

[Review]**Another Powerful E-learning and Course Management Tool for Web-based learning: DOKEOS**

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Abstract

In this paper, an open source e-learning and course management tool, Dokeos will be introduced. Dokeos can be used to offer any course which aims to benefit from online education as well as blended learning, in which face to face and online education are mixed. It enables the teacher to organize teaching using the features such as conference, chat, blogs and forums. The teacher can decide on the features and select them according to the learner's needs. Moreover, there are some more features only for teacher use such as user tracking and reporting. The main advantage of Dokeos over the other platforms such as Moodle is that it provides a free campus, where the teacher can register and create a course in less than a minute with almost no technical knowledge. However, there are some limitations such as lack of virtual classroom and the quota on the space available.

Keywords: E-learning, Course Management, CMS, Dokeos

Introduction

E-learning systems are increasingly becoming a common way of delivering online and flexible activities, which enable teachers and students to communicate with each other outside the classroom and campus via forums, blogs, chat rooms, and virtual conferences. This type of interaction at schools mostly occurs through both commercial and Open Source CMSs (Course Management System) such as [WebCT](#), [Blackboard](#), [Moodle](#), and [Dokeos](#). It is increasingly common at universities and other educational institutions to benefit from CMS and support learning activities through these systems. Many teachers find these platforms very useful regarding the features they provide such as publishing teaching materials, benefiting from multimedia, re-using them, and the interaction they provide outside the classroom ([Altun, Gulbahar, & Madran, 2008](#)). However, there are quite many platforms available on the Internet, some of which are commercial and some of which are provided free of charge.

The commercial platforms do not require an installation on a server or maintenance, unlike the open-source platforms. However, they are not easily affordable and to some degree closed proprietary systems. The open-source platforms, on the other hand, are provided free of charge and they need to be installed and maintained on a web server. The installation and maintenance require technical knowledge, though. Moreover, any institution using these open-source platforms is not dependent on a commercial company

and can use the sources to improve/extend the system, which would otherwise have been devoted to licensing and updating fees.

In this paper, Dokeos, one of the open-source platforms, will be introduced. It is similar to other known open source platforms in that it can be used to offer any course which aims to benefit from online education as well as blended learning, in which face to face and online education are mixed and enables the teacher to organize teaching using the features such as conference, chat, blogs and forums. However, unlike the other installable open-source platforms requiring technical knowledge and expertise to install, Dokeos provides a free campus, where the teacher can register and create a course in less than a minute with almost no technical knowledge. This feature is especially vital for any teacher willing to benefit from web-based learning but lacks the technical skill and/or works in an institution that cannot afford to buy hosting service.

Free Campus: Dokeos

Teachers can visit the page (<http://campus.dokeos.com>) to register an account on the campus. This process takes less than a minute, filling in the required information and providing the description data for the course and category. Upon visiting the open campus and entering Dokeos page, in the main interface (Fig. 1) there are two views teacher view and student view. The teacher can decide on which of the following features are available for students' use and select the features according to learners' needs. However, some settings (Blogs Management, Course Settings, Reporting, and Course Maintenance) are only available for the teacher(s) responsible for the course created. These are not available for students even if the teacher decides to share these.

