


Preparing first years to use a learning management system (LMS): Does it add value?

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This presentation

- Background
- Why? Today's students
- First year *Edulink* (LMS) orientation (FYEO)
- Access to technologies
- Expectations of students
- Reflections and conclusions

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CenTAL's vision

We strive to cultivate excellence in learning, teaching and assessment through the innovative and optimal use of technology, enhanced and supported by relevant research


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CenTAL's mission

- Enhance all the vocational and academic programmes
- Practice distinguished scholarship ... in promoting the innovative use of technologies
- Put intellectual capital to work ... by sharing knowledge, expertise and experiences

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CenTAL today

- With 20 permanent staff members, including seven Instructional Designers
- Recently completed self-evaluation, panel included three external members
- LMS (*Edulink*) and ETs: two new labs; now increased students' access on all four campuses!
- Now part of division for Academic Development and Support

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And now . . .

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Digital natives and immigrants



Marc Prensky (2001):

- Digital natives: Many of today's students are native speakers of technology and fluent in digital language of cell phones, computers, etc.
- Digital immigrants: People not born into the digital world; have adopted many aspects of technology
- Digital divide: Access and socio-economics: ?!
- Industrial age and information age mindsets: ?!

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Digital natives . . .



- are changing from TV “watchers” to “(inter)active doers”
- become multitasked by doing things
- are mobile communication nodes
- typically explore new technology with intuition without brochure
- want to be engaged or else ... they get enraged!

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Digital natives expect us to . . .



- do things differently
- do different things
- start thinking differently
- reconsider approaches, methodologies and outcomes of curricula
- include meaningful information age learning experiences
- transform ourselves and our institutions to thrive in changing environments.

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Learning and ETs



- Daniel (2002): Learning – blend of two types namely interactive and independent
 - Both types are supported by ICTs
- Provide more and more varied learning and assessment opportunities with feedback (formative and summative)
- Engage with significant learning activities
- Accommodate more learning styles in a blended learning environment.

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Web 2.0 Applications



- Communicative: Share ideas - blogs
- Collaborative: Work with others – wikis
- Documentative: Collect and share experiences with others – e-portfolios
- Generative: Create something new – virtual communities of practice (VCOPs)
- Interactive: Exchange resources – social bookmarking. (Mc Gee and Diaz (2007))

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Challenges for FYE



Need an integrated approach to ensure the holistic development of students by:

- designing socialization experiences
- strengthening academic foundations (...including computer and information literacy (own addition))
- integrating academic and social experiences
- using a systemic, collaborative approach. (Hossler, Kuh and Olsen, 2001)

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Towards a definition for FYE



First Year Experience: Is the total integrated **Experience** of a whole person enrolling for the first time in a higher education institution; its **Impact** on his/her well-being as a human and performance as a student and the developmental and supportive **Strategies** needed for such a person to optimally benefit from this experience. It includes tracking and reporting in an integrated system which is not completed before clear signs of progress and success is visible, thus ensuring a **Healthy** and wellness relationship with the institution.

The total concept in one word is: **EISH!**

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- Additional questions
- Conclusions

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Introduction: FYEO



- Since 2003: Computer orientation and **EduLink** (LMS) training for specific first year student groups
- 2004 onwards: All first year students on APK (2500 – 3000 students)
- 2005 and 2006: Include SWC and ERC
- 2007 and 2008: Also limited training on DFC and APB, only on request for individual modules

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Learning materials: FYEO



- Guide: Basic computer and **EduLink** (LMS) orientation; desktop icon for interactive CD (library) with self-assessment (till 2005)
- 2007: Z-folders and mini-CD to all students; new system (**EduLink2007**)
- 2008: Z-folders to first year students on APK; other campuses during requested training sessions
- Help-U-Book (2004 – 2008)

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Format & content: FYEO



- Basic functionalities in LMS (**EduLink**) module: Two-hour hands-on training session
- E.g. Information and communication tools, learning modules, assessment and grades
- Information related to different campuses, such as maps, computer laboratories, opening hours, etc.
- Theme for discussion: Plagiarism and use of **Turnitin**

