ERASMUS+ PRINTEL PROJECT

585760-EPP-1-2017-1-AM-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP

"CHANGE IN CLASSROOM: PROMOTING INNOVATIVE TEACHING & LEARNING TO ENHANCE STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE IN EASTERN PARTNERSHIP COUNTRIES", PRINTeL

Virtual Academy for Teaching and Learning Portal

Terms of Reference

Virtual Academy for Teaching and Learning (VATL) Portal is a virtual platform for creating, using, promoting & disseminating innovative technology-enhanced T&L and the usage of Open Educational Resources (OERs). The VATL Portal supports a community of users from various countries of the world with offering access to teaching and learning materials, provides communication possibilities for discussing T&L strategies, approaches and tools with colleagues from other countries and functions as a sort of community for sharing teaching practices and experience among participants. The VATL Portal is also a collection open online T&L materials and teacher development services for use by Partner HEI, other universities, representing the academic community of the Eastern Partnership Region.

Main functionalities of the VATL Portal are as follows:

1. Providing an online content building tool for creating online courses, OERs and personal instructional websites;

2. Acting as a repository for the above-mentioned e-resources with the search functions;

3. Reviewing/ranking the e-resources by the users;

4. Creating communities of teaching practice and providing them with discussion forums;

5. Providing online teaching tools.

Main target audiences of the VATL Portal are as follows:

1. Teaching Staff of Partner Universities and other educational institutions

2. Researchers in the field of education

3. Students of Partner Universities and other educational institutions?

The given Terms of Reference (ToR) define the conceptual model of the ICT solution for the VATL Portal as well as all terms and concepts involved in the software solution, their relationships and roles.

Part 1. VATL design and structure.

1.1. Rules & requirements for VATL design and structure.

1.1.1. Basic concept of the VATL implementation and description of software solution.

The VATL Portal is a shared information resource owned by the consortium of partner universities and is located on the web-servers of partner universities with 1 central web-page (located in the .edu or .am domain) and local web-pages on the servers of partner universities.

The VATL Portal is a MooJoo software combination of 2 main technologies: Joomla Open Source Software for the central web-page and Moodle Learning Management System installations for local OERs of Partner Universities. The VATL Portal consists of 2 blocks: Portal Block (based on Joomla) and Course Building Block (based on Moodle).

Creation and online content building for online courses, OERs and personal instructional websites is implemented with a help of Moodle LMS – a free open-source learning management system that is used to create and manage courses, assess students, prepare practical training assignments, etc.

The VATL Portal based on LMS MOODLE could be hosted on the number of servers — at least 1 per each Partner Country with a possibility to adapt all courses to exact requirements and course structure of each Partner University.

Coordination of local OERs is implemented with a help of MNet — a technology that enables both to access the core content and create own national content with a possibility for placing the OER on the local web-server of the Partner Institution for keeping all property rights.

It is also possible to connect other types of proprietary LMSs used in Partner Universities (i.e. Blackboard, Google Education, etc.).

1.1.2. Property rights for created educational content

All intellectual property rights for the created educational content are reserved for Partner Universities responsible for creating respected educational content (online courses, OERs, other types of T&L materials).

The consortium of Partner Universities owns the VATL Portal and the MNet coordination network for local LMS Moodle web-servers.

1.1.3. Language Support

The VATL Portal provides information content in English, Belarusian, Russian, Georgian and Armenian with a possibility of independent editing of all language versions.

Part 2. List of functionalities and tools

2.1. The VATL Portal (possibly, .edu or .am) is a gate to all educational resources, courses, OERs, tools and other types of educational resources created by Partner Universities

2.1.1. The initial structure of the VATL Portal is as follows:

Top-level menu:

1. Information (about VATL)

2. News and Info

3. T&L Hub (methods of teaching, online pedagogy, etc.)

4. Technology Hub (Online tools and learning technologies, technology support)

5. Resources Hub (Collection of materials)

6. Communities (Community for teachers, community for course builders, community for technology support, community for administrators, etc.)

7. Contacts

8. VATL.Net Global Course Search

2.1.2. Interactive and cooperation functions to be implemented within the VATL Portal:

1. Online Calendar for upcoming events within the VATL

2. News Sharing Possibility

3. Social Media Integration (Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, etc.)

4. Discussion Forums

5. Design adaptable to smartphones and tablets

6. The ability to integrate with existing Student Information Systems (SIS)/Education Information Management Systems (EMIS);

