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Abstract

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Title: Creating free educational content for the web: the Project POAW* (PLOW Project).

Description:

The project Production of Learning Objects for the Web (PLOW, POAW, in portuguese: Produção de Objectos de Aprendizagem para a Web), proposed by University of Minho and held by the Curriculum and Educational Technology Department, is based on an advanced use of ICT's, and, as far as we could gather, is unique in the Portuguese context. It was not yet produced content in this format and the technologies we will use were not employed. All over the world, there are cases of similar projects, but in a reduced number and always in the context of partnerships between universities and/or organizations.

The purpose of the PLOW project is to create educational content in a "learning object" format (800 objects), which will then be available over the Web (Internet) in an open access repository. That is, those learning objects will be completely accessible to any citizen that has access to the Internet. We totally fit in the philosophy of the Open

Access Initiative because we believe that only a system of free access to knowledge and information can really allow the construction of a Knowledge Society and a Lifelong Learning. If the learning content is "closed" in platforms with a reserved and conditioned access, info-exclusion will increase even more. The training of citizens and the access to educational content cannot be limited to the laws of market supply or the "industrialization of training". The industrial model does not serve the humanist purposes that underlie the promises of a different and better world for all, promises that the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) carry on.

In this sense, three groups of content destined for three different audiences are beeing created: content destined for students and teachers in higher education; content destined for students and teachers in primary and secondary education; content intended for the common citizen.

All content can be used in situations of: formal or informal learning, with or without the teacher; presential teaching, distance learning and/or blended learning; in an independent, autonomous and autodidactic way.

As is known, the Internet puts an end to the traditional distinctions between age groups (just like television before): the content designed for certain age groups is accessed by other audiences. Much learning is developed outside the school context and outside the "corset" of the curriculum. Today's youngsters know many things that are not prescribed in the curriculum, and that can only be faced positively. Therefore, the content which we will develop, despite the diversity of the target audience, can be used by any person, belonging to any age group, as long as the subject interests him/her. This is the great added value of the Internet and of a policy of real open access.

The project aims at contributing to the development and consolidation of the institutional and public offer of educational content for the web, in Portuguese, with a reach that overcomes the territorial frontiers and expands to the Portuguese Diaspora and the Portuguese-speaking nations: Brazil, Angola, Mozambique, Cape Verde, S. Tomé and Príncipe, and East Timor.

The Team includes 2 researchers in Educational Technology, 2 in Information Systems, 32 Professors (content experts) and 17 collaborators (graduation students, master students and Phd students).

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Wiley, D. A. (2000). Connecting learning objects to instructional design theory: A definition, a metaphor, and a taxonomy. In Wiley, D. A. (Ed.) (2000). *The instructional use of learning objects: online version.* http://reusability.org/read/chapters/wiley.doc (June the 2nd, 2003).