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### Blackboard

### CONTENTS

JANUARY 2017





### EDITORIAL

### EDUCATION

E-learning to promote spirituality					
and community service6					
Innovation in learning: the essence					
of Pompeu Fabra University8					
FRISCO ISD, the school district that					
grows through digital tools <b>10</b>					
University of Warwick:					
empowering learners via					
self determined learning12					
Philippines eLearning					
Society: learning online					
to teach online14					
OPENNESS					

5

Openness: The Transition	
to a Barrier-Free Education	18
Moodlerooms: Open for all	24
Opportunities and challenges	
of open education	26



Always learning with the	
Blackboard Community	28
How technology sparked the	
openness philosophy	30
Blackboard Collaborate	
speaks your language	. 32
Openness, a practice for	
innovation in higher education	34

Democratizing education	
with the LMS	36
Blackboard Learn and its	
commitment to the	
innovation of open standards	
The open source	
expert who wants	
to change the system	40
Bending towards Openness	
EDUCATION	
Self-Motivation as the key	
to success on eLearning	46
From Copenhagen	
to the world	
What's the main advantage	
of online collaboration	
CORPORATE	
In Finland, you can learn to drive us	sina
Blackhoard Collaborate	52
REFERENCES	

### E-LEARN IS A MOODLEROOMS PUBLICATION

For more information please contact CAROLINA.PINTOR@BLACKBOARD.COM

### PROYECTOS SEMANA

PRODUCTION Carolina Pintor

EDITOR Manuel Rivera

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS Tyler Stike

> PHOTOGRAPHY AFP

ART AND DESIGN TRiiBU Studio

### SPECIAL THANKS

Phill Miller, Laureano Díaz, Lynn Zingraf, David Hastie, Jaslyn Hughes, Karen Underwood, Kelly Lemar, Foong Yee Leong, Samuel Tang, Paul Hardy, Andy Holohan, Jarkko Elo.

msojo@semana.com JOURNALISM Laura Orozco Castrillón. María Paula Triviño Salazar, Catalina Sánchez

DIRECTOR

Mauricio Sojo Vásquez

Montoya, Nicolás Peña Ardila, Natalia Perdigón Beltrán, Alejandra Hamann, Ángela M. Palacios Giraldo and Christina Gómez Echavarría.

### DESIGN

Camila Mejía Valencia, Miguel Ángel Sánchez and Catalina Losada Salgado

PHOTOGRAPHY EDITOR Mario Inti García Mutis

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### From the editor

### IT'S A PLEASURE FOR OUR TEAM TO

start the New Year off by sharing this 'openness' edition with our readers.

his edition is based on the philosophy that everyone should have the opportunity to access and utilize information and knowledge. We will examine openness as a concept and also evaluate its application throughout the world. We will also cover various open initiatives in higher education as well as other relevant challenges and opportunities.

We want to thank Ray Henderson for his contribution as columnist, as well as Doctor Charles Severance and Gavin Henrick, who shared their experience on open source code through interviews. We also want to thank the various Blackboard participants who spoke to us about openness from various perspectives: Allan Christie, Mark O'Neil, Anneke Bates, Marissa Dimino, Brad Evans, and Brad Koch.

Likewise, thanks to all the organizations and interviewees who shared their experience on using technology to improve teaching and learning:

Gautam Saha from Georgia Technology Institute; Emily Willard from the Australian College of Ministries; Manel Jiménez from Universidad Pompeu Fabra; Mark Priddle from Primary Health Care; Ashley Nelson from Frisco ISD; Teresa McKinnon from Warwick University; Anthea 'Thennie' Mariano from the Philippine eLearning Society (PeLS); Jim Friscia from Western States University; Carsten Storgaard from Copenhaguen Business Academy; Dr. Conrado Iñigo from the Lyceum of the Philippines University (LPU); Harri Keski-Rekilä from Opetustarvike Oy; Jason Neiffer and Mike Agostinelli from Montana Digital Academy. We would also like to thank José Omedes, Co-founder & Research and Development Director at IADLearning, a company that Blackboard maintains a Business Development Partnership model with.

In an effort to make this edition more enriching for you, we want to pose the following question: how can you ensure that knowledge and information is open for everyone?.

Sincerely, **E-Learn Team** 





### E-learning to promote spirituality and community service

### IT'S 2016 AND TECHNOLOGY IS

changing all areas of life. The Pope and the Queen of England use Twitter and if that's the case, it's certainly a viable proposition to use E-Learning to learn about Christianity and spirituality. This is precisely what the Australian College of Ministries aims to do: to teach its students the Christian faith, how to answer difficult questions about God, how to think for themselves about God, how to help their local communities, and how to promote a healthy spirituality through classes like "International and local community development" and "The personal work of Christ".

BY: Christina Gomez Echavarria Sydney, Australia



ven though spirituality is something that has to be practiced in real life, there is no reason why it can't be taught through reading, through learning how to think, and especially through a willingness to learn and apply it to your community. Religion is not only going to church and praying; it's about studying the

EMILY WILLARD, LEARNING SYSTEMS MANAGER, AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF

MINISTRIES.

roots, understanding the Bible, theology, and confronting questions that might arise. This is the fundamental goal of the Australian College of Ministries (ACOM).

ACOM has been a distance school since 1990; before e-learning was a viable option, they would print and mail out course materials to their students. There are many reasons for choosing to be a mainly distance learning school that doesn't have a campus; first, it allows them to reach anyone in Australia and around the world who finds that the school's values are in line with their own. The second reason is to align with their slogan: "your church is your campus"; the school encourages its students to help out in their local church, hospital or shelter and thus give back what they have learned. With this in mind, if their courses required classroom attendance, this would create a limitation on students that were not based in Sydney to pass on what they have learned to their communities.

The objective is to establish ministries, which includes activities a student may be involved in that leads to providing a service to a community, for example: a church service, working at a fundraiser or in a community classroom. Ministries are a necessary part of every discipline. It's very important for ACOM to make sure that the knowledge its students acquire doesn't only stay in their heads or in their notebooks, but that it makes an impact and difference in how they lead their lives.

ACOM is a member of the Sydney College of Divinity, which is recognized for having some of the highest education standards. Course content and reading matter is uploaded by the teacher to Moodlerooms, then students can complete the class at their own pace. Obviously there are some deadlines they will have to meet, however they can take either one course or six per term and take the time they require to complete their degree. At some point during the trimester, the students and the teacher have a 'three-day facilitation'. This is a three-day retreat with the entire class and the teacher, where they review various topics seen during the course, go through different terminology, and talk about what they have learned and what it meant to them. The retreat is very popular but attendance can be lower because some students live too far away.

Australia is a very widespread country and as these facilitations have become so popular, Moodlerooms has helped ACOM through its integration

with Collaborate Ultra, a communication and video conferencing tool similar to Skype, but better, explains ACOM Learning Systems Manager, Emily Willard. Collaborate helps groups of people get together with their teacher at the same time, no matter where they are in the world, to discuss certain topics and get any help they might need. Moodlerooms was a great acquisition for ACOM, according to Emily, because it has allowed them to reach more students and to find out if any of them are slacking or having trouble with their assignments. As a result, this allows for better communication and enables them to understand what is happening and to offer any help the student might need. Moodlerooms also allows ACOM to keep an online library to store coursework and any additional reading materials that students might be interested in.

Emily explains that majority of students who choose to enroll in ACOM do so because they want to feel a deep and real connection, or find answers to questions they have in order to understand their own spirituality, rather than gain money or status: it's more of a life choice. Many of their students are fairly young, but there are older students who may have reached a point in their life where they want to understand certain things or learn aspects that they never learned when they were younger.

Students can enroll in four specialisations: Biblical Studies, Christian Life and Ministry, Humanities and the Christian Tradition, and Theology. There are minimum spiritual training requirements that all students are reguired to take, because this is where ACOM understands how students are responding to what they are learning and if it really affects their lives for the better. Students choose other disciplines depending on their interests, but they also have free credits where, for example, a person who is studying the Bible but is also interested in leadership can take some related classes. Students also have Learning Support Managers, who help motivate students that fall behind or are not doing well. Learning Support Managers also help quide students to their goals and interests. There are 1,100 students currently enrolled in vocational, undergraduate, and postgraduate courses.

Emily doesn't believe that there is friction between religion and technology. Dissatisfaction with technology probably has more to do with age or lack of practice rather than any moral reason. Emily says she has a quote on her desk, "Learning requires humans to be curious, to communicate, to interact, to test, to define, to argue, to find hope and to reject. Technology alone cannot do that." That said, while it's an important tool, she says it's not all they rely on. She states that it is the balancing of both things what matters.

### EDUCATION JANUARY **2017**

# Innovation in learning: the essence of Pompeu Fabra University

### POMPEU FABRA UNIVERSITY BELIEVES IN strong, interactive teaching, and that is why it started working with Moodlerooms, the

LMS that enables it to expand the institution's learning and performance strategies.

**BY:** Ángela Palacios Barcelona, Spain

ore than five hundred years of university history has made Barcelona a pioneer in the field of education, thanks to the top-ranking undergraduate and postgraduate courses offered by the Catalonian capital city's universities. Despite the wide range of universities, one in particular has stood out in the world of education, namely Pompeu Fabra (UPF), a public university that has been noted throughout the 25 years it has been in existence for its academic excellence, its teaching strategies and the position it has won for itself in national and international rankings as one of the best in the world: Campus International Excellence, according to the Ministry of Education (2010); 17th in the world in the first edition of the Times Higher Education '100 under 50' ranking (2012); the Spanish university with the best performance rate – 89% (2014); and one of the 20 European universities with most projects awarded by the European Research Council (2015).

Barcelona isn't attractive just because of its Mediterranean character, its numerous green zones, its streets and its cultural activities, but also for what it offers in the academic field. Thousands of students from all over the world go there for a valuable and enriching learning experience.

### MANEL JIMÉNEZ, ACADEMIC DIRECTOR OF THE UPF CENTER FOR LEARNING

INNOVATION.

Manel Jiménez, Academic Director of the UPF Center for Learning Innovation, believes that despite it being a relatively young university, the success and prestige it enjoys have been is due to knowledge administration. "It's a university with a very high level of research activity, and it aims all the time to connect to the teaching staff. Rather than reproduce materials, teachers explain what it is that they are researching.

UPF has succeeded in differentiating itself from Spain's major universities by viewing research as a support for innovation. UPF transfers knowledge with companies and industries, applies social responsibility and being open to foreigners, and because it is in great demand by students, who are considered to be important UPF talents.

### TECHNOLOGY FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING

The fact that Pompeu Fabra is a young university has meant that its structures are basically young, too, or in the words of Jiménez, "It influences how everything flows," because it is much more flexible and open to change, including to virtual learning.

The university currently has a Center for Teaching Innovation, which promotes initiatives and plans to help teachers in pedagogical matters. This makes it easier for technology to be introduced in the classroom and speeds up learning processes.

The learning platform is made of specific learning products, as departmental needs dictate. "We work with a tool called Collaborate, where the teacher organizes his own learning environment in a highly intuitive and extremely easy manner," explained Jiménez.

There are many other tools used to complement their transverse LMS, Moodle, a platform they have been using now for a long time and has been a key part of teaching processes, since it is used for uploading class materials and for work groups and forums. They are also heavily involved in the subject of distance classes, where they have recourse to MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) so they can deal with various students at the same time.

This change in teaching methods and the way they utilize technological resources is part of the reason why Pompeu Fabra is currently the most productive Spanish university, according to the BBVA Foundation and IVIE ranking, since using these tools simplifies learning opportunities and makes interaction with the teacher easier.

In the case of distance courses, the university has a large team of technicians to coordinate activities. "What we aim for now is to have some classes online and others that are face-to-face, with the virtual ones being more important and the face-to-face ones for general debate," explained Manel, who added that these new tools allow the online component to play a more fundamental role.

However, UPF has discovered that despite the fact that they want to take advantage of Moodle as much as possible, some students still do not fully recognize the capabilities of the platform. "A minority use Moodle tools entirely, but what has happened with the rest is the same as when you buy a new phone: you end up using the camera, messaging and calls. Later you realize you can do a thousand things," said Manel, based on his user experience.

It's a matter of exploring the properties of Moodle much more and familiarizing themselves with its structure, design, and how to organize the tools. That is why UPF is conducting a series of trials with students and the

They are also conducting studies with both teachers and students to evaluate how Moodlerooms is being adopted in their academic activities. This is being done by the department, aiming to gradually implement the LMS, so that if a problem arises, the whole university will not be affected.





administrative and teaching staff, with a goal of migrating to Moodlerooms at the end of this year. "Although we like Moodle, we believe that moving to Moodlerooms will make a bigger contribution and that it will be much more versatile. At the same time, we are introducing training courses, although not in how to use the technical tools, but rather in how to exploit it from the teaching perspective and to generate innovation in learning," stressed Manel.



