

ASSESSMENT AND EVALUATION OF STUDENTS IN DISTANCE LEARNING WITH THE INTERNET

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Abstract:

Assessment and evaluation of students' participation, acquisition, habits and skills in distance learning with the Internet is not a simple process as it does not only consist of knowledge check after respective teaching units or at the end of teaching materials. It is a process that includes the evaluation of students' total activity within Web based school. By evaluating students' total work we can also evaluate the quality of teaching materials.

Key words: *Web school, tests, interactive tests, communication services*

INTRODUCTION

The development of the Internet has led to a new approach to distance learning with the Internet which has been attracting attention of broader social community in the past several years. The world of Internet has enabled the connection of all participants in the teaching process (teachers, students, school) in a unique virtual school regardless of the geographical distances. With the help of multimedia computers, Web schools, Internet schools or virtual classrooms become the venue of organised and systematic acquisition of knowledge and perfectionisation. The development of distance learning is undoubtedly going in two directions:

- education of adults, perfecting, vocational re-training, specialisation and sub-specialisation
- acquisition of academic degrees at universities and academies or in higher education

Assessment and evaluation of students in Web school

Regardless of the participation in distance learning with the Internet in one or the other direction, the issue of assessment and evaluation, as well as mastering educational materials rises. The purpose of assessment and evaluation of students in Web school does not only aim at evaluating acquired knowledge but also at detecting possible problems in the learning of the material. Thus the timely and direct help for the student is provided, which can result in higher motivation on the part of students.

Teachers and leaders of the process of education through Internet must supervise the student and evaluate him/her appropriately in order to simultaneously evaluate the quality of educational material, contribute to their development and find the most efficient way of their presentation.

By assessment students, it is possible to cleanse the educational material from possible unclear issues very efficiently.

How should we assess and evaluate students' work in a Web school?

It is possible to evaluate students' progress and learning of educational material in programmes of distance learning with the Internet by direct check of students' knowledge, but also by some other methods depending on programmes and the organisation, as well as the facilities of the school itself.

The assessment of students in the process of education within the Internet school includes:

- Assessment of students' progress in the learning of educational materials
- Assessment of the use of Internet communication services
- Assessment of approach to educational materials.

The assessment of students' progress through educational materials is feasible by means of

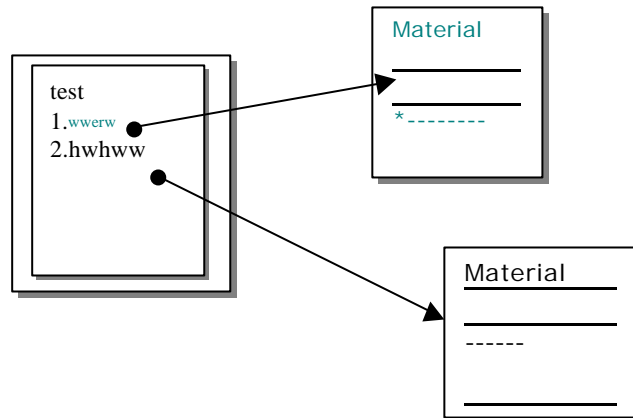
- tests
- students' papers
- final evaluation

Tests:

The checking of students' progress by means of tests is a very common method in distance learning schools. Several kinds of tests or their combinations are used in Internet schools:

- time-limited / unlimited tests
- interactive tests

The interactive type of tests enables the student after he/she has finished the test to obtain the results and to evaluate answers by means of statistic data. If the student produces an incorrect answer, a link should be provided in the teaching material for him to find the correct answer or explanation.



Graphic presentation 1 *Links from tests for teaching materials*

Such a form of test enables the student to check the acquired knowledge and get an insight to what extent he has understood the educational material. Along with correct answers, it is possible to add links that would enable students to find additional material from a certain area. The use of time-unlimited tests enables students to return to parts of teaching materials with explanations in the process of test writing. It is possible to use time-limited tests if we want to check the acquired knowledge. Those tests do not allow the checking of correct answers while doing the exercises. This kind of tests provides a better insight into acquired knowledge. In this case too, it is possible to provide answers and the statistic data on the completed test for the student. Most teachers usually use tests that they can correct themselves, using also open-type questions, in an effort to create a better and more intimate communication with their students.

Depending on the teaching materials but also the possibilities of the existing software for the setting up of Internet schools (WebCT, Topclass, ToolBook, etc.), a more common kind of tests are those containing closed-type questions.

