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EHEA-wide course data base – a proposal

Mobility, transparency, quality assurance and recognition are at the core of the Bologna process and should be highly supported within the EHEA. The Leuven/Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué declared that “mobility shall be the hallmark of the European Higher Education Area”.

The present proposal aims to enhance transparency and facilitate student mobility, recognition and quality assurance by outlining a data base on higher education courses within the EHEA, searchable for students, educators and authorities (e. g. quality agencies).

Conditions

- Practically every Higher Education Institution has an informatized educational administration system, containing all relevant information on the courses it offers, usually in the language(s) of the country, but very often also in English.
- In a truly distributed system, it is hopeless to implement an efficient search engine (see e.g. the solution of Google; it uses crawlers to collect data, and then allows users to search in its own data base created from the harvested data).

Technical solution

To create a standardized, transparent database we suggest the adoption and modification of a system worked out in the EU for the harvesting, handling and search of publication metadata.

Example:

DRIVER

(see

http://www.driver-support.eu/documents/DRIVER_Guidelines_v2_Final_2008-11-13.pdf)

Repositories implement a Dublin Core based data service (OAI-PMH). A central harvester builds up and periodically updates a data base which offers a service for clients.

The abstract from the description of DRIVER:

“DRIVER, the ‘Digital Repository Infrastructure Vision for European Research’ project is conducted by an EC funded consortium that is building an organisational and technological framework for a pan-European data-layer, enabling the advanced use of content-resources in research and higher education. DRIVER develops a service-infrastructure and a data-infrastructure. Both are designed to orchestrate existing resources and services of the repository landscape.”

To construct the course data base, standardized XML format could be developed (similarly to Dublin Core), and participating institutions would offer a web service which could be used to extract the courses offered, along with their data and short description. A central harvester could collect the data and upload them into a central data base. Students and professors can search this data base starting from a dedicated web page.

(This webpage could be hosted at PLOTEUS (Portal on Learning Opportunities throughout the European Space) maintained by the European Commission.)

Standard data of individual courses

(text in national language, any other languages of the EU, and English)

- institution and its abbreviation
- educational unit: faculty, institute or department
- course name
- course identification code
- level and specialty (bachelor, master, doctoral; major, minor, *etc.*)
- course home page
- credits (local and/or ECTS)
- semester according to suggested sample curriculum
- contents (minimum 200 words)
- source of course material, textbook(s) in English
- requirements to have a final note
- standard workload and distribution among activities such as classroom lessons, homework, preparation for test, *etc.*
- course status (compulsory, elective, *etc.*)
- responsible educator
- prerequisites
- courses held before (date, educator, home page)
- date of next course and its educator(s)
- is it recommended for Erasmus students?
- comments

Each course should have a link to the home page of the institution, and to the description of the education system in the country.

Additional possibility: shared tuition materials

We also suggest considering an additional platform for tuition materials (lecture notes, textbooks, classroom presentations, videos, *etc.*) freely available for students and teaching staff. Such a platform would enhance comparability of the courses and promote cooperation in development of tuition materials EHEA wide. For this purpose, a widely used open source free system (e.g. Moodle) could be adopted.