The migration intends to be complete by the end of this year and that the first semester of 2017 will begin with technology that is much more 'friendly' for the UPF community with a stronger pedagogy and more innovation in teaching and the development of learning processes.

Pompeu Fabra University has seven faculties: humanities, health and life sciences, economic and business sciences, political and social sciences, communication, law, and translation and interpreting. Its campus is divided into three: Ciutadella, Poblenou, and El Mar



### EDUCATION

JANUARY 2017



DUE TO ITS SMALL-SCHOOLS MODEL THAT ALLOWS TEACHERS TO REALLY GET TO know each student, Frisco Independent School Districtis one of the fastest growing in

the United States. Technology and e-learning systems are a big part of this success.

risco ISD, located about 30 miles north of Dallas, is one of the biggest school districts in the United States and enrolls more than 55,000 students distributed in 9 high schools, 16 middle schools, 40 elementary schools and 3 special programs schools. Its mission is to know every student by name and need, and to be able to this, the use of digital tools and e-learning systems is vital. E-learn Magazine spoke to Ashley Nelson, Professional Learning Coordinator at Frisco ISD Administration, to learn more about it.

### E.L.M: THE FISD GROWS BETTER THAN ANY OTHER SCHOOL DISTRICT IN THE COUNTRY. WHAT IS THE KEY TO THIS SUCCESS?

A.N: Yes, the District has grown 7-30 percent annually since the early 1990s and typically adds 2,500-3,500 students each

year. Frisco ISD has a strong vision in the midst of this unprecedented growth to maintain a small-schools model and the district's leaders have remained committed to schools that are personalized learning environments. Our schools typically serve more than 700 students in grades K-5 (from kindergarten to fifth grade), middle schools serve around 800-1,000 students in grades 6-8 and high schools serve up to 2,100 students in grades 9-12. This keeps the leadership of each school in tune with the personalized needs of that slice of the community and each student in it.

### E.L.M: THE SCHOOLS THAT BELONG TO THE FISD TRY TO REALLY KNOW EACH STUDENT AND THEIR NECESSITIES. CAN YOU TELL US A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT THIS PHILOSOPHY?

A.N: Our mission in Frisco ISD is to know every student by name and need. This philosophy drives our day-to-day efforts to understand each child's unique circumstances, his or her strengths and weaknesses, and the role we must play to ensure each student learns at high levels. Our teachers work in Professional

Learning Community (PLC) teams that strive to know where students are in relation to their learning targets and then to respond accordingly, offering additional support to students who need it, while enriching curriculum for students who already have mastered content or concepts. Our goal is to ensure that all students not only meet the standard, but grow in their skill set.

### E.L.M: HOW DO YOU USE DIGITAL TOOLS AND E-LEARNING SYSTEMS TO GET TO KNOW EACH STUDENT DEEPLY?

A.N: We focus on student learning and results. Our goal is to model best practices using various types of digital learning tools that can be used in the classroom. We want teachers to integrate technology with intent and purpose, focusing on lessons and learning experiences that include collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, communication, and digital citizenship skills.

### BLACKBOARD COLLABORATE IS A TOOL THAT HELPS US BE CONSISTENT WITH OUR COMMUNICATION TO THE VARIOUS CAMPUSES.

E.L.M: IS MOODLEROOMS A BIG PART OF THIS STRATEGY? A.N: Yes, because it is one tool that we use for many pur-

poses, such as communication and collaboration. Moodlerooms also supports our Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) and flipped classroom initiatives.

### E.L.M: MORE SPECIFICALLY, HOW DO YOU APPLY E-LEARNING SYSTEMS IN YOUR EDUCATION PROCESS?

A.N: We always stress that anything we do is instructionally focused. Digital Learning Coaches work with teachers to help them learn new digital tools and where the tools can be applied and used to enhance and personalize student learning. We model for our teachers how to use the platform to support student learning and we provide support as teachers continue to grow in their use of the platform focusing always on student learning and results.

### E.L.M: DO YOU HAVE A GENERAL E-LEARNING SYSTEM, OR DO YOU LET EVERY INSTITUTION TO CHOOSE THE SYSTEM THEY WANT TO USE?

A.N: Every student and teacher in Frisco ISD is provided a Moodlerooms login to access and interact with content

hosted on our Learning Hub. Each teacher is provided support and assistance in their use of the platform, and it is up to the teacher to decide how and if they will use it with their students.

### E.L.M: HOW ARE THE LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS IMPROVING YOUR EDUCATION STRATEGIES AND THE RESULTS YOU HAVE AS A DISTRICT?

A.N: We utilize Moodlerooms for online, just in time learning for our staff. Courses are created to help support teacher and student learning. In addition, we utilize Blackboard Collaborate to host online PLC (Professional Learning Community) collaborative discussions. Blackboard Collaborate is a tool that helps us be consistent with our communication to the various campuses. Curriculum and Instruction rely on this communication to share updates and also get feedback from teachers in our effort to continuously improve our instructional practices. We also model best practices in our staff professional learning courses, and in turn, our teachers incorporate these strategies in their student online courses.

When the main objective for a school is to get to know every student by name, e-learning strategies help accomplish this mission. This is why Moodlerooms fits perfectly with the FRISCO ISD mission as a school district. The e-learning tool facilitates participation, discussion through forums, interaction between professors and students, and it also allows keeping track of the progress of each individual that enters the digital classroom. Since kids and youths spend more and more time in virtual spaces, Moodle enhances what one teacher can provide during 'face to face' interaction.







### <u>University</u> of Warwick: <u>empowering</u> <u>learners</u> <u>via self</u> <u>determined</u> <u>learning</u>

BY: Christina Gomez Echavarria Coventry, United Kingdom.

### AS GLOBALIZATION BECOMES

more and more imminent, languages become a bigger and more important factor in our world. People are learning languages as a means of travel, as a way of communicating with other people, as a way of understanding other cultures. Lots of people who learn languages do so because of a personal gain, and not because it's forced upon them. It's about learning because learning expands your horizon.



his is the best way to learn: because people want to and not because it's a demand they have to meet. That is what Teresa McKinnon, who has been a language educator for 30 years and today is the Principal Teaching Fellow at the Language Center for the University of Warwick, says. From the hundreds of thousands of students that the University of Warwick has, about four and a half thousand study languages each year, most of which don't have language as their main study focus, but that appreciate the benefits of learning languages for multiple purposes.

The practice of self-determined learning is called Heutagogy. It's a practice that focuses on empowering learners and that reduces the very strict rules that people have in their minds when thinking about traditional pedagogy. E-Learning is almost completely based on the Heutagogic principles. It's a learning setting where people have their own devices and move at their own pace which encourages students to explore, create, collaborate, and co-create. This allows

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#### TERESA MCKINNON, PRINCIPAL TEACHING FELLOW AT LANGUAGE CENTRE, UNIVERSITY OF WARWICK

students to share and reflect on their experiences, think back on what they have learned, and try to understand what is the best way they learn. Being aware of what and how the personal thought process works is called metacognition, and that is the key to really learning; not memorizing or even understanding

but truly learning, grasping, and taking ownership of the information at hand.

For the three decades that Teresa McKinnon has been teaching, she has always taken advantage of all and any technology she could get her hands on. She first started using some CDRoms, or databases, which allowed her to design oral tasks to engage students in language learning. She explains that every day technology becomes more ubiquitous, which makes it easier to become a connected practitioner. Today, she is responsible for designing and implementing Language At Warwick, a Moodlerooms hosted platform that has special tools designed for language learning.

Each course can have an open Blackboard Collaborate Ultra room available throughout the year to facilitate interaction with external connections. All the course participants, who are students from all over the world, can participate as moderators at any time. For example, a Russian language teacher once used it for an oral practice with students who had a very low grasp on the Russian language; the students explained how to use Blackboard Collaborate in Russian, interacted with each other in a digital space, and spoke in a language that was not their own: a visible example of globalization.

### IF WE USE TECHNOLOGY IN AN INNOVATIVE MANNER, WE SEE MUCH GREATER RESULTS. WE SEE LEARNERS ACTUALLY TAKING OWNERSHIP OF THEIR LEARNING, AND UNDERSTANDING THAT ACTUALLY BY FULLY ENGAGING IN THE PROCESS, THEY CAN MAKE GREATER DEVELOPMENT AND EXPERIENCE GREATER LEARNING.

Additionally, with Blackboard Collaborate, she uses Voice Thread thanks to the LTI integration. Voice Thread is a purely voice-based platform that facilitates oral exam preparation. Video distracts a lot of people and doesn't allow them to concentrate on the pronunciation or the accents, which is fundamental for any language. Also, there is a psychological barrier when studying for oral practice, because most students will know everything perfectly on paper, but will freeze when opening their mouths. Voice Thread allows there to be assessments and assignments that can be sent through the platform, the students can ask questions that are then threaded to replies from the whole class. Teresa says students love it because the interface looks a lot like a social media site, so they feel at ease.

When Teresa looks back at the way technology has been used, she remembers it hasn't always been easy to implement it for learning. Thirty years ago, technology was seen as a content generator, and not a process tool. However, as technology

evolves, and communications with people around the world become a constant in our daily lives, it's important to transform what we know about technology. She explains that the technology and the "E" in E-Learning are the least important parts if teachers can't transform the way they teach to mold to the best technological practices, and let go of the practices that have been established decades back. The technology alone doesn't teach anyone.

An example of this is the pressure teachers have in terms of curriculums, timetables, and the hours of class they have in a given semester, etc. But on the other hand, the student also has certain expectations; they want things done in a particular way, not all students learn the same way, and it's the student that knows how they wish to implement the knowledge they are receiving. Heutagogy is a brave new world with rules to bend, where people can derive the benefits they need in the best way. Teresa finds that the best way for teachers and students to agree on a middle ground is by inspiring them both: applying the Heutagogic principles for teachers as well as students.

She makes as many tools as possible available on her platform so that teachers can get creative and make innovative approaches to extend the interaction that happens through the portals at a distance. They can record key grammar points, or ask the students to record a presentation together and then share it with the class, or they can have a distance meeting with a native speaker and record it. Teachers often apply the minimum of work by creating PowerPoint presentations with loads of text, that isn't teaching anybody. Teresa encourages her teachers taking a community practice approach and allow innovation to begin.

"My personal experience after spending 30 years in language education, is that if we use technology in an innovative manner, we see much greater results. We see learners actually taking ownership of their learning, and understanding that actually by fully engaging in the process, they can make greater development and experience greater learning," Teresa explains. All teachers, when they begin a new language course, are registered on a Moodle course called "Using Moodle for language teaching", which supplies them with the resources and the access to tutorials on all the tools. Using the same Heutagogic principles, if a teacher wants to innovate, the university doesn't obligate them to, but instead gives them the tools and the resources to find the encouragement to innovate by themselves.

Being able to empower both teachers and students to make the best effort they can in their role of teaching or learning, in a relationship where they both see a challenge, where they both learn, and where they both take matters in their own hands, might be the real future of learning.

### ASSOCIATION

JANUARY 2017

### <u>Philippines</u> <u>eLearning</u> <u>Society:</u> <u>learning online</u> to teach online

### THE INTERNET MIGHT SEEM LIKE SOMETHING

that has been around forever. How did people live without it? How did they communicate? How did students do their homework? Interestingly, in some remote provinces in the Philippines, the Internet is a new discovery. There are public schools in these areas where teachers are just starting to learn how to use Google as a search engine and slowly introducing e-learning into their classrooms.

BY: Christina Gomez Echavarria Manila, Philippines

earning is not only about sophisticated platforms where teachers and students can meet up in a digital space and interact. E-Learning has to do with any learning that uses technology to enhance the learner experience. This is what the President for the Philippines eLearning Society, Ms. Anthea Mariano (or Thennie to her friends and colleagues), says. PeLS promotes substantive content, good pedagogy, and proper use of technology for eLearning. The Society was started in 2003 by pioneers in the academic, industry and government sector. Today it has more than 400 individual members and 20 institutional members, and PeLS' mission is to ensure that its members acquire the knowledge and tools they need in order to implement the most suitable eLearning system for their institutions.

As a first step, PeLS believes in starting with the basics by going to remote provinces and educating public school teachers on the usage of Google and some simple E-Learning implementations. This will bring them closer towards the objective of enhancing teaching & learning, which in turn aims to help future generations be more prepared for the future.