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General feedback: 2008



- Positive learning experience; 98.5% recommended that every first year student should in future have the possibility to attend a similar session
- Integrate questionnaire on student profile at end of each session (since 2006)
- 2008: First time – SMSs, faculty groups and Library involvement

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Detailed feedback



- Printed FYO programme, supplemented with SMSs as reminders of sessions
 - SMS received: 65.1%
 - SMS message useful: 64.7%
- Students from all faculties: (N=2614)
 - E&FS: 33.6% (870)
 - Humanities: 25.9% (672)
 - Management: 15.6% (405)

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Detailed feedback



- Improvement of
 - knowledge and skills: 77.5%
 - only knowledge: 17.4%
 - only skills: 3.8%
- Experienced learning content as
 - clear and logical: 53.5%
 - practical: 42.9%

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Detailed feedback: 2008



- Experienced the language used
 - clear and logical: 91.0%
 - too difficult: 0.7%
 - fairly confusing: 7.8%
 - very confusing: 0.5%
- No answer: 1.0%

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Access to technologies



Technology	Percentage
Cell phone	86.6%
CD-player	67.4%
DVD-player	60.0%
Desktop Computer (with CD-ROM)	45.8% (45.2%)
Internet	39.7%
Laptop Computer	28.7%

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Expecting from lecturers . . .



Students' perceptions on lecturers' role and its importance to contribute to successful learning on scale of 1 – 10; each as 8+9+10:

- Experience, knowledge in field of expertise: 82.1%
- Ability to enhance learning experience using educational technologies: 74.4%
- Ability to convey main points during lectures using software (e.g. PPT): 65.4%

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Expecting lecturers to . . .



Students' expectations of the ratio between lecturing (L) vs interactivity enabled by integrating varied forms of technologies (ITs) with four ratios given on scale of 1 – 4; each as 3+4:

- L 100% and ITs 0%: 45.7%
- L 75% and ITs 25%: 67.0%
- L 50% and ITs 50%: 66.0%
- L 0% and ITs 100%: 28.1%

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The way forward . . .



- 2009: Two and a half hours per sessions
- More campuses; more students and concurrent sessions; more presenters and assistants; more bandwidth and more ...
- Library integration (interactive CD with photo's and video clips)
- SMSs improvement and strategies towards "mobile learning"?

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Reflection: Some elements



- Optimise seamless integration of ET and ICT systems into core of the organisation
- Create synergies to optimise students' learning experiences and activities; best blends NB!
- Critical-cross field outcomes (for e.g. computer and information literacy skills, active and responsible citizenship) and preparation for WOWork
- Student training and support
- Towards lifelong and self-directed learning
- Ongoing professional development of lecturers towards implementing effective TAL practices

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Reflections



- Contributions to enhance computer and information literacy skills – analyse, evaluate and apply relevant info in useful ways
- Free typing tutor programmes – add to campus bookmarks; access to many online resources
- VUMA website: For students in HE; valuable resources on life and study skills (www.fotim.ac.za)
- ? Credit-bearing "End User Computing" in all programmes or assessment before enrolment?

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Conclusions



- Is it important to think about and know our students' current and future profiles?
- Is it really necessary to engage in these conversations or is it time wasting?
- What will the University of the Future look like?
- How can we best support each other in our collective efforts to change our institutions' blueprint?
- Can we afford NOT to develop and incorporate effective TAL experiences?

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Conclusions



- Do we need these LMS orientation sessions for FYs?
- Do we add value to the FYs' learning experiences?
- Some examples of present reporting and tracking activities, using the LMS:
 - Faculty of Humanities: Development Studies and Anthropology - Tutors online and weekly assessments
 - Faculty of Science: Geography and Chemistry: Weekly formative assessments
 - Faculty of Economic and Financial Sciences: "Safenet mini-pilot" (BCom Accounting programme)

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still
We live our motto . . .



Sikhuthaza imfundo!
We energise learning!
Ons gee woema aan leer!
Re fa thuto mafolofolo!

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