPUV platform—
   including bound pedagogic models)

- Distance learning, **e-learning**
  (area plus a number of additional services in the UFPUV platform—
   including bound pedagogic models and UFPUV monitoring)
**Elearning and distance education**

- Historically, elearning has several phases:
  - *Computer Based Training*
  - *Learning Management Systems*
  - *Courseware Management Systems*
  - *Collaborative Learning Systems*
    (the one that is supported by actual UFPUV technology)

- Within UFPUV context:
  - elearning is web-based (but non-exclusive) and complemented with a pedagogic and monitoring context to bound both the staff and the students
Examples of *elearning activities*

- In traditional teaching
  - Stabilized processes
    - lectures, labs, etc.
  - Knowledge plus use of alternative technology
    - Blackboard, slides, videoprojector, lab equipment, etc.
  - Well known context
    - Traditional face to face interaction
    - Classroom, as a space with defined rules
    - Fixed time periods
    - The school as an interaction space and also as a social space for both students and teachers
Examples of elearning activities

• In elearning
  – Experimentation processes
    • Use of distance education techniques, intensive use of 
      computer and the Web, new applications and innovative 
      activities
  – Knowledge and use of alternative technologies
    • Integrated systems, digital interaction, contents
  – Context well defined but different
    • Computer mediated interaction
    • Ciberspace as the negotiation space
    • Results based, with well determined goals
    • The knowledge itself as the trigger for interaction and 
      socialization
Examples of *elearning activities*

Associated challenges:

- New activities, new contents
- Relationship between teacher and students
- Relationship between students
- Efforts needed for both content and context:
  - Creation and development
  - Trial and error
  - Support and monitoring
  - Evaluation
- New responsabilities for the student (new ones or just a shift in the most important ones?)
- New skills for the teacher
Examples of elearning activities

Let me see my email....
A roadmap for students

• Study contents **BEFORE** their use
• **VERIFY** UFPUV regularly
• **USE** and consult additional references available in teacher/sessions notes
• **PLACE** questions about what has not been understand from your own work
• **DO NOT MAKE** work proposals in the last minute
• **REVIEW** the sessions and their notes
• Search for **HELP** if experimented some difficulty
• **SHARE** in a positive way suggestions with other students and teacher, giving also information about your learning progress
A roadmap for teachers

- Create a context
- Prepare and organize available contents
- Develop activities to take advantage of the content
- Select a small number of services and prepare the use of the platform
- Planning the learning and list the requested results
- Create a plan to monitor student activity (management effort)
- Maintain, give feedback and monitor activity
- Inform, broadcast and promote the sharing in the learning process
UFPUV – current usage numbers

• Arround 40% of the UFP teaching staff
  – Half of those have a strong use of the available facilities

• Arround 50% of the registered student population
  – Over 2000 students use UFPUV in one or more disciplines
  – From the 2100 disciplines occurrences from a total of +400 disciplines, 25% of them show some level of activity

• Among 20% of the support UFP staff also use the UFPUV platform
  – In some cases, as part of a local CoP programme

• Overall, 50% of the university population has been covered until now (two years activity, the first has pilot)
Final remarks

- The Virtual University took its first two years:
  - Selecting, testing and providing a stable platform
  - Promoting within the UFP environment the use of the platform
  - Develop a digital culture for the teaching staff
  - Develop the university approach to virtual university
  - Support integration with the university information system
  - Support all the university presentational teaching
Final remarks

• New year activity
  – Pedagogic concerns: promote blearning and elearning offers
  – Technological concerns: continue the development of new services for the existing platform
  – Administrative concerns: provide a virtual interface with distance learners
  – Business concerns: develop a business approach to the virtual university services