PeLS also shares knowledge and experiences through annual conferences held in different regions of the Philippines. They conduct training workshops and



create case studies through which their members share experiences in technology adoption, as well as benefits and challenges throughout the process. To date, they have par-

ticipated in 13 national conferences and two international congresses where they invited international presenters and delegates to speak and share. Currently, there are no other formally-organized eLearning groups in the ASEAN region.

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ANTHEA

PRESIDENT OF

THE PHILIPPINE

THENNIE" MARIANO

ELEARNING SOCIETY

PeLS also has a course on Moodlerooms called "Introduction to eLearning" for its members. An open course available to all members, additional courses are already being planned and will eventually include more advanced topics on eLearning. As Thennie explains, teaching online learning through an online learning platform is a great way for teachers to learn because they can experience the platform as a learner. They can see what about the platform engages them, and acquire better course design knowledge for application in the courses they teach.

Thennie adds that the Philippines is very different from some other developing countries in how it embraces change and evolution, instead of resisting it for fear of not understanding the technology. The country has a strong Spanish and Chinese influence in its history, and its education system is American-influenced as well. Thennie says she sees how people now recognise the importance of e-learning especially in the field of education. The President of the Philippines has even passed the "Open Distance Learning Act" (RA 10650) which seeks to institutionalize distance learning in higher education, and also recognizes it as a suitable and efficient system that delivers quality education.

Thennie believes in lifelong learning and feels that e-learning is the best way to go. It is impossible to remove technology from the equation today, even in the most remote of places, because technology is making its way through every place in the world. Even though achieving a full adoption of e-learning through all educational institutions in the Philippines is a huge task and will take many years, Thennie is glad that it is moving forward.







DESIGN: TRiiBU Studio

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#### P.28

ALWAYS LEARNING WITH THE BLACKBOARD COMMUNITY



#### P.30

HOW TECHNOLOGY SPARKED THE OPENNESS PHILOSOPHY

#### P.32

BLACKBOARD COLLABORATE SPEAKS YOUR LANGUAGE

### P.34

OPENNESS, A PRACTICE FOR INNOVATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

#### P.36

DEMOCRATIZING EDUCATION WITH THE LMS

#### P.38

BLACKBOARD LEARN AND ITS COMMITMENT TO THE INNOVATION OF OPEN STANDARDS

#### P.40

THE OPEN SOURCE EXPERT WHO WANTS TO CHANGE THE SYSTEM

### P.44

BENDING TOWARDS OPENNESS

### <u>Openness: The</u> Transition to a Barrier-**Free Education**

### WHAT IS OPEN EDUCATION?

Open education refers to a philosophy on the way people must produce, share and build upon knowledge.

DESIGN: TRiiBU Studio



"OPENNESS"

"OPENNESS" IT CAN BE UNDERSTAND AND APPLY FROM DIFFERENT ISSUES Open Education Open Content Open Knowledge Open Innovation Open Source Open Standard

ollowers of this philosophy think that everyone in the world must have access to high-quality educative experiences and resources. This notion argues that any barrier that hinders collaboration among academics and

PRINCIPLES

EDUCATION

ACCESSIBLE EDUCATION:

done through digital

tools such as an LMS.

face-to-face courses.

Everything can be

with no need for

DEMOCRATIZATION:

Anybody from any

social, cultural or

economic level

LEARNING AT THE

INDIVIDUAL'S OWN PACE:

The learning process

is independent and

without deadlines.

FREE KNOWLEDGE:

and distributed.

DISCIPLINE:

Students are responsible for their own progress.

Information can be

freely used, modified

can access it.

It is affordable.

OF OPEN

educators must be eliminated. The main feature of open education is the sharing of knowledge, ideas and information with others to the point of creating new knowledge, skills and concepts<sup>1</sup>

Likewise, "open education en-

practices that employ a framework of open exchange to improve educational access and effectiveness worldwide"<sup>2</sup>. Open education combines traditional ways to exchange knowledge with the use of new techcompasses resources, tools and nologies to create a great spectrum



WHAT IS OPEN EDUCATION? (N.D.). **BETRIEVED NOVEMBER 9 2016** FROM HTTPS://OPENSOURCE.COM/ RESOURCES/WHAT-OPEN-EDUCATION

ABOUT THE OPEN EDUCATION CON-SOBTIUM (N.D.) BETRIEVED NOVEM-BER 9, 2016, FROM HTTP://WWW, OECONSORTIUM.ORG/ABOUT-OEC/



of open, shared and collaborative educational resources where educational approaches that truly respond to students' needs can be developed.

One of the main features of open education is that by working with equally open content and technologies, there is an ability to modify materials and, therefore, customize the learning experience<sup>3</sup>.

### WHAT IS THE IMPORTANCE OF OPEN EDUCATION?

Thanks to open education and to the digital revolution today, it is easier than ever to access free, high-guality educational resources for academic experiences. The main feature of open education lies in the fact that students can gain additional information, compare points of view, and choose the materials that will lead them towards success. Workers have resources that help them with their work; professors can find new ways to support and help their students; and people in general can connect with others to share information and ideas. Additionally, educational materials can be treated, modified and shared according to specific needs. Thus, one of open education's benefits is making everyone capable of accessing educative resources and giving them the freedom to use them in accordance with their personal objectives<sup>4</sup>.

3 ABOUT THE OPEN EDUCATION CON SOBTIUM (N.D.) RETRIEVED NOVEM-BER 9, 2016, FROM HTTP://WWW OECONSORTIUM.ORG/ABOUT-OEC/

<sup>4</sup> ABOUT THE OPEN EDUCATION CON-SOBTILIM (N.D.) RETRIEVED NOVEM-BER 15, 2016, FROM HTTP://WWW, OECONSORTIUM.ORG/ABOUT-OEC/

JANUARY 2017



OEPs stem from the creation and implementation of OERs and hinges on their management in accordance with the involved interest groups. These usually are:



<sup>5</sup> CONOLE, G. C., & EHLERS, U. (2010). OPEN EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES: UNLEASHING THE POWER OF OER. HTTP://EFQUEL.ORG/. RETRIEVED NOVEMBER 16, 2016, FROM HTTP://EFQUEL.ORG/WP-CONTENT/ UPLOADS/2012/03/0EP\_UNLEASHING-THE-POWER-OF-0ER.PDF

6 CONOLE, G. C., & EHLERS, U. (2010). OPEN EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES: UNLEASHING THE POWER OF OER. HTTP://EFQUEL.ORG/. RETRIEVED NOVEMBER 16, 2016, FROM HTTP://EFQUEL.ORG/WP-CONTENT/ UPLOADS/2012/03/OEP\_UNLEASHING-THE-POWER-OF-OER.PDF

Undoubtedly, OEPs go beyond merely creating access to OERs; they are about analyzing, describing, and documenting these practices in such a manner that quality and innovation becomes their inherent characteristics. Education has become a social, reflective, and participative practice where the student can generate content that can be validated via interaction with their peers or professors<sup>6</sup>.

7 WHAT ARE OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES (OERS) (N.D.). RETRIEVED NOVEMBER 17, 2016, FROM HTTP://WWW.UNESCO.ORG/NEW/EN/COM-MUNICATION-AND-INFORMATION/ACCESS-TO-KNOWLEDGE/OPEN-EDUCA-TIONAL-RESOURCES/WHAT-ARE-OPEN-EDUCATIONAL-RESOURCES-OERS/

8 WILEY, D., & GREEN, C. (2012, MAY 2). CHAPTER 6: WHY OPENNESS IN EDUCATION? EDUCAUSE .RETRIEVED NOVEMBER 17, 2016, FROM HTTPS://LIBRARY.EDUCAUSE.EDU/RESOURCES/2012/5/CHAPTER-6-WHY-OPENNESS-IN-EDUCATION CHAPTER FROM GAME CHANGERS: EDUCATION AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES CHAP-TER IS LICENSED UNDER CREATIVE COMMONS ATTRIBUTION 3.0 UNPORTED LICENSE





### HOW IS AN OPEN EDUCATION RESOURCE COMPOSED?



ECOSYSTEM The tools and software that ease the delivery, access and use of knowledge. It includes learning and knowledge management systems such as LMS.



EDUCATIONAL CONTENT A whole course, multimedia materials, publications, etc.



IMPLEMENTATION RESOURCES Intellectual property and right of use copyright that promote free access to resources. (Creative Commons)



#### OPEN EDUCATION IN THE WORLD

Education is different in each part of the world. Similarly, the state of open education depends of the social, economic, and cultural context of each region. However, there is a global awareness of the importance of promoting education as a vehicle for development, which is why there are open education initiatives in every region of the planet.

OPEN EDUCATION IN NORTH AMERICA In the United States, many institutional, state, and national OERs policies have arisen, ranging from the Public Library of Open Resources of Washington State to a training program by the US Department of Labor<sup>9</sup>. A notable case is the MIT's (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) with the "OpenCourseWare" project that began 15 years ago, with the idea to publish all course materials online an make them available to everyone<sup>10</sup>.

Another six universities from the US have large-scale OER programs: Rice, Johns Hopkins, Tufts, Carnegie Mellon and the Utah State University.

<sup>9</sup> ALLEN, N., & TARKOWSKI, A. (2016, NOVEMBER 18), OER POLICY IN NORTH AME

RICA AND EUROPE. LECTURE PRESENTED AT OPEN EDUCATION 2014, RICHMOND.

HTTPS://OPENEDUCATION2014.SCHED.OBG/EVENT/108GX

JX/OER-POLICY-IN-NORTH-AMERICA-AND-EUROPE

OPEN EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA Open education in Latin America: In 1976. Ecuador became the first country to introduce Open and Distance Education in Latin America via the Particular Technical University of Loja (UTPL). Other countries such as Mexico and Colombia stand out for their open education initiatives. In Mexico, the Autonomous National University of Mexico (UNAM) has the Open University and Distance Education University System

(SUAyED in Spanish), which offers a wide array of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees. In Colombia, there is the Santo Tomás University and the National Open and Distance University (UNAD). In Brazil, the open education system is a program financially supported by the federal government so that public institutions offer undergraduate and postgraduate studies based on digital tools and materials<sup>11</sup>

> 10 MITOPENCOURSEWARE RETRIEVED NOVEMBER 17. 2016. FROM: HTTPS:// OCW.MIT.EDU/ABOUT

11 HIGHER EDUCATION IN HISPANIC AMERICA AND SPAIN. IN: HTTPS://ES.WIKIPEDIA.ORG/WIKI/ANEXO:EDUCACI%C3%B-3N\_A\_DISTANCIA\_EN\_HISPANOAM%C3%A9RICA\_Y\_ESPA%-C3%B1A#ECUADOR. CONSULTED ON NOVEMBER 18, 2016.

OPEN EDUCATION

innovative initiative

called "OER Africa"

was created by

the South African

Institute of Distance

Education (SAIDE).

The OER Africa is

a regional leader

higher education

institutions and in the

development and use

of open education

Resources (OERs) for

the improvement of

This organization

focuses its efforts

African educational

institutions to develop

content and materials

that support the

learning processes

in accordance with

the African context<sup>14</sup>.

teaching and

in supporting

teaching and learning.

in supporting

IN AFRICA

In Africa, an

### OPEN EDUCATION IN EUROPE

The European Union created the "Opening Up Education" initiative, which promotes OERs as a pillar for educational policies and acts as a reference framework for their development. This initiative

includes the portal "open education Europa", which aims to catalogue and allow access to all existing quality OER databanks in the different European languages to make them accessible to students,

professors, and researchers, 2. Helping to overcome the current with the goal of: fragmentation of 1. Encouraging the the localization and widespread use and creation of OERs in use of OERs<sup>12</sup>.

different languages for all educational sectors, levels, and disciplines.



#### OPEN EDUCATION IN OCEANIA

Open education in Oceania: New Zealand is a world leader in the open education movement. Both in schools and universities,

professors share their educational Resources high-quality and open *Universitas*", an work for anyone in independent, nonthe world to use it. profit network that Many universities offers free online in New Zealand courses for students all over the world<sup>15</sup> belong to the "open

12 IGLESIAS, L. (N.D.). OPEN EDUCATION EUROPE, OPEN EDUCATIONAL RE-SOURCES (OER) IN EUROPE AND SPAIN. RETRIEVED NOVEMBER 18, 2016, FROM HTTP://WWW.EDUCACONTIC.ES/BLOG/OPEN-EDUCATION-EU-ROPA-RECURSOS-EDUCATIVOS-ABIERTOS-REA-EN-EUROPA-Y-ESPANA

<sup>13</sup> ABOUT ASIAN ASSOCIATION 14 OER AFRICA BUILDING AFRICAN HIGHER EDUCATION CAPACITY THROUGH OPENNESS. (N.D.). RETRIEVED OF OPEN UNIVERSITIES, (N.D.), **BETRIEVED NOVEMBER 18 2016** NOVEMBER 18 2016 FROM HTTP://OFRAFRICA ORG/ FROM HTTP://AAOU.OUHK.EDU.HK/ SITES/DEFAULT/FILES/OER BROC2013 FINAL.PDF



Additionally, Europe houses one of the most

notable cases of open education worldwide: the United Kingdom's Open University, known for its extremely high educational quality and an enrollment rate of over 50,000 students.