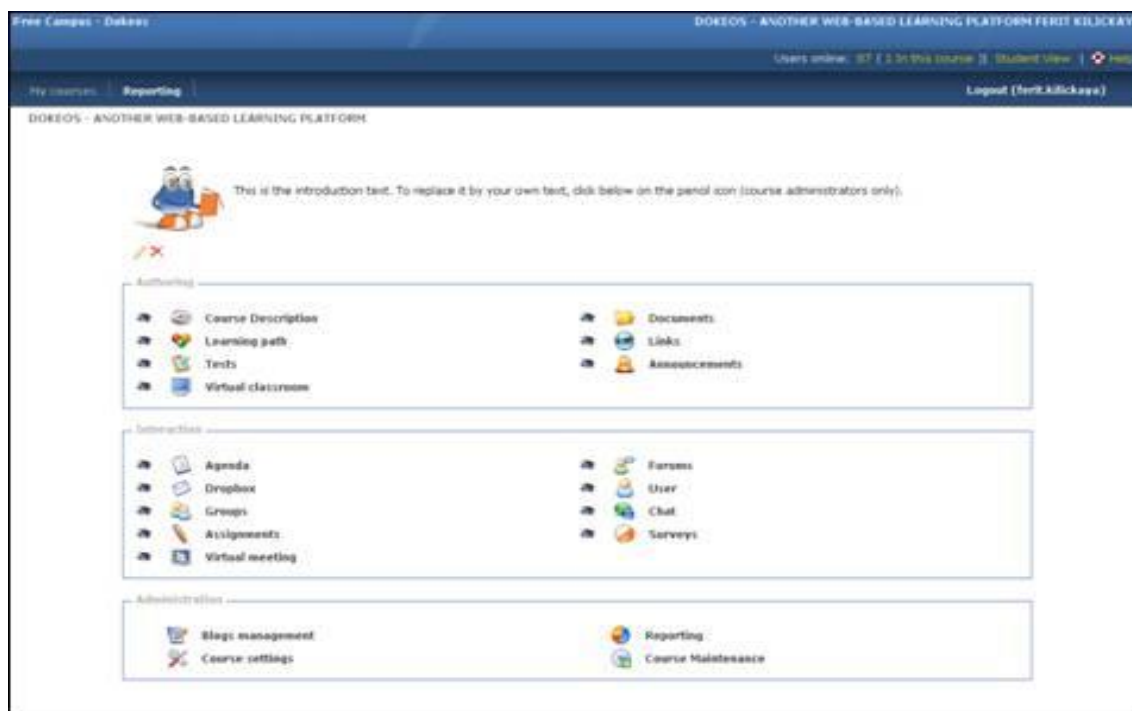


Fig. 1. The Main Interface of Dokeos on Free Campus

Dokeos: Features

All the following features are ready to be used by the teacher and the students. However, some of them are controlled and edited by the only teacher, whereas some are available for students' use; however, almost all of the following features are seen by the students and teachers except the ones related to the course management and settings.

Course Description includes detailed information about general policy and detailed information about the course such as objectives, topics, methodology, and course material, which will be provided by the teacher. Through Learning Path, a new document can be created or existing resources can be used such as tests, links, or forums. Moreover, pre-created Word or PowerPoint files can be converted to be used in a learning path. Using the Tests tool, teachers can create multiple-choice tests (unique and multiple answers), cloze tests, and matching. The scores are sent to the teacher automatically as soon as the students complete the test. In addition to this, tests created via Hot Potatoes Software can be imported to the tests section. Dokeos on Free Campus does not provide the virtual classroom, in which teachers and students have a live session on any topic to discuss. The pro and enterprise versions have this feature, but it requires licensing, other server requirements, and expertise in technical knowledge. The interaction between the teacher and the students can be maintained through Forum, text-based Chat, and Survey tools.

Personal Experience and Students' Views

Dokeos on Free Campus has been introduced to undergraduate students at the Department of Foreign Language Education, Middle East Technical University in Turkey through the course on the use of technology in teaching English and the Master of Arts students at the Division of Applied Linguistics, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Poland through a seminar course on the opportunities in technology-enhanced language learning. In these courses, students have created course content, utilizing the functions such as learning path, tests, and text-based chat and survey. In addition to this, students have discussed how to benefit from Dokeos in a language class, comparing Moodle and Dokeos on Free Campus. Students highly valued Dokeos on Free Campus as they easily created an account and started creating course content without dealing with the technical issues. Moreover, they found Dokeos on Free Campus more user-friendly as the menu was simple to follow and supported by icons. However, the students touched upon the limitations such as the space available for storing materials and the lack of online conference tools.

Advantages

Dokeos can be said to be one of the most useful tools of web-based learning as it combines most of the tools such as forums, learning paths, and blogs. Dokeos on Free Campus

- provides an easy way to create and control an online course for any teacher and student without requiring a server, knowledge to install and maintain the software, which is a real advantage over many commercial or open-source free course management tools.

- includes chat sessions which are saved automatically and saved in the chat log file, which can be used later during the course.
- allows teachers to adapt the tools in line with learners' needs, which gives a sense of control and security.

Limitations and Ways to Overcome

Online conference, which allows participants to communicate verbally and visually, is not supported on Dokeos on Free Campus. However, this can be overcome using one of the online conference tools, WiZiQ, which

...is originally a free online teaching and learning platform and a free alternative to other conferencing tools such as Adobe Connect Professional. The platform aims to enable the educational community to create a user-friendly online teaching and learning place. It is an easy-to-use tool that is operating-system free (it works on any operating system), requires no installation or changes in your system; however, its features are astonishing, such as audio and video stream and recording the sessions held ([Kilickaya, 2008a](#), p. 1)

Dokeos on Free Campus has a limitation of 20 MB for storage; however, for uploading files, PBworks (formerly PBwiki) can be used as an Academic version that provides 2GB space. Both teachers and students can use PBworks for uploading/downloading/sharing documents, pages, videos, and for other purposes ([Kilickaya, 2008b](#); [Augar, Raitman & Zhou, 2006](#)).

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