Student work:

The term *student work* includes all student work in the form of individual and group (project) work. Individual student work includes essays on a given or free topic, homework, etc.

Students' group work on a given topic does not only aim at supervising and evaluating but also stimulating quality group work among students. Group work can be organised throughout entire education or as a part of the final work.

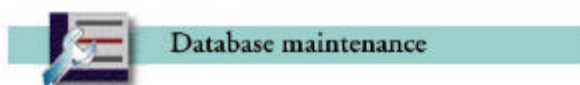
Final evaluation

Final evaluation includes all available methods of supervision and evaluation of student work. On the basis of Interactive tests, students' papers, participation in programmes and activities in the school, use of communication services, students' motivation, final work and essays, we can make the final evaluation of students' work. By supervising the student during the teaching process we can make the final evaluation of the success of the teaching process and student's knowledge.

Assessment of use of communication services

The most important feature of the virtual classroom is the communication between the student and the teacher, as well as among students themselves. Communication services make the basic frame of the school. Communication within the school is done by means of communication services: e-mail, Internet telephone, desktop videoconferencing system, Chat service, Bulletin Boards, newsgroups, white board, etc. The diversity of communication services and their possibilities facilitate a better presentation of educational material, but also the building of positive atmosphere in the school. The use of all communication services requires a high

degree of familiarity with Internet technologies both on the part of students and teachers.



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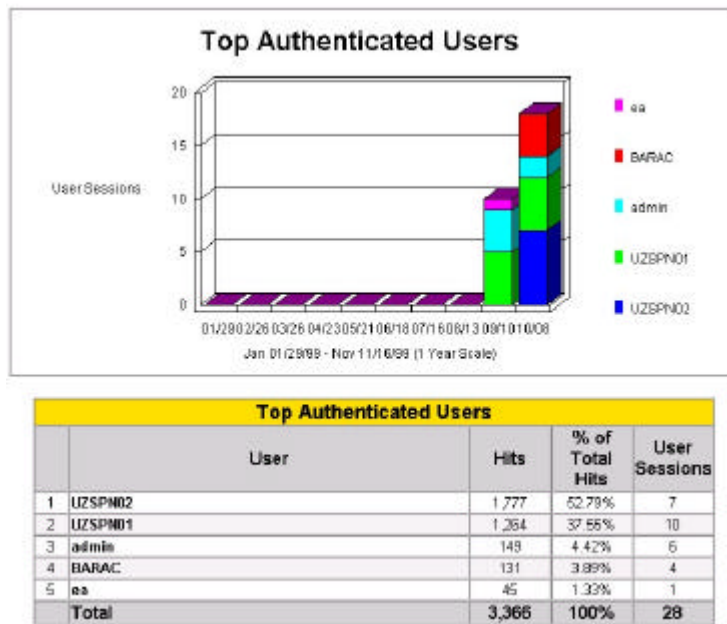
Picture 1 Assessment of the use of E-mail in the school

It is very important whether students use communication services, i.e. whether they participate in the activities of the school, and how long and how well they do it. The assessment of use of communication services allows the creation of an image of every student, his/her motivation, aspiration and understanding of educational material.

Assessment of access to educational materials

One of the very important parts of the assessment of students' progress is the assessment of access to educational materials.

The term assessment *of access* includes the assessment of the time of access, duration of work on certain materials, return to them, etc. It would be logical to suppose that students' return to teaching materials can mean revision of material, but it can also indicate certain unclear issues, possible problems, etc. If the student only superficially goes through the teaching materials we can also expect poorer results in tests, students' works or joint students' activities.



Picture 2. Statistically processed log database of access to respective teaching sections.

The assessment of access to educational materials and the use of communication services are offered almost by all Internet schools. By processing log files it is possible to successfully plan consequent developments in the school but also have an insight in the work of each individual student.

Conclusion

The assessment and evaluation of students' participation, acquisition of knowledge, habits and skills by means of the Internet school is not a simple process and it does not consist only of the check of knowledge after respective teaching units or at the end of teaching materials. It is a process that includes the evaluation of students' total activity within the Web school. By evaluating students' total work we can also evaluate the quality of teaching materials. Distance learning with the Internet is developing simultaneously with the development of the Internet itself. New possibilities of the Internet services the development of user interfaces, speed of data transfer, etc. will allow rethinking and experimenting on various methods with a single aim: how to evaluate students' work in the best and most appropriate way.