Openness is the path to make education, information, and knowledge accessible for everyone by removing any barriers that inhibit growth and development.

0 OPEN EDUCATION IN ASIA

There is the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU), a non-profit organization that includes several higher education institutions that mainly deal with open and distance education. It works towards broadening the educational opportunities available to all Asians and improving the institutions' quality regarding their learning, teaching and research management. The AAOU also promotes education via distancebased learning systems, as well as professional and ethical regulations. It develops the potential for open and distance education and cooperates directly and indirectly with official organisms regarding distance education. It also facilitates cooperation with similar regional and international organisms<sup>13</sup>.

> 15 OPEN EDUCATION. (N.D.). RE-TRIEVED NOVEMBER 18, 2016, FROM HTTP://CBEATIVECOM MONS.ORG.NZ/EDUCATION/

JANUARY 2017

### <u>Moodlerooms:</u> <u>Open for all</u>

### **BRAD KOCH, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF PRODUCT**

and Services Management for Moodlerooms, speaks with E-Learn about openness in Moodlerooms and the main developments that ensure the accessibility of online education for all.

BY: Maria Paula Triviño, Indianapolis, IN, USA

### .L.M: CAN YOU DESCRIBE WHAT OPENNESS MEANS FOR MOODLEROOMS?

B.K: The key to openness is providing the opportunity for everyone in the educational community to access information, collaborate, and share knowledge and ideas. You have to contribute and practice openness – that's what it's all about. We think bigger than just our products and customers and aim to stay transparent, collaborative, and keep a dialogue with the entire educational community. It's not just about openness for Moodlerooms and Blackboard; it's about the openness for the entire educational community.

\*BRAD KOCH,

SENIOR DIRECTOR

PRODUCT AND SERVICES

MANAGEMENT, OPEN SOURCE SOLUTIONS

FOR MOODLEROOMS

### E.L.M: WHAT CONTRIBUTIONS AND TOOLS HAS MOODLEROOMS MADE TO PROMOTE OPENNESS AND ACCESSIBILITY?

B.K: To start, Moodle is an inherently open and accessible platform that's built around the community. We extend and enhance Moodle, and constantly contribute to the community and participate in Moots.

We've contributed many plugins that extend Moodle capabilities such as seamless integrations with Google Apps and Microsoft, Office 365, the entire Blackboard integrations portfolio, IMS Common Cartridge import and export, IMS Learning Tools Interoperability for external content repositories, and innovative, practical course formats and rubric checklists.

In terms of recent tools, Snap is a user theme that's easy to use and entirely accessible and responsive for everyone. We've also contributed a plugin for Ally, which works with open source Moodle and Moodlerooms. Ally evaluates the content of your courses and can update the content to be more accessible. It also provides information about what areas you need to improve on to deliver a more accessible, and improved learning experience for your students.

### E.LM: CAN YOU EXPLAIN WHAT MOOTS ARE AND THE PURPOSE OF THEM?

B.K: We co-sponsor global Moots, which are gatherings of Moodle users to discuss certain topics. The topics really depend on what's relevant at the time; it could be new plugins, roadmaps, releases, and the educational community as a whole.

We also run virtual Territory Moots on a regular basis, where we invite the Moodle community to talk to us about Moodlerooms, Moodle, and the open community in general. On a yearly basis, we also contribute significant funding for Moodle headquarters. These funds help the sustainability of Moodle and makes sure that all users are able to take advantage of its benefits.

### E.L.M: HOW HAS THE MOODLEROOMS USER EXPERIENCE IMPROVED OVER TIME?

B.K: Our user experience is about being accessible, efficient, and easy to use while still having all the functionality that you could possibly need. The biggest recent improvement is the Snap user theme, which is a modern, streamlined interface that completely simplifies the user experience. We also extended Moodle with our Personalized Learning Designer, which allows



for automation of customized learning paths and personalized feedback to students as they move through their course materials – it's pretty much like a personal assistant for instructors.

Another example is the standards and Outcomes system that Moodlerooms develop and added to Moodle core.

### E.L.M: HOW DOES MOODLEROOMS MANAGE ITS PRODUCT FEEDBACK?

B.K: The goal is to create a dialogue, not just one-way communication. We review the Moodle community site and then the Moodle product management team surveys client advisory boards and works with our internal sales and support teams to use external surveys to gather data in terms of what the community would like to see of us do to help deliver a better product.

We appreciate the Moodle community because it's a space where everyone's voice is heard and conversations happen that bring us to that next level. We're always listening, learning, and evolving.

### E.L.M: HOW DOES WORKING WITH IMS ENSURE MORE TRANSPARENCY IN THE EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY ECOSYSTEM?

B.K: IMS Caliper is a way of exporting data in a standard format that makes it easier for clients to analyze student performance. We are also LTI certified (Learning Tools Interoperability). LTI enables institutions to plugin external learning tools into the learning management system. Blackboard's Moodlerooms product is certified to support IMS Calipers 1.0 and LTI 2.0. This certification means that we pass IMS standards tests that validate that our integrations pass data the way the IMS standards were defined. This ensures the interoperability of data between systems that are IMS certified.

### E.L.M: WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS FOR OPENNESS IN MOODLEROOMS?

B.K: Openness is a philosophy and we develop our road map around this. We add additional functionality to our products to help institutions improve the entire learning experience for all of their users. We'll continue to plan, develop, build, and implement everything with this open philosophy. As always, as we continue to add and perfect functionality, we'll contribute that functionality back to the open source community. Whatever the customer and community needs are, we aim to contribute.

# Opportunities and challenges of open education

### **OPEN EDUCATION RELIES ON OPEN**

Education Resources (OERs), which are considered a trend within higher education and are based on other, already established movements, such as Open Source and Open Access software.

herefore, when talking about openness we refer to content and

information that is1:

- Available for free
- Unrestricted to use
- Freely modifiable
- Easy to share
- Affordable

OERs are digital materials that are free and open for educators and students to use and reuse in their teaching, learning, and research<sup>2</sup>. There are opportunities and challenges to OERs developers and users. The

following opportunities and challenges were extracted from a study from the "Centre for Educational Research and Innovation", located in Paris, France<sup>3</sup>.

### **OPPORTUNITIES**

- 1. Sharing is good for knowledge: This is supported by the Open Access (OA) movement. This movement views openness as a way use and reuse educational resources.
- 2. What you give, you receive: Sharing and reusing any kind of resource reduces development

<sup>1</sup> HYLEN, J., DR. (N.D.). OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES. RETRIEVED NOVEMBER 22, 2016. FROM HTTPS://WWW.OECD.ORG/EDU/CERI/37351085.PDF

<sup>2</sup> HYLEN, J., DR. (N.D.). OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES. RETRIEVED NOVEMBER 22, 2016. FROM HTTPS://WWW.OECD.ORG/EDU/CERI/37351085.PDF costs and improves quality far more than having each person do things individually.

**3.** Participating in open projects improves relationships: For students, being able to participate and be part of institutions that offer open courses is very attractive. The ability to share educational practices and experiences with others greatly improves learning.

4. OERS eliminate barriers of distance in learning for users from different backgrounds: OERS involve more people in the educational process because students from anywhere can access and share resources, regardless of where they are, which improves the exchange of knowledge with peers.

5. Improved community ties for **learning:** All users have the ability to work together to share their knowledge and experiences among their community of peers in order to solve mutual challenges and goals.

### CHALLENGES<sup>4</sup>

1. Awareness of copyright issues: Although there is an intention to share work credits, many authors prefer to keep the copyright of their work. There are some who believe that open work should be limited to strictly academic, non-commercial ends. However, several open content licenses have been developed, such as Creative Commons, which

mitigates the issue by sharing some of the copyrights. All content must be reviewed to ensure no copyright law is infringed.

2. Ensuring quality: OERs offer a vast amount of content is very easy to find. The challenge is knowing how to prioritize and detect the importance of the educational materials. This aspect is key because it also evaluates institutions' prestige. It is advisable to only publish material that has been reviewed by peers.

3. Sustainability: Numerous OER initiatives have been launched to create a competition for financing. Though some projects possess strong institutional backing, it is very likely this financing will cease

<sup>3</sup> HYLEN, J., DR. (N.D.). OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES. RETRIEVED NOVEMBER 22, 2016. FROM HTTPS://WWW.0ECD.ORG/EDU/CERI/37351085.PDF <sup>4</sup> HYLEN, J., DR. (N.D.). OPEN EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES. RETRIEVED NOVEMBER 22, 2016, FROM HTTPS://WWW.OECD.ORG/EDU/CERI/37351085.PDF



### **OERS ARE DIGITAL MATERIALS** THAT ARE FREE AND OPEN FOR EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS TO USE AND **REUSE IN THEIR TEACHING,** LEARNING AND RESEARCH.

after a few years. With this in mind, sustainable community and institutional models are proposed. The former refers to voluntary work, and the latter refers to a program that defines contributing figures.

- Language and cultural context: 4. Many OERs have not been localized and their development is limited by their original socio-cultural context, which can hinder the chances of them being globalized.
- 5. Technological setbacks: Even if technology is what enables the global and massive exchange of knowledge, there may be occasions where one of the agents involved in the academic process has connectivity issues or problems to access the technological platforms.

### **OPENNESS** JANUARY 2017

## Always learning with the Blackboard Community

### **ONE OF BLACKBOARD'S MOST INNOVATIVE**

projects is its web community. This site directly connects developers with customers, attending to their needs. No programing problems, no schedules, no intermediaries everyone's opinion is important here.

BY: Catalina Sánchez Montova Washington, United States.

oday, around 7,000 users make up the Blackboard Community, a website officially launched during the course of 2016. The goal is to set up a one-on-one communication outlet with each client, on a massive scale

"We wanted all that feedback from customers regarding Blackboard products and services to be all in one place," explains Brad Evans, Product Manager for Blackboard

According to Marissa Dimino, Senior Community Manager at Blackboard, it all started with a couple of conversations they had with customers. "They have always been very interested in providing ideas and feedback. That helped us create the site; they value transparency and we strive to continually improve in our level of openness. We thought this platform was the best way to respond to that desire of getting involved in the improvement of the products we have."

### **OPENNESS EQUALS ACCESS**

Undoubtedly, transparency is one of the most important values of Blackboard's structure. The community project started precisely for that reason: a space in

٥ \*MARISSA DIMINO, SENIOR COMMUNITY MANAGER AT BLACKBOARD

which everyone could have access to the processes and could freely raise their hands and give their opinion, because their contribution is important.

"As usual, customers have access to our roadmap presentation. However, the site allows them to understand in greater detail what we are working on. We have prioritization exercises of topics and ideas so that they focus on their needs, and we include that in the goals. We also take note of specific ideas," explains Evans, "and this is not about them proposing something and getting a response in a year or two."

In other words, in the Blackboard Community, openness means that customers are involved in the whole process and that they know, step by step, the status of evolution of the approaches used to improve one or another product.

In the Blackboard Community, everyone takes part equally; everyone has the same status. It doesn't matter if

### IN THE BLACKBOARD COMMUNITY, OPENNESS MEANS THAT CUSTOMERS ARE INVOLVED IN THE ENTIRE PROCESS AND KNOW THE STEPS INVOLVED IN TO IMPROVE PRODUCTS.

a user is a member of the Blackboard team or even if they are using other types of learning platforms, the value of this exercise is that each member involved is present to give an opinion and expand their knowledge. From the Blackboard developer to a product consumer, they are all learning from each other. Because you can always learn more!

### INTERACTION, COMMUNICATION, AND EXECUTION

One of the biggest advantages is that communication is not one-sided between a customer and a member of the Blackboard internal team. The interaction goes beyond this because customers can also interact with each other, ask questions and learn from their personal experiences, no matter what type of product they use. In the long run, this strengthens the community and the ideas that may emerge from it.

Through this web platform, a type of communication that did not exist in the past has been fostered. In the past, when a customer had a doubt, comment or improvement proposal on a particular product, it went to the developers through a sales representative, and on the way, more than one precise point or a part of the intention was lost. This is why for some time until now, Blackboard has ventured to establish a one-on-one communication outlet with its customers. However, along the way, they realized that, operationally, it wasn't easy to get every member involved to agree upon schedules and times.

