



Multidisciplinary Experiences at University Degrees in the Use of Synchronous E-learning

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Abstract

Since the early 2000's, a Sakai-based e-learning platform (PoliformaT) is available at the Universitat Politècnica de València (UPV). The framework enables among other important features: i) the provision of learning materials to students, and ii) the assessment of the learning progress achieved by students. PoliformaT is mainly used as a common mail box in which both students and teachers share information. However, due to its asynchronous nature, it is difficult to use this platform for any teaching activity that involves teacher-student interaction, which is of paramount importance in the learning process. For instance, a significant hindering for students in distance learning is the lack of fluent communication and interaction with the teacher or among colleagues. In this respect, synchronous e-learning tools can overcome these limitations as they provide, among others, the opportunity of: i) watching the teacher and talk to him/her, ii) sharing documents instantly and iii) following directly what the teacher types in the computer (as a sort of e-blackboard). Therefore, they are able to provide an experience similar to a regular class or meeting, and are useful for tutorships, on-line courses, regular courses (for students who cannot physically attend the class), or even, seminars provided by foreign colleagues in video-conference format.

All these reasons motivated the recent adoption of a new synchronous e-learning tool named PoliConecta (Adobe Connect-based online service) at UPV. PoliConecta enriches the existing e-learning UPV system providing virtual classrooms/sessions chaired by the lecturer and collaborative learning sessions, where interaction between lecturers and students is enabled by means of audio/video-conferences and software application sharing. Due to its novelty, its usefulness in the context of UPV remains to be proved. This contribution presents the conclusions issued from experiences that have been deployed in five different courses at various UPV degrees (Computer Science, Agronomics, Tourism and Telecommunications). Pros and cons of the use of PoliConecta in different learning activities proposed in the mentioned degrees are discussed from both the lecturers and the students' point of view.