

Opportunities and development of Polish e-learning platform e-sgh.pl.

The article aims at presenting experience, which Warsaw School of Economics (SGH) gained during implementing Internet platform for e-learning e-sgh.pl. It also shows plans of its development.

History and technology

Warsaw School of Economics started e-learning activity in October 2001. Nowadays, it runs a few different ways of e-learning. The first is complementing lectures and exercises in full time, extramural, doctorate and postgraduate studies. Teachers can enrich traditional classes with additional materials, exercises and interactive tests. What's more, they can enlarge them by adding new issues. The second way is conducting whole classes online. The third – organizing online commercial courses with free access (not only for students from the School).

SGH created its own platform for e-learning. It has been built and developed with the use of open source (PHP scripts and database MySQL, programming language XML). The platform has 5 000 unique users¹.

Content and possibilities

There are over 60 courses with 300 classes in e-sgh.pl platform. They include over 5 000 slides and over 1 000 interactive tests and exercises².

Slides

The platform offers many possibilities to enrich slides usage. They can:

- be published with audio commentary,
- have notes made by students and teachers (also during the lecture),
- be differentiated by marking the most important with bookmarks (which helps students to quickly find slides).

Exercises and tests:

Interactive materials help students in memorizing and learning and they make a course more interesting. A student learns a part of the material and then checks the knowledge. SGH teachers use tests, which give a commentary to direct students to a good answer. When wrong answers are repeated, the key is published, but the test is remembered as failed. All is summed up by a slide, which systematizes gained knowledge, shows good answers and reminds most important issues. A teacher can use results of such test.

Register for teachers:

A virtual register is used in evaluating student's activity during e-consultation, discussions online, and others. It is much more than traditional teacher's register. It includes archives of e-consultations, links to opinions and global number of statements published by a student. A teacher describes each grade, so a student knows exactly when, for what and why the grade was given. The virtual register enables to communicate with students and check length of time, which a student spent on a site.

Additional tools:

Teachers communicate with students by e-mail. They also use chat-rooms and forums as e-consultation. The platform provides educational crosswords and an electronic calendar. All

¹ 5 000 unique users - 15th April 2004

² All Figures – 15th April 2004

notes to slides are shown in the calendar and a student can also create a note for a specific day there. This information is reminded by a system through e-mail.

Types of materials

Materials can be divided according to a few criteria.

When we consider **accessibility**, we have fully accessible for everybody materials and materials dedicated to specific groups (usually conducted by a person who prepared them.)

If we take into consideration **forms of education** – we have materials for full time students, extramural students (which is the greatest part in e-sgh.pl platform), postgraduate students, doctorates, SGH staff, people not connected with SGH.

Considering **repayment** we provide free courses (about 95% of all courses) and commercial ones (with a fee).

We also discern traditional lecture materials from interactive ones. They include exercises, tests, cases, library and additional documents.

Materials can be supportive to a traditional lecture or they can act as independent courses. Most of texts is published in Polish, but more and more is published in English.

Promotion

Such a successful development of e-learning in Warsaw School of Economics wouldn't be possible without intensive promotion. During over 2 years, SGH promotes e-learning among students and teachers emphasising advantages and methods of online education. Since October 2003 SGH publishes Internet magazine 'e-mentor', which aims at encouraging them to use e-courses. 'E-mentor' has two versions – printed and online (www.e-mentor.edu.pl). The first four issues had over 12 000 readers³.

Plans for future

SGH is implementing extramural studies, in which whole curriculum (program) is supported with online additional materials. The first step is to support all basic subjects with online materials. The next is to complement all subjects with them and build whole courses in Internet.

The process is not short but it brings advantages for school and teachers, who observed better grades in a group of students who used e-learning. Also students have high opinion on such way of studying. We measured their attitude by a survey on 3 April 2004. Among other questions, we asked a group of extramural students who already participate in lectures supported with online materials about their opinion. 20,8% evaluated utility of online materials as very high and 66,7% as high.

In the closest future we plan to start whole postgraduate studies online. This will be the first such project offered by SGH.

The platform itself is also still being developed. We add new materials and tools considering opinions and needs of users.

More information: Centre for Development of Distance and Permanent Education of Warsaw School of Economics, www.cren.pl.

³ 'E-mentor' circulation and statistics