None of these two problems happen here in the Blackboard Community. Thanks to the Blackboard Community, there is a deeper and much more direct level of connection with customers, and now it's much easier to capture those needs they have to work on them, in order to improve their experience with each different product.

### WHAT DO MEMBERS NEED?

Over the course of these six months, it has been possible for the Blackboard team to make sure that most of the customer's requirements are already covered in the company roadmap.

Requests usually revolve around issues such as care and functionality. There are also a lot of ideas regarding the website's improvement because, among other things, customers belong to the community to give their opinion not only about a product or service, but also about the site itself. All these ideas make it possible to strengthen the platform and enhance its usefulness from now on.

### THE FUTURE OF BLACKBOARD COMMUNITY

One of the key goals is to make the community grow, and that more and more users come to the site to get involved in generating ideas. While this VISIT THE COMMUNITY SITE: https://community.blackboard.com/



happens, it is also intended to improve the design of the interface to facilitate everyone's access and render the experience more effective.

In addition, a formal process will be put in place to systematize new ideas that may arise in the community. For Blackboard, it is important to ensure that they are taking advantage of all those opinions of the customers involved, as the number of users grows.

To us, 'community' means that members are connecting with other like minded individuals who have shared goals and interests", says Marissa Dimino, "We want to provide one location to enable these interactions so that they increasingly understand learning technology, they are using our products better, they are happier and have more knowledge; they are increasingly empowered customers."

In both the present and future, the Blackboard Community expects its customers to return to the website because they

feel it is a useful place and that the conversations given there are actually having an impact.

\*BRAD EVANS. PRODUCT MANAGER FOR BLACKBOARD.



## How technology sparked the openness philosophy

**OPENNESS IS** supported by the technological and educational movement around it. It is important to understand the main features that have strengthened open education.

PEN SOURCE<sup>1</sup> There are learning management tools and platforms that employ open source to build a flexible educational technology with continuous improvements. Open source has allowed universities to create easily accessible courses to the world's academic community.

- The original idea behind open source followed a decentralized development model that was used by software companies.
- The result of software limitations and the development of proprietary and licensed code.
- Peer participation is one of its basic principles. Any open source software must include the source code and be, in most cases, free. Requires software to

be redistributable.

- Software licensed as open source allows an entire community of developers from all over the world to improve the software by providing updates and bug fixes.
- Has a lower acquisition, implementation, and support costs
- compared to proprietary software.

#### **OPEN STANDARDS<sup>2</sup>**

These are fundamental to open education as they allow interoperability among education platforms and any learning-oriented technology. They diversify the use of technologies and make sure they work together.

- Any standards that are independent from their developers. Users may also propose changes to them.
- Can be used by anyone to develop software.
- No substantial associated costs.

CORRADO, E. M. (2005, SPRING). THE IMPORTANCE OF OPEN ACCESS, OPEN SOURCE, AND OPEN STANDARDS FOR LIBRARIES. RETRIEVED NOVEMBER 24, 2016, FROM HTTP://WWW.ISTL.ORG/05-SPRING/ARTICLE2.HTML

of Open Education Resources.

Mitigates the obsolescence and

as well as any other future

systems, can communicate.

**OPEN ACCESS<sup>3</sup>** 

and knowledge.

• Guarantees the quality

Accelerates research and

enriches education.

Aims to unite a common

intellectual dialogue.

methodical thinking.

**OPEN COURSEWARE**<sup>4</sup>

These are basic elements of open

education because they represent

education democratization initiatives

and they are one of the best examples

of information.

dependence of software and hard-

ware creation as they have more longevity and applicability for development. This allows for greater flexibility and easier migration to different systems in the future. Ensures interoperability among platforms and various systems. • Guarantees that diverse systems, Open access is key to open education as it offers quality content and access to first-hand publications, research Research articles that are free for the public to read, review and use. Opportunities for informational autonomy of scientific authors, but it also poses a challenge for scientific freedom as authors working in public institutions will probably no longer be granted exclusive rights of use. Additionally, it can greatly feed into professors' teaching materials and encourage the students' scientific and

> <sup>3</sup> KUHLEN, R. (2007, JUNE 18). OPEN ACCESS : A PARADIGM SHIFT FOR PUBLIC AVAILABILITY OF KNOWLEDGE. THE DEVELOPMENT IN GERMANY. RETRIEVED NOVEMBER 24, 2016, FROM HTTP://BID.UB.EDU/18KUHLE2.HTM

OPENCOURSEWARE. (N.D.). RETRIEVED NOVEMBER 24, 2016, FROM HTTPS://ES.WI-KIPEDIA.ORG/WIKI/OPENCOURSEWARE

1 CORRADO, E. M. (2005, SPRING). THE IMPORTANCE OF OPEN ACCESS, OPEN SOURCE, AND OPEN STANDARDS FOR LIBRARIES. RETRIEVED NOVEMBER 24, 2016, FROM HTTP://WWW.ISTL.ORG/05-SPRING/ARTICLE2.HTML

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- Entails the publication of teaching material as open content. They are intellectual property and ensure the transfer of certain copyrights, such as those of the distribution, reproduction, communication or creation of derivate works.
- A global movement promoting free and unrestrictive access to knowledge.

#### **OPEN CONTENT<sup>5</sup>**

1

Open content is fundamental to open education because it unites the efforts of all types of openness in a concrete result: open material that may be accessed to via technologies, and open software with freedom to use and distribute information and knowledge.

- Refers to educational research or materials that may be freely distributed and reused.
- Based on digital technologies for the generalization and use of materials and content.
- Types of content may vary from previously published books and articles to educational software simulations.
- Actively supports copyright protection via licenses such as Creative Commons.
- Open Educational Resources are a direct result of open content.
- Open content gives way to free higher education that aims to have both collective knowledge and the exchange and reuse of learning as defining traits of open education.

5 IGI GLOBAL. WHAT IS OPEN CONTENT. (N.D.). RETRIEVED NOVEMBER 24, 2016, FROM HTTP://WWW IGI-GLOBAL.COM/DICTIONARY/OPEN-CONTENT/21170

JANUARY 2017

### <u>Blackboard</u> <u>Collaborate speaks</u> your language

### THANKS TO ITS LTI INTEGRATION, THE WEB

conferencing tool, Blackboard Collaborate, works seemlessly with most Learning Management Systems. We talked to Anneke Bates, Senior Product Manager for Blackboard Collaborate, about the open product philosophy.

BY: Laura Orozco C. Atlanta, Georgia.



### .L.M: HOW DOES BLACKBOARD COLLABORATE SHOW THAT OPENNESS IS A TRUE PRIORITY?

A.B: The goal of Blackboard Collaborate has always been to serve all customers, regardless of their LMS and that's still true today – we provide services to the entire market, not just Blackboard users.

### E.L.M: HOW ARE THE LTI STANDARDS A PART OF THE OPENNESS PHILOSOPHY AND HOW DO THEY WORK IN GENERAL?

A.B: LTI stands for Learning Tools Interoperability, and it's been an industry standard for many years. I usually say that it's like a language and it has its own vocabulary and rules. If you can make your tool speak that language, then it can speak to any other tool that also speaks that language. As long as everyone is LTI compliant, those tools will be able to talk to each other. This means that Blackboard Collaborate can speak to Blackboard Learn and many other LMSs.

The basic part about the LTI standard is that, depending on who you are, you have to be able to either send or accept a specific set of information about

the item that you're talking about. Meaning, if it's a web conferencing session, you need to be able to send the user's name, e-mail, and a role within that course so that you know whether someone is a student or an instructor. There's a short list of information that everybody must be able to send and accept.

### E.L.M: HOW DO LTI STANDARDS SPECIFICALLY WORK FOR BLACKBOARD COLLABORATE?

A.B: Blackboard Collaborate has the ability to schedule live virtual meetings, among many other things, for teachers and students.

As a user, you want your LMS to work with Blackboard Collaborate, so that you can put links to the Collaborate session inside the courses. If everyone is LTI compliant, and most of the LMSs are, we just have to make our tool speak to LTI and it automatically works, which means a lot less work for everyone involved on both sides. Before LTI, Blackboard Collaborate needed to create a special component that could speak to each LMS, because they all spoke a different language. Most of the users don't pay attention to whether the product they are using is made by Blackboard or any other tool providers; it's all in the same environment for them.

### E.L.M: HOW MANY LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS, OR ANY OTHER LEARNING TOOLS CAN USE THE NEW BLACKBOARD COLLABORATE ULTRA THANKS TO THE LTI INTEGRATION?

A.B: The answer is changing all the time. The IMS Global product directory has over 250 different versions of compliant tools and consumers right now.

A.B: LTI makes everything consistent and easy for everyone involved. It takes a lot more work for each tool provider to make the integration component to work with each of the different LMS. Advantages for the LMS' administrators include not having to install a new piece of code on their system. Anytime you install an integration component, there's a risk to your system and you have to perform extensive testing to make sure that they work well together. With LTI, you don't have to install anything else, and that's great for the users.

On the Blackboard Collaborate side, we developed an interface that it can be used outside of an LMS. Users can simply log into Blackboard Collaborate and schedule sessions. We use that same interface for the LTI experience, which means that when we add new features to the Blackboard Collaborate, those features automatically show up for anyone using the LTI integration.

The LTI integration really opens the possibilities for Blackboard Collaborate and allows users from different LMSs take advantage of the web conferencing tool. It integrates smoothly and users don't think about who created the product, because all that matters is that everyone can use it and that it works perfectly.



\*ANNEKE BATES SENIOR PRODUCT MANAGER FOR BLACKBOARD COLLABORATE

### E.L.M: WHEN YOU SAY TOOLS, WHAT OTHER THINGS BESIDES LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS YOU ARE TALKING ABOUT?

A.B: Other tools include plagiarism checking, recording tools, blogs, different discussion boards, and many others that you can put inside your course and students can interact with them. The LMS brings the tool providers into their system. For example, when a student is going to use Blackboard Collaborate, they initially go to their Learn system, then go to their course and find the link to their Collaborate Session inside. So, Blackboard Collaborate is the tool provider and Blackboard Learn is the tool consumer.

### E.L.M: WHY DO YOU THINK THE LTI STANDARDS ARE SO ESSENTIAL FOR THE E-LEARNING COMMUNITY? WHAT ARE OTHER ADVANTAGES BESIDES THE ONES YOU'VE ALREADY MENTIONED?

JANUARY 2017

### **Openness, a practice** for innovation in higher education

### **OPENNESS IS SEEN AS A FUNDAMENTAL VALUE**

that supports societal changes and is necessary for higher education institutions aiming to promote change while being relevant for everyone<sup>2</sup>.



### THE CONCEPT OF OPENNESS

Openness has been a feature of higher education for decades thanks to the establishment of open universities and digital technologies. Due to technological evolution, Open Educational Resources (OERs) have become the bridge between education and digital development.1





1969: The idea of openness started when the United Kingdom's Open University opened its doors. It began with the idea of being open to persons, places, methodologies and teaching techniques.



2000: The definitions of openness within higher education started to complement the concepts of Open Content, Open CourseWare and Open Educational Resources.



	IS FREEDOM TO <sup>1</sup>
AFTER	_
✓ 7	
DIGITAL Significant increase in the use of digital resources. and moment.	
MOBILE	
Any place, any time.	Pay very little or no money to access and
CONNECTED Content is created	use content for specific needs.
among peers and is highly collaborative.	٠
CREATOR Students shift their role, have more participation, and	Copy content and make more copies.
develop the capacity to create content.	٠
PERSONAL Educational experiences can be adapted to	Obtain content and reuse without needing previous consent.
each student.	•
OPEN Freedom to modify and distribute educational material.	Complete derivative work (but not necessarily the freedom to obtain benefits
	from it).

<sup>2</sup> DAVID WILEY AND JOHN HILTON III, (2009). OPENNESS, DYNAMIC SPECIALIZATION, AND THE DISAGGREGATED FUTURE OF HIGHER EDU-CATION. RETRIEVED NOVEMBER 23, 2016 FROM: HTTP://WWW.IRRODL.ORG/INDEX.PHP/IRRODL/ARTICLE/VIEW/768/1415.