7. Suite of supports (hosting the course, course design, help with upgrades, etc.);

8. Special features (e.g., Blackboard's suite of applications; Moodle's filtering system; D2L's portfolio feature).
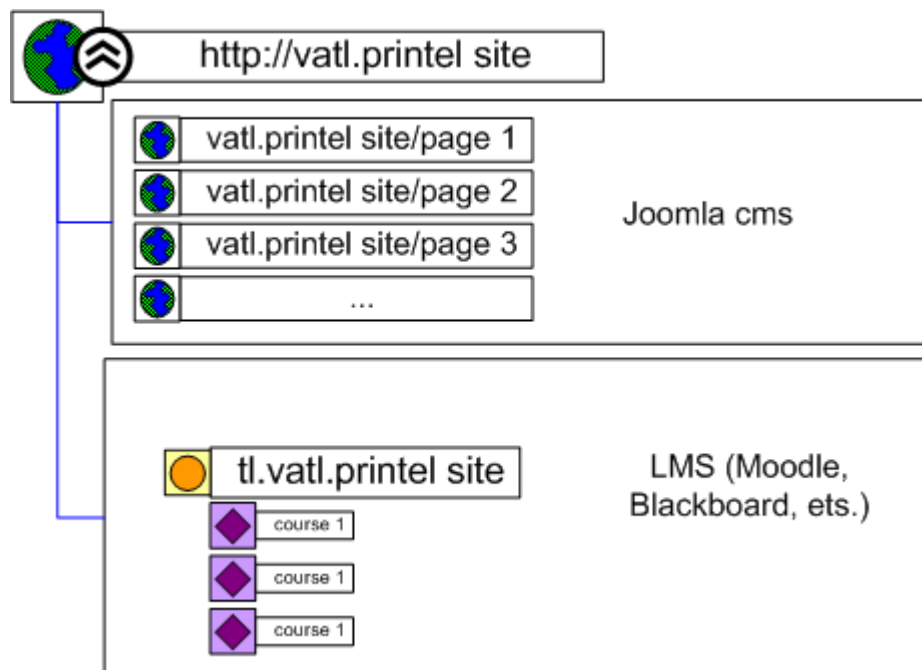
2.2. Course Building Functions

Course building functions are implemented using functionalities of LMS Moodle (or other proprietary LMSs owned by Partner Universities) including possibilities to:

1. Create an online learning material (a set of materials)
2. Create an entire online learning course (MOOC, self-standing course, supporting course, etc.)
3. Create materials for blended learning courses
4. Upload a video course of lectures with supporting materials and assignments
5. Create interactive courses with integration of other technologies and tools.
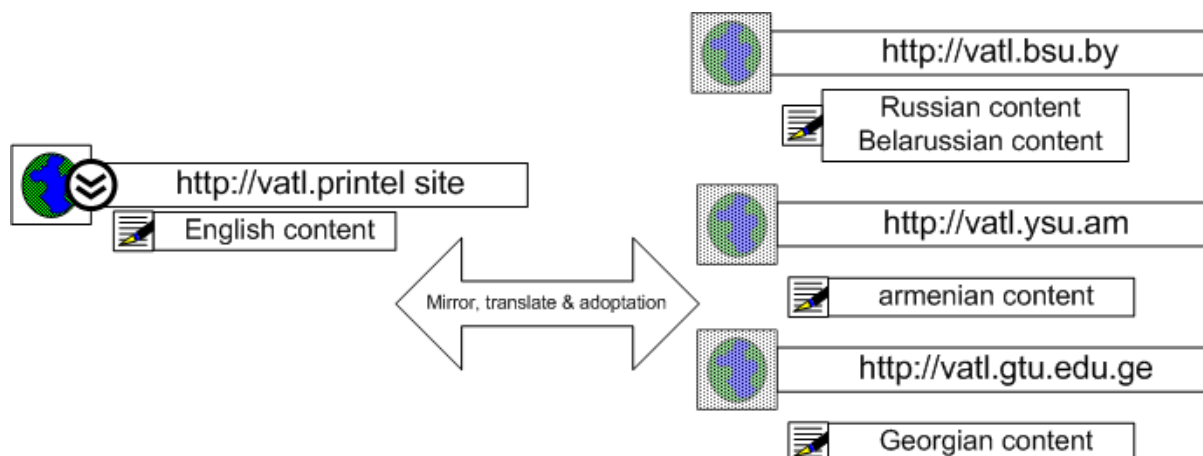6. VR & AR – Toolkit for teachers, Virtual tour editor & hotspots.

Part 3. Procedures for coordination & managing the content

3.1.1. Coordination and managing the content

The VATL Portal consists of 2 blocks: Portal Block (based on Joomla) and Course Building Block (based on Moodle). Portal Block is initially developed by the universities-members the PRINTeL project with a possibility of sharing the development tasks with other Partner Universities.

The Course Building Block of the VATL Portal is based on Moodle and is developed by universities-members the PRINTeL project with a possibility of sharing the development tasks with other Partner Universities. Each university provides the installation of LMS Moodle (or its analogue) on its server with subsequent integration via an MNet technology. Such an approach provides open access to learning materials for Partner Universities but still reserves the rights for all learning materials for those universities that developed them.

The scheme above shows the organisation of various language versions of VATL. The main version - is the English language version with content being provided by all Partner Universities. The content is placed on the VATL Portal by the editorial office in the English language (the university to be defined). Language versions are to be supported by partner universities (Russian – BSU, Armenian – YSU, Georgian – TSU).

The main web-page contains content and courses T&L courses developed in the English language. National versions of the VATL Portal contain localized content with adaptation for each particular country and its system of education.

Part 4. Membership policy, services, etc.

4.1.1. Membership Policy

The VATL Portal is initially developed by the universities-members the PRINTeL project with a possibility of sharing the development tasks with other Partner Universities. The content is placed on the VATL Portal by the editorial office in the English language (the university to be defined).

10. Access Policy

The VATL provides free access to all materials on the web-portal with content available to all visitors.

T&L courses (within the LMS) are available in the following way:

Ready and approved courses are uploaded to VATL Portal (English version of the Portal) and available to PRINTeL participants and may be downloaded for further installation to local LMSs.

The courses uploaded to local LMSs of Partner Universities are available to PRINTeL participants and national universities within the countries for nation-wide trainings headed by tutors from Partner Universities.

Each Partner University may copy the national T&L course (localized, in the national language) to its own LMS and use it for T&L purposes.