SUMA Project (Open Murcia University Services)

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Abstract: The SUMA project, represents the actions taken to develop a whole TIC (Information and Communications Technologies) solution, which allows the pupils in the project to access remotely to the University from their own home. The goals in this virtual access, goes from making the remote control of the administrative and the extra-curricula tasks easy, to making some teaching tasks for a specific course if possible (forums, remote tutorials, e-mail linked to the courses, virtual classrooms, virtual exercises and problems which an Intelligent Card authentifies). These tasks are called TeleLearning. We want to facilitate some tasks, which can be made at the pupil’s home, avoiding unnecessary pupil displacements which can be harmful for nature. This kind of teaching is called bimodal. The SUMA project is a long time project, with great teaching and academic interest, really important for the Information Society development in Murcia

1. INTRODUCTION

The main project goal is to allow teachers and pupils at the University of Murcia to use the telematic tools, developed in the information highway context and inside the bimodal learning, to evaluate the possibility of shortening and improving the learning cycles and to blow down the physiological barriers, which impede access to the teacher who monitors the pupil.
The project development is based on the university community desire to enhance the telematic communication through Internet. We want to make this desire real within a whole project, which includes the teaching activity and offers the educational sector a solution to extensively use the tools required nowadays.

The project wants to evaluate the use of tools such as the e-mail and the web in the teacher-pupil communication, to introduce security and access control utilities and to evaluate the methodological and organisational changes derived from the introduction of these techniques in a flexible university environment. The SUMA project promotes virtual communication, the use of forums through telematic applications and the possibility of doing self-assessment tests to achieve their own evaluation of the knowledge learnt in every subject.

This project is the University of Murcia contribution to the worries expressed in some community documents like the first annual report of the European Commission from the “Information Society Forum” in June 1996. This report manifests that neither society nor European institutions are ready to use the new technologies and advises that the solution to this situation is essential in order to keep the “Welfare Society” in the European Community countries.

Nowadays we can say that the technological resources to do this already exist. Now we have to introduce them in the improvement process of teaching quality levels, established with the new technologies irruption mainly in the telematic area and in the services related to the Data Highways.

This improvement process is a strategic goal at the University and in other teaching environments. The European Community support every initiative in communication improvement in the telematic area and in multimedia and teaching contents production. The reports of the European institutions speak about a strong social impact with the introduction of the new technologies, which will have unexpected consequences in the near future.

There are a lot of initiatives in Spain using the new technologies in distance learning. University entities covering this teaching level are UNED or UOC. Therefore, the new technologies allow getting a new teaching level, (called bimodal in the OCDE report titled: "Les technologies de l'information et l'avenir de l'enseignement post-secondaire" edited in 1996, page 49), which takes advantage of the benefits derived from the presential universities, i.e. the usage of research centers and laboratories placed at the university campus.