OPENNESS

### **OPENNESS' FUTURE IN HIGHER EDUCATION<sup>2</sup>**

There are several spaces to improve, refine, and enhance<sup>2</sup>:

- Higher education must continually aim to being relevant for everyone
- Peer review methodologies that aims to ensure the quality of Open Educational Resources.
- **OPEN TEACHING**: a model that pursues the possibility of professors openly sharing their materials before courses start, which allows the participation of other students besides those officially enrolled.
- The success of higher education institutions depends on their capacity to differentiate themselves from others; this depends on market dynamics and changes the institution's specialty.
- UNIVERSITIES MUST HAVE CLEAR PARAMETERS REGARDING STRUCTURE, access to content, learning and tutoring services, content creation and access to research materials.
- OPEN SERVICE PROVIDERS (OSP) refers to people or organizations that provide access to world-class experiences under open licenses and with low transaction costs. OSPs promote innovation and a competitive climate among higher education institutions that will have to adopt and define a their strategy. Additionally, institutions must define what role they want to play in higher education's evolution.
- Institutions without any kind of commitment to openness can find themselves as mere observers that are unable to participate in the creation of significant innovations (as they have no significant open service to offer).

JANUARY 2017

### Democratizing education with the LMS

### THE WORD "OPENNESS" MEANS TRANSPARENT

access to information and embracing collaboration and freedom for all stakeholders and parts involved. The Internet makes being 'open' easy for anyone. However, today's economic competition also makes companies think twice about becoming completely open. Allan Christie is Blackboard's Vice President for e-learning in the Asia Pacific region, and he explains that openness isn't necessarily cut and dry, because everything and everyone in the education sector is somewhat open.

BY: Christina Gomez Echavarria Adelaide, Australia

penness isn't just about collecting information from different sources, countries, and perspectives. It's also about collaborating with people from all over the world, so that the companies and users can fine-tune tools to their specific needs. One company that fully embraces and adopts the openness attitude is Blackboard. Blackboard demonstrates a long-term commitment to open education with the acquisitions of open source companies such as Moodlerooms, Nivel Siete, and NetSpot—the company Allan Christie created in Australia.

Christie explains that Moodlerooms and Blackboard are part of an educational technology ecosystem and that being able to integrate with other products and services allows for a more open approach. It's important to note that openness means something different to each person and it involves many different industries like open source with Moodle and Linux; openness in creative products like the Creative Commons License; Open Academia and Open Education Resources, which are copyright resources that can be used and edited; and Open Standards, which works with interoperability.

However, Blackboard Learn is a proprietary system but with an open philosophy to support a range of integration frameworks and standards that provides flexibility and choices to its clients in order to meet their particular needs. Christie explains that, "we see openness as benefiting the customer and the company because we have a collaborative relationship with the community in order to share ideas and resources and gain inspiration and motivation from others. That's the power of being open."

### THE ROLE OF LMS IN PROMOTING OPENNESS

Allan Christie explains that with Open Education Resources (OERs), the open education environment is clearly visible, and



that adding an open license to documents and media makes them free to access, revise, and share. This creates a real democratization of education and provides opportunities for the entire education community.

It's also important to understand that there isn't one single solution for all education institutions on a global scale. The ability to use open standards ensures interoperability for everyone and provides an opportunity for each institution to pick what's right for their particular needs.

Blackboard wants to take its active role in openness to the next level. Openness also means accessibility for everyone, which is something that the industry lacks. Moodlerooms is developing an accessibility MOOC that they hope to release in 2017 to provide an opportunity for instructors to create educational content that is fully accessible for the blind and visually impaired. "I think that's the role of our technology: it initially supports open educational content, but also isn't locked into a particular system." Blackboard Learn became the first LMS to achieve the National Federation of the Blind's gold level certification for non-visual access in 2010.

### **OPENNESS AND GLOBALIZATION**

It's possible to learn almost anything through the Internet nowadays. However, Allan believes that the vast amount of content on the web has made it difficult to find and understand credible content because the drive to learn and share knowledge is increasing at such a tremendous rate that the value that is put on the content is diminishing.

The amount of access to information exists because of globalization. Globalization is the process of interaction and integration between people, companies, and governments in different nations, along with a free flow of ideas and international trade. Even though globalization has been routinely discussed, there are still people who don't believe it exists because of certain restrictions to enter different countries. However, globalization is what leads to openness.

Allan believes that the increase of mobile access that is increasing throughout the world, especially in places like Africa and Asia, will give people the ability to access free content. He also thinks that platforms, such as Blackboard, can provide intelligent response

### C ALLAN CHRISTIE, VICE PRESIDENT FOR E-LEARNING FOR THE ASIA PACIFIC REGION

systems to ensure real understanding of the content that they are receiving. "Artificial intelligence can start to become a leader going



forward as a combined capability that personalizes content and provides responses to the content that is available. It's a pretty exciting time, in terms of granting global access to education," Christie explains.

But then again, there are many companies who have closed source software and that charge for the use of their product, because it's economically reasonable to do so. **So why does a company decide to go the open source route?** Christie explains that just as Moodle has an open source offering, that is only one part of the delivery. High quality support and hosting services need to be bundled with open source to ensure that customizations are maintained around performance and security. That's why many companies have embraced the open source approach to software development to develop a sustainable business.

#### INTEROPERABILITY, COLLABORATION, AND OPENNESS

Collaboration is a very big part of open source and open education. There are vibrant communities of users around the world who customize their Moodlerooms courses to their exact needs and specifications. The company needs to consider the performance and security implications of modifying the source code. That's why it's a good idea to partner with a professional organization like Moodlerooms and Blackboard, so that companies are able to provide quality control and interoperability maintenance, so that the modifications are sustainable and also meets the security level that the software requires.

However, Christie also understands the importance of having software that molds to each client individually, generates a creative solution to problems, and also helps people all around the world.

#### THE FUTURE OF OPENNESS

We are certainly in a global education environment. Institutions don't just look at their local cohort of students in terms of being sustainable and relevant. There's a mix of face-to-face, fully online, and blended learning opportunities. Increasingly, as universities are looking for new business models to sustain, they are looking beyond their borders to grow.

Christie also believes that, as mentioned earlier, the value given to content will continue to reduce, but educational resources will become a much bigger part of the offerings, as there is a growth of e-learning on a global scale.

Openness will continue to grow as technology evolves; more people have access to technology and Internet, and there are more diverse solutions for learning skills, information, and languages.

JANUARY 2017

### Blackboard Learn and its commitment to the innovation of open standards

### INNOVATION IS A REALLY BROAD CONCEPT, BUT

it all comes down to a key element: meeting customer needs, as explained by Mark O'Neil, Product Manager for Developer Platform at Blackboard. He added, "When open source combines itself with an open platform, it is able to generate products that go beyond what may be offered by commercial suppliers."



**BY:** Angela Palacios

lackboard Learn is an example of this, because through providing architectures such as REST APIs (a RESTful architecture to design network applications) developers are enabled to write custom applications which interact with Blackboard Learn data using a known interface. REST APIs meet the integration needs of the community in a modern and easier way.

### **REST APIS FOR EVERYONE!**

Mark explains that, since 2003, Blackboard has provided open APIs called Building Blocks for Java, meaning that they required the use of Java. Also, in 2007, a set of SOAPbased web services (or APIs) was introduced, that in spite of not requiring Java only supported a subset of the use cases for which Building Block APIs provided. Although SOAP-based applications could be written in the developer's preferred language, additional libraries were required in many cases to satisfy SOAP complexities.

Now, REST APIs are used because, "It is a modern architecture, is easier to adopt to build applications that can integrate with our products. REST is used in a simpler way than both Building Blocks or SOAP; the requests, and the returned results are use JSON, which is considerably simpler to use and contains less markup than the XML required by SOAP," as said by Mark.

REST APIs allow the use of the developer's language of choice, provided it supports HTTPS and has access to a JSON library. This optimizes use of internal experience and reduces delivery times.

The Developer Platform and REST APIs were released in the Spring of 2016 under technical preview with the Q2 2016 release of Blackboard Learn, but are now available for production use. This means, "We are lowering the barriers of entry for developers interested in Blackboard products," Mark stated.

### HOW DO THEY DO IT?

- 1. Opening the documentation, anyone can read about what can be done currently with the REST API and we are evolving the REST APIs with every SaaS release.
- 2. Making the source code of the example available in Github. Currently there are examples written in cURL, Java, C#, Go, Ruby, Python. "We are working to deliver examples in other languages and the Community site is a great resource for exchanging ideas and asking questions."
- 3. A model to deliver development environments to the community more effectively is being developed.

### BLACKBOARD ON THE WAY TO THE **EXPANSION OF OPENNESS HISTORY**

Since 2003, Blackboard Learn has been an open product in terms of opportunity, through the use of APIs to access and manage Learn data, and to provide unique tools to Learn users.

According to Mark, "Today we are extending that opportunity by taking a different approach and publishing our examples and API documentation to anyone who is interested in developing an application that integrates with Blackboard Learn, enabling them to investigate, adopt using the REST APIs and build their product."

This is one of the biggest keys to innovation in open source, because the fact that everything can be reached by the community means that there are more development resources and new opportunities for improvement.

In addition to these reasons, O'Neil emphasizes other issues to consider for open source to be a subject of constant growth: solution sharing and rapid response; "The more we share, the more we grow as a global community. Access to source code allows the community to drive product development as fast as necessary," explains O'Neil.

### "WHY NOT WORK WITH OPEN SOURCE?"

According to O'Neil, detailing the reasons why open source is a great benefit to the community becomes almost endless, so the question of "why not do it?" is always reconsidered, because although there are difficulties, there are plenty of reasons which equate and outperform them in terms of benefits, such as the following:

• My code may not be good enough: "I'm positive it could be improved! I had the same concern when I started participating in the open source community. If my code works as I expect, it'll be good enough; people are very excited to see



a provided solution." The community has always been receptive and supportive – I have learned a lot from fellow developers!"

- What about open source supgreat support from the community."
- to reaching a solution

### **OPEN SOURCE IN THE** FUTURE OF E-LEARNING

One of the biggest challenges lies in the resources that are required for the development and contribution of solutions to the open source community and the institutional value. However, more and more open source developments are favoring open specifications and technologies for learning, since access to the LMS/ VLE API and open standards such as LTI, Caliper, LIS, and Common Cartridge are seen as areas of opportunity in which the open source community can drive innovation

Open source has an interesting development field as well: • Pedagogical tools: "They enhance

- tent interactively."
- better learning experience."



• My solutions are specifically institutional: "This is just a design problem - to abstract the components that are specifically institutional so that others can make the necessary changes and find a generic solution." **port?:** "This depends on the project for sure, but most of them are in use in some production capacity, and have

 Open source gives you the opportunity to learn from the solutions others give • Reusing existing code speeds time

• Contributing to the community favors both them, me, and my institution.

teaching and learning because they show concepts or personalized con-

 Analytical tools: "They gather the activity performance and enable a

Both are examples of the use of learning technologies that allow the

understanding of the relationship between content and performance. They also provide an improved and personalized learning experience. The use of technologies for learning is also made visible, in order to produce the selection of guided courses based on previous experience.

### MARK O'NEIL

Mark has worked for Blackboard for seven years. He started as the Technical Product Manager for Blackboard Learn, a position in which he supervised the adoption and enhancement for several standards including IMS Learning Tool Interoperability (LTI), Learner Information Services (LIS), Common Cartridge, CAS, and Shibboleth. During that time, he facilitated the development of the Blackboard SIS Framework to simplify the integration with student information systems and the Authentication Framework to streamline the management and installation of standard and custom authentication models.

He is the current Senior Product Manager for the Blackboard Developer Platform and is responsible for delivering what he calls the "Blackboard developer experience," that is, everything (including APIs) which developers use for creating applications for teaching and learning that integrate with Blackboard products.

He has a long history with the development of software for Blackboard; he has developed open source applications, administered a campus Learn installation and related curricular systems. In 2005, he met with a group of Blackboard clients to start a mailing list that shared tips, tricks, and development solutions that they called BB-OpenSrc. This mailing list grew into OSCELOT (Open Source Community for Education Learning Objects and Tools), a community he co-founded that provides Open Source e-learning solutions.

e began by studying biology at Michigan State University in the 1970's, and as part of the course he was required to take a compulsory computer class where he fell in love with software development. Since then, his career has shifted between three main fields: teaching, being a software developer, and being chief information officer. As a teacher, he realized that computer science and programming in general were things that weren't taught well, and he wanted to come up with a better method, one that would adjust more easily to various learning methods. Today he is a teacher at the University of Michigan School of Information and for several MOOCs on computer science courses on Coursera. One of his first ever classes was in 1996, when online e-learning was unheard of. So much so that he couldn't even stream video, only the audio and a presentation with synchronized slides. After this, he became obsessed with e-learning and wanted to give universities a Learning Management System that would meet their real needs. In 2004 he was part of an effort to build a new open source LMS, called Sakai.

Sakai was initially founded by the University of Michigan and several partners. At first, the project received big investments from various organizations so it could be built, and in 2005-2006 it became the most widely-used open source LMS at research universities. Today, Sakai has a market share of around 6%, and although it might not be the biggest LMS in the world right now, Dr. Chuck says his aim is to innovate in teaching and learning and that he hopes all products on the market can do the same.

