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Time management on the on-line learning platforms. A case study regarding the BSCW platform used by future teacher student

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Abstract

The management of an online learning platform includes coordination of the activities conducted by students under the direct supervision of the teacher. Along with users accounts management activities, organization of virtual work space on the platform, loading of current media and learning tasks, one of the most important activities of the tutor is time management. This paper presents the results of a research on the concrete ways in which a trainer manages the time for online activities developed on BSCW platform. The study is anchored on an experimental research of the future teacher students' work on the platform and is focused on how students and teacher make use of time management facilities provided by the BSCW platform.

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Keywords: Time management, On-line learning platforms, BSCW, Future teacher student;

1. Problem statement

The management of an online learning platform includes coordination of the activities conducted by students under the direct supervision of the teacher. Along with users' accounts management activities, organization of virtual work space on the platform, loading of current media and learning tasks, one of the most important activities of the tutor is time management. For the present study we used the on-line platform BSCW (Be Smart – Cooperate Worldwide, OrbiTeam and Fraunhofer FIT) (fig. 1), which is an electronic collaborative learning environment. This workspace takes the characteristics of a classroom learning environment, but using the Internet, reconstructs this environment in cyberspace and offer possibilities for cooperation, communication, information storage and creation of new learning products. The calendar represents a BSCW facility that proves very useful for the management of the individual and group activities. The tutor can construct a timetable for the teaching activities to be delivered during the whole semester, with their data, deadlines for the tasks that will be available for all the users.

The user can structure own personal calendar that may include personal notes. In the note typing window that becomes available by clicking the corresponding calendar data there exist the possibility of sending a notification message for the users regarding the event that will take place at that date. Thus, the calendar becomes an organizer of the group activities. The icon represents a shortcut to this facility.

In the following we will present the most important time management facilities of BSCW platform. *Date and hour of the last document/ directory/ object modification*. The platfor automatically generates the date and hour of

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the object posting on the space, attributes that may be visualized by the users. The displayed data and hour represent the features of the last modification of the directory and all the subordinated objects. In order to identify the data regarding the moment of its creation, the user can access the history of the document that is available in the submenue of each of the platforms' directories.

Date and hour of posting a discution subject and of an answer to the proposed subject. The discussion subjects include the data and hour of their creation as well as the name of the creator attached to the very contents. In the analysis of the posted messages contents it is interesting to observe the rhythm and constancy of the answers and the paternity of the contributions, in order to compose an image of the learners' involvement in the discussion.

Data and hour of the platform login and logout. This information is useful for the platform administrator and for the tutors in order to analyze from statistical perspective the frequency of the platform accessing for each of the users as well as for the whole group. The periods of time in a day and a week when the platform is accessed and the pick hours are also visible, together with the most accessed objects of the platform. Given the fact that the login is made through introducing the username and the password, it is possible to now the exact data and hour of login and logout. The amount of time that the student spends on the platform may also be relevant. Yet, from a rigorous perspective, these data are relative as the platform communicates the period of time the platform is opened, but do not insure about the quality of students' real involvement in the activities. From this perspective we consider of a real relevance the amount and quality of activities students are involved in during this time.

The history of the objects placed on the platform. For each object (document, directory, discussion, web address etc.) that is posted, the platform offers an inventory of the actions taken in relation with it, giving the data and hour of the action, the type and author of it. Thus the analysis of the statistics regarding the interest that the object opens in comparison with other objects is possible.

Concluding, the BSCW platform includes a large range of work options that support a variety of teaching and learning actions that simulate a functional virtual classroom environment. BSCW extends the primary use of Internet for finding and downloading of information, and allows for complex actions as the documents management, web publishing, document versioning, group activities management and information sharing, all these through a standard Internet browser, without being necessary to install a specialized software application for accessing the platform.

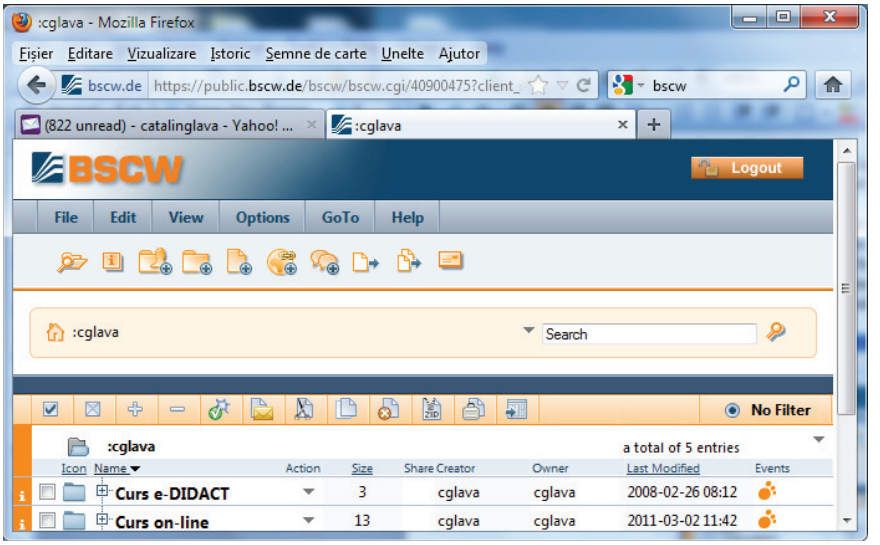

Fig. 1. BSCW platform workspace

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