In 2007, he realized that even with an open source LMS he had not achieved freedom for teachers, because they couldn't modify the LMS code their universities had acquired, which ultimately made the LMS everything that Dr. Chuck never wanted it to be. For this reason he worked to build IMS Learning Tools Interoperability (LTI), which is now the standard for LMSs such as Canvas,

### The open source expert who wants to change the system

BY: Christina Gomez Echavarria Holt, MI, United States

### WHEN YOU SEE DR.

Chuck, you might not realize that he is a walking billboard for Learning Management Systems. He is known for tattooing logos of LMS companies that use the LMS learning tools interoperability (LTI) software he has created on his arm. He has worked for over a decade with open source.





### JANUARY 2017

Sakai, Moodle and Blackboard Learn. It is simply a way for teachers to build tools and functionality outside their learning management system, plug them in, and then modify them so they best suit their needs.

Dr. Chuck spent nearly a decade promoting LTI. Initially it was hard to convince the other LMSs to adopt the standard because highly competitive companies didn't want to be compatible with other LMSs and make it easier for their clients to switch. This is when Dr. Chuck decided to challenge Desire2Learn, Moodle, Blackboard and others to adopt the standard and offered to tattoo their logo on his shoulder if they would deliver support for LTI. Eventually, the companies realized it was far more than just a tattoo and that their lives had really gotten better and easier, which resulted in more companies wanting to implement LTI as well.

### MY DREAM IS THAT EVERY SINGLE PERSON ON THE PLANET CAN BUILD THEIR OWN LMS, IF THAT IS WHAT THEY WANT TO DO. I WANT TO BUILD AN ECOSYSTEM OF TOOLS THAT MAKE LIFE EASIER FOR TEACHERS.

Dr. Chuck wants to cooperate with anyone who is willing to help the cause of software interoperability. The ability to make app stores and other standards are really expanding the possibilities for e-learning. "My dream is that every single person on the planet can build their own LMS, if that is what they want to do. I want to build an ecosystem of tools that make life easier for teachers," Dr. Chuck says. His train of thought is that if a teacher has a chemistry class, or a python (a programming language) class, he or she shouldn't simply have a PowerPoint presentation to explain the theory behind it, but also software that actually allows the student to see what writing code is like in real time. His next project is called Tsugi, which is an open source app store and application environment for building learning tools that are compliant with LTI standards.

He explains that a lot of universities don't want the hassle of having an open source LMS and thus hiring a trained programmer to help teachers with whatever they might need. So, instead, they choose to pay for very expensive software that they can't modify later on, and therefore taking freedom away from teachers. However, many of those expensive outsourcing companies built their LMSs



based on what the open source revolutionaries did first. Chuck is confident that the market will eventually turn around, and realize that the best alternative was always right there, staring them in the face and, additionally, it's free! He explains that the most important factor that an open source project can have is perseverance. Never give up. If it's innovating, then it's worth the effort. That's his most important piece of advice.

After the decades of work that Dr. Chuck has put into open source, and being one of the top experts in the field, E-Learning Magazine asked him three important questions:

### E.L.M.: WHY OPEN SOURCE IS SO IMPORTANT FOR ACADEMICS? HOW DOES OPEN SOURCE FIT WITH THE CULTURE AND PRACTICE OF UNIVERSITIES AROUND THE WORLD?

C.S.: Open source ensures that there are alternatives. What we are building is a way for teachers to own the technology that allows them to teach how they want. It's important for academics because that is what we do. We are not focused on making a profit, we are focused on making the world a better place, with better tools that are free and open for anyone to use. That is why open source is so important, and why we can't keep letting universities look for the easy way out and buy software that isn't going to do them any good in the long run.

### E.L.M.: WHAT DEFINES A SUCCESSFUL OPEN SOURCE PROJECT IN ACADEMIA? MOODLE AND SAKAI ARE TWO EXAMPLES, WHY WERE THEY IMPORTANT?

C.S.: The key thing to any open source project is, whether its Sakai or Moodle, is to keep going, to not run out of energy. It

have a product and you have to polish it up and you have to doesn't have to be growing rapidly or gaining market share. When a project starts, there is this exciting time when you are growing so much that you think you will take do less exciting work, which is fixing, improving, etc. He considers that open source is going through a bit of a over the world because you think you are going to stay on that growth curve for years. The answer is that every growth curve flattens out. The key to open source is it just "quiet period", because customers think everything they need has to keep going. Because when one of the other LMS makes a big mistake, schools has already been created, that there's no more room to grow, are going to turn and say Sakai has always been here, and it's free, and it works well. that LMSs have done everything they can. But Dr. Chuck insists That is what I need. My job is to keep the fire burning, even if it's a small fire, so that if that we haven't even begun to scratch the surface and that there are still loads of things that remain to be done. In the other fires go out, mine will be the salvation. future, we will have better LMSs; every LMS will have its own E.L.M.: WHO ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT PEOPLE IN MAKING app store, and if we imagine that an LMS works like a cellphone THESE OPEN PROJECTS (BOTH OPEN SOURCE SOFTWARE where the base functionality comes from the vendor but the app AND OPEN STANDARDS) ACHIEVE CRITICAL MASS? store makes each one unique, then that is when the innovating C.S.: In the beginning, you need relentless promoters, who can talk to big names really begins, and we are currently only 5% of the way there. Dr. and you have to convince people to bet on your project. In the beginning, it's about Chuck is optimistic about the future and will continue to work brand establishment; you have to build software but you have to build a brand for open source and for teaching and learning online until he first. In the middle, you have to have people who are committed and dedicated physically can't do it any more. His plan for the next ten years is to the long-term cause of the product. These are people who are fundamental in to make sure open source beats the commercial vendors, and the second phase of an open source product. Then the third phase, is where you he is literally looking to change the system.

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CHARLES





OPENNESS JANUARY 2017

### Bending towards Openness

### **RAY HENDERSON**

is an education technology entrepreneur. He developed the now conventional Companion Website product model in the publishing industry. He was key product executive at eCollege, ANGEL, and Blackboard. He received a lifetime achievement award from IMS Global for his role in developing open standards in the industry. He now advises young companies in ed tech through his advisory firm Lessons Learned Ventures, LLC.

hen called upon to reflect on open standards in the ed tech industry, I'm compelled to start with an observation about my own experience of in the early years of the current industry expansion. As an executive at Pearson circa 2000 I became active in developing the IMS Common Cartridge, a foundations level open standard for content interchange between systems. The company was rapidly scaling digital product strategies and busily picking low hanging fruit available in those early days. Charged with scaling our technology infrastructure forced me to think more deeply about the future, and the market landscape that would emerge as we and our kin in publishing continued in our direction while learning platform technologies growing up around us reached their full potential. The more one squinted into the future, the more one saw the chaos to come for educator and vendor.

Naturally, competition did its work and in a very short time the publishing industry experienced its Cambrian explosion of digital products. Those first-generation products were utterly proprietary, incompatible across subject areas even within the publishing firms developing them. Add to this the market context that early LMS players were in the largest land grab ed tech had ever seen, with more than a dozen viable platforms emerging globally, and you begin to sense what those of us there at the time felt. The future was bright on the one hand—but chaotic and confusing on the other. It's turbid times like these that offer proprietary strategies oxygen.

They can provide a comfort amidst confusion, and they have market force to organize activity around their orbit. Yet I'm happy to say that this did not happen. Amidst this all, the publishing industry's key players laid down arms, broke bread, and agreed to collaborate on standards.

I played some minor part in this, making the first arguments in support of what is today the IMS Common Cartridge specification for content interoperability. I routed a basic specification for the idea and convened a secret meeting at O'Hare airport with my peers at the major publishing houses. There had been some initial skepticism, especially about Pearson's intentions by making the first proposal. But as we gathered it quickly became clear that some set of forces brought the room to quick agreement that we must act soon. For some of the smaller players it offered them a more economical path to market, as standards would lower their costs to satisfy demand. For larger players, there was some form of enlightened self- interest at play as the consequences of doing nothing were slowing market development. And perhaps most importantly as I look back on it, rather than starting a new foundation focused on publisher related standards, we agreed to bring this project to the IMS Global and strengthen what was at the time was more of a seed than the sturdy oak it's become.

Since that time, this positive pattern has occurred repeatedly. The momentum established behind IMS Global has proven quite sustaining, and they've become a true convening authority for open standards. They've added mightily to the list of participating institutions—with virtually the entire ed tech industry participating in their activities, and with numerous



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together. MLK made famous an inspiring quote -- "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice. Adapting that optimism, I'll suggest that we see "the arc of the industry is towards openness." While some arrive at this table with a fear of corporate control, and others with a fear of market stagnation without them, somehow what's emerging is preserving openness and etching it into the landscape of industry practice. Practical illustrations of this phenomenon now include basic systems interoperability with LTL aka IMS Learning Tool Interoperability. Its impact has been enormous, and I now routinely see startups that launch that credit their existence to this industry burden of systems integration having been removed from their core innovation. And with content and tool interoperability now in place, the industry focus is now shifting to sharable standards for learner data, a very strategic area at all levels of education. A first step in the path to coherence is to align interests between corporate training and their XAPI/TinCan standard with the IMS Caliper standard developed for Higher Ed, and others in K12. It appears the right people are convening across standards orgs, getting into the same room I'll predict if that continues to happen, it won't be long before we get a coherent



additional standards added. Every quarter there's another, much larger instance of that O'Hare meeting plaving out. Only it's no longer secret—as major vendors and the most innovative educational institutions in ed tech now send established representatives to this open standards congress on a quarterly basis. While each operates with an agenda, and their conflicts, I've come to see that the same pressures that we felt at O'Hare are felt today. Progress is needed. At since no single set of corporate desires can prevail, we instead have informed individuals solving problems and reaching compromises

and open standard for learner data transport. This will be a great accelerator for developing analytics tools and ultimately instructional insight into learner progress and what drives it best.

Finally, I must share my enthusiasm for open standards development for education credentials. There's been much written about the unbundling of education, the development of micro-credentials, and their positive benefits for learners and workforce development. Liberating one's credentials from granting institutions and managing them understandably recurs often in learner bill-ofrights dialog. The Mozilla Open Badge standard has emerged as a flexible schema to describe education credentials and common transactions at all levels. Noting that they too have recently teamed up with IMS Global-adding another room near the gathering of our industry's best minds-gives me real optimism about its future potential. More futuristically MIT Media Lab has recently released a related standard for credentials described by Open Badges for their permanent storage on the Blockchain. This brings digital credentials to a global level of distribution, with a financial markets level of permanence and transactional integrity.

Everything I've described above has occurred from conception to acceptance 15 years, from the open standards themselves to the development of IMS Global as an international clearing house for the industry to sustain these developments. And while some lament it might all have happened faster, which is doubtless correct, it's not such a long time given the limitless runway ahead for ed tech. Nor, for the avoidance of what might have been had we not convened the industry when we did to anticipate what the future might look like. May those at the vanguard of industry conventions continue this tradition on behalf of us all, and may the long arc continue to "bend" towards openness.

EDUCATION JANUARY 2017

### Self-Motivation as the key to success in e-learning

he e-learning universe improves learning quality and brings many advantages for everyone including students, instructors, schools, universities, and companies/organizations. Consolidated platforms like Moodlerooms are improving online educational collaboration.

Gautam Saha, an expert in e-learning content creation, administrates Moodlerooms at Georgia Tech Professional Education, an academic division of the Institute that keeps up to date with features, functions, and pedagogical application of new features as version upgrades occur. In conversations with E-Learn Magazine about his experience with learning and teaching technology, Saha explained the challenge of online training, "there is no chance of face to face interaction that can fill the gap of poor instructor training skills. In the online training world, the online training content has to be very well designed and delivered for meaningful impact."

For that reason, using Moodlerooms, Saha applies pedagogical strategies such as the group function to

form smaller learning communities; the Wiki tool to create collaboration spaces, and the workshop tool for students to peer assess each other.

Motivational strategies are also important to effective course and content creation; This is led by providing rich feedback, using rubrics, and voice based audio feedback for assessments; offer encouraging responses on forums, and virtual office hours, use of the messaging and chat tools to reach out to students, and adaptive learning techniques in course content.

### C

GAUTAM SAHA, INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGNER, PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION, GEORGIA INSTITUTE

OF TECHNOLOGY.

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to thrive and erase geographic distances using digital communication and Massive Online Open Courses (MOOCs) for formal and informal learning. This gives people the same leverage regardless of location. Gautam Saha, Instructional Designer at Georgia Institute of Technology, explains why.

> <mark>BY:</mark> Natalia Perdigón. Atlanta – USA



Furthermore, new roles are becoming more apparent by displacing and strengthening traditional teaching methods.

Saha researches new community and commercial Moodle plugins, and aligns them to faculty and student needs. He implements and researches various plugin integrations using LTI or server plugins, and pilots, then evaluates and implements cutting edge online proctoring/identity verification system.

Instructional Designers that use Moodlerooms, can use the "Collapsed Topic Course Format," a powerful course format. "The Course Completion Block and Progress Block are fantastic to monitor student performance," Saha compliments.

### WHAT IS A SUCCESSFUL STUDENT IN AN ONLINE ENVIRONMENT?

Saha explains that they should be:

- Self-motivated.
- Organized to manage deadlines.
- Willing to experiment with new ways of collaboration in synchronous and asynchronous mode.
- Actively engaged.



Additionally, successful students should have a basic competence with digital authoring tools for word processing and some graphic software.

Saha makes it clear why education and e-learning is better with Moodlerooms: "It has very powerful conditional release functions to program how content is revealed and accessible to students based on various conditions. It is one of the few platforms that was founded on deep authentic learning theories and based on sound pedagogical research as a result of Martin Dougiamas's PhD research work. The platform is vibrant, organic, flexible and extensible."

E-learning is based on its flexibility, accessibility, immediate course content updates, cost reduction, and many others. The roles of teachers and students are redefined in today's online learning environment. The active worldwide group of users, programmers, and developers are constantly contributing and helping each other.

### EDUCATION

JANUARY 2017

# From Copenhagen to the world of the career they want.



openhagen Business Academy is Denmark's largest business academy. A few months ago, this academic institution decided to implement the Moodlerooms LMS.

The decision was made to better prepare students for "real world" work environments. Copenhagen Business Academy achieved this through various activities and practical exercises where students can develop the skills needed to perform well.

Carsten Storgaard, who has worked with digital learning for more than 20 years, is a key person at Copenhagen Business Academy who monitors, supports, trains, and encourages teachers and students to use technology within the Moodlerooms platform. He also helped create a guide of seven key factors (differences and attributes) that help students find the ideal job opportunity.

### MOODLEROOMS OFFERS AN EXCELLENT COMMUNICATION CHANNEL TO SHARE PRACTICAL KNOWLEDGE. ADDITIONALLY A VARIETY OF ACTIVITIES ARE STRENGTHENED SO THAT STUDENTS ARE IN REAL WORKING SITUATIONS

- 1. Teachers organize teams of 5 to 7 people with multidisciplinary competences, in order to offer holistic knowledge to students through specific tools that the current labor market needs.
- 2. The courses are developed based on real cases. Teams apply their knowledge with real life obstacles in mind in order to find practical solutions. Courses are designed for periods of 4 to 5 weeks. Storgaard explains that, "Four hours of economics, four of accounting or marketing don't exist anymore." Students work on projects to gain the experience of working firsthand with clients. First, the cases are thoroughly explained and then the students must implement applicable theories to those particular cases.
- 3. Thanks to Moodlerooms, professionals from different fields, such as accounting, economics or business administration can create versatile, guality contents. The courses aim to meet the participants' specific needs, including time flexibility. With Moodlerooms, individual work can also be included within group activities. This methodology seeks to make the students' academic process more efficient and engaging
- 4. The workshop module and forums are key areas to begin tasks, initiate discussions, and deliver feedback between students and teachers. There is also a Wiki tool to create definitions, concepts, and personalized portfolios. Additionally, the Mahara, GAFE, and Office 365 platforms offer options that strengthen group work.
- 5. Carsten Storgaard points out that Copenhagen Business Academy programs offer a variety of courses related to finance and economics that last for 4 and 6 weeks. "The idea is that our students end up working for banks, insurers, real estate, marketing or administrative service area." It is expected that about 12,000 students will participate at the beginning of next year.

- 6. The benefits of new educational technologies are for both students and teachers. "The advantages for the latter are summarized by being able to build coherent courses through programs with an interface that has certain reusable forms and contents. In this way, some teachers would be moving from an imperious system to another considered a 'playground'. In addition, with Moodlerooms, teachers will easily carry out their activities and will surely attract their students," Storgaard summarizes.
- 7. The main difference between regular university academic programs and the Copenhagen Business Academy digital program is that, with Moodlerooms, there is a 'window' to promote discussions. It offers an excellent communication channel to share practical knowledge. Additionally, a variety of activities are strengthened so that students are in real working situations.

Each of these strategies were designed to increase future professionals' chances in their guest to find a job where they are happy, able to succeed, and recognized as skillful change agents. Thanks to Moodle, Copenhagen Business Academy discovered new tools of the digital age that provide a quality education that is not just focused on theory, but on practice and analysis as well.



### EDUCATION JANUARY 2017

### What's the main advantage of online collaboration

### **ONLINE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS**

can be synchronous or asynchronous. Synchronous online collaboration tools remove the distance or location. Asynchronous collaboration minimizes both location and time as barriers to working and learning together. It has a huge impact in the ability to provide educational opportunities that wouldn't be possible for some students. One expert from University of Western States (UWS) speaks about his experience.



im Friscia, Director of Academic Support and Training at University of Western States, manages the academic technology tools used for teaching and learning. These tools include an LMS (Moodle), lecture capture (Panopto), polling (REEF Polling), electronic testing software (eMedley), and online meeting tools (Blackboard Collaborate), among others.

These tools are used for online courses, classroom-based courses, and blended learning courses though all the programs offered at UWS. Friscia's team provides instructional design services, technical support, and multimedia production services to the faculty. They also provide group, individual, and online training.

He has become an expert on this topic since he jumped into the world of distance education using interactive video teleconferencing over 25 years ago. "With the evolution of the internet, many of us saw the possibilities it offered for distance education. My path eventually led to working with an online collaboration software company, and then back into higher education and my ongoing interest in how all of these tools could be leveraged to create a rich teaching and learning environment."

For that reason, he joined the UWS in 2012, just after they launched their first fully online program.

As part of his role, Friscia helps the programs and instructors look at how to employ the most appropriate tools based on their program and course goals and objectives. Realizing that preferences for learning environments vary, his department creates training in a variety of formats to meet faculty needs.

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#### \*JIM FRISCIA, DIRECTOR ACADEMIC SUPPORT AND TRAINING, UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN STATES.

pating in an online training course However, that's not an option for online instructors. Most of the adjuncts are working healthcare practitioners, may be teaching at multiple institutions, and are located around the country or world. "We have the challenge of creating learning opportunities that takes into account their limited time available for training. We try to create online instructor training that is targeted, short, and engaging," Friscia explains.

UWS has campus-based facul-

ty members who will always opt for

face-to-face training before partici-

For the online programs, the emphasis is always on creating engagement; whether it's student-content, student-instructor, or student-student. Providing courses with a variety of opportunities for meaningful connection is the main focus. The instructional designer for online programs works directly with the programs' instructors to develop their courses using a variety of tools available in Moodle to present content, create engagement, and assess learning.

At UWS, there are about 1,000 students currently using Moodle and approximately In addition, they host a variety of training courses for both faculty and stu-

half are fully online students. They offer over 40 courses each term among the three online programs. They have close to 80 courses each term in the campus programs using Moodle as an integral part of classroom courses. Over the next few of years, many of those will undergo redesign to be offered in a more hybrid or completely online format. dents, and have a second Moodlerooms-hosted site for chiropractic continuing

### WE HAVE THE CHALLENGE OF CREATING LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES THAT TAKES INTO ACCOUNT THEIR LIMITED TIME AVAILABLE FOR TRAINING. WE TRY TO CREATE ONLINE INSTRUCTOR TRAINING THAT IS TARGETED, SHORT, AND ENGAGING

education. That site provides access to over 100 courses - some developed in Moodle, others via third party CE providers that they connect to through their site. UWS has used Moodle since 2010. It began as an optional tool to support classroom instruction and to offer a few pre-program science courses to prepare incoming doctor of chiropractic students. When the master's program in human nutrition and functional medicine was first offered, that self-hosted Moodle platform was used. It became apparent that the needs of a full-fledged online program were beyond the school's self-hosting and support capabilities, so they sought a third-party hosting solution and chose Moodlerooms. "I came onboard just before the transition and was very pleased to help implement the move," he told us.

"For us, having Moodlerooms host Moodle and provide technical services has been of paramount importance. It's great for our team to have the Moodlerooms support team to work with. We can focus on working with the programs and instructors to best utilize the LMS for teaching and learning, rather than worrying about whether the system is running or needs to be updated. As I have looked at various LMS choices available today, Moodle still feels like it was designed by educators," he stated

Regarding online collaboration, whether synchronous or asynchronous, Friscia sees that from an educational standpoint it has the ability to foster and grow an engaged learning community without place or time boundaries, and this is vital. In addition, it brings advantages in the shared construction of knowledge, independent thinking, responsibility, and self-evaluation.

When we asked about the future of e-learning, he answered: "calling it 'e-learning' assumes that it's somehow distinct from other forms of learning. We've created digital tools that provide us with an unprecedented degree of flexibility around access to learning opportunities and learning modalities, but I don't think they fundamentally change how we learn. They are the tools of an evolving learning ecosystem."

### CORPORATE

**JANUARY 2017** 

# In Finland, you can learn to drive using Blackboard Collaborate

Harri says that "Some teachers give face-to-face classes and at the same time have students remotely connected through Blackboard Collaborate." Which means that there can be 20 people in a classroom and five or seven remotely connected.

Teachers are also trained in innovative ways using various platforms: for that reason, Harri hopes that there will be more tools of this type to continue advancing in virtual courses, because according to him, teachers have improved quite a lot in the use of Blackboard Collaborate, generating an added value to the courses they teach.

### "SOME TEACHERS GIVE FACE-TO-FACE CLASSES AND AT THE SAME TIME HAVE STUDENTS REMOTELY CONNECTED THROUGH BLACKBOARD COLLABORATE."

driving schools have joined this proposal.



urrently, 400 driving academies are enrolled in this national association that has been operating for more than 70 years. During this time, Autokoululiitto has been concerned with promoting education development, road safety, schools, and driving instructors training.

Innovation is part of this organization's mission, which works day after day to improve driving schools. Opetustarvike Oy arises as a teaching management counsel that develops work materials for the digital environment.

Until the end of 2015, driving school theory teaching was complicated because the Finnish Government had a long pedagogical tradition for theory lessons, which meant that anyone who wanted to learn to drive could do the theory part of education only with face-to-face classes.

"Things were done as in the old days, they were a little reluctant to change the methodology. Despite this,

ASSOCIATION / DRIVING State policies were modified, allowing the integration of digital

platforms into education," explains Harri Keski-Rekilä, Training Consultant at Finnish Driving Schools Association/Driving.

In this way, Harri decided to bet on something new and different that would revolutionize learning pedagogy and would also facilitate teaching for all: Blackboard Collaborate. This powerful video conferencing tool has been ideal for developing

HARRI KESKI-REKILÄ. TRAINING CONSULTANT AT FINNISH DRIVING SCHOOLS online management simulations and has also generated revolutionary advances in driving programs, as they allow the user to have greater experience-based learning.

PEDAGOGY AND

an association of

**BY:** Angela Palacios

Helsinki, Finland.

teaching methods are

being modernized over time, an example of

which is 'Autokoululiitto'.

driving schools that has revolutionized the way

driving is learned in Finland.

### WHY USE BLACKBOARD COLLABORATE?

Harri Keski-Rekilä listed five reasons why this tool has significantly improved the programs of Autokoululiitto driving schools: 1. No software has to be installed to use it.

2. The of ease joining a session. There is one link for the teacher and another one for the students. 3. It is easy to use.

4. It is improving all the time; it is good to see that it is reinvented every day and updated four times a year.

5. It is mobile and in Finnish language.

#### BLACKBOARD COLLABORATE WITHIN EVERYONE'S REACH

The possibility of accessing this tool is really simple, since it can be used on all platforms: iPhone, iPad, computer, among others; There are some links to virtual courses and with just a click students connect to classes.

#### "MANY THINGS CHANGE WHEN WE USE THIS PLATFORM."

Driving programs at Finnish Driving Schools Association/Driving have developed considerably since they started using Blackboard Collaborate. In such a short time, 60

According to Harri, "the trend of adoption of this tool has been mainly for people over 20 years, while younger people still prefer traditional classes."

Generating a learning culture different from the traditional one is sought, as the 19 hour classes required by the Finnish Government to grant driving licenses are also validated through this video conferencing tool.

"In Finland minimum Basic phase driver training contain 19 hour theory lessons, 18 hour Driving lessons. After that theory test and driving test".



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