

Cultural e-Learning Through Erasmus Experience Management

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Abstract: The practice of cultural orientation through e-learning is one of the achieved success of our technology use, as culture is said to be a form or stage of civilization of a certain nation or period, this might imply that we are the culture and learning the culture is learning ourselves. This paper is trying to bring close to our vision the need for the cultural experience management system, through which people that have the knowledge of another culture can share and document their experiences of that culture. A cultural knowledge system can build a vocal community with human understanding that will help in, use of cultural signs, selection of words for communication, and guide us in our physical appearance to a certain community, with respect and preservation of human integrity from each society. The system will assist in bringing up a civilized young generation that will be good ambassadors in any geographic location they found themselves. Based on this, we may say, a student that goes to Erasmus program can have a lot to share regarding to a culture in a different perspective that is likely not to be the same with a person who learn about the culture through papers or by attending classes. Culture is taught and learned and shared, these can be better accomplished through the management of such experience.

Keywords: Culture, e-Learning, Erasmus, experience management, Erasmus students

Introduction

Since the start of visual technology, cultural advocacy has become a concern within our society which leads to creation, implementation, and recreation of different means of cultural awareness. Culture as a stage of civilization characterized by social, ethnic, and age group of a community can be attributed to every one of us. Culture or civilization might vary from one community to another, but they all fall under individual awareness of

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the culture in that vicinity, to be civilized is to be cultural. Various forms and means are been used in the awareness of culture, such as TV programs and movies that later become more practical with the introduction of cultural exchange through the exchange of student and teachers. Due to the variability of the culture in different regions, culture plays a major role in our educational environments, and in many places the educational systems demand that students should be introduced to the culture of such a locality before undergoing their normal learning process. This creates a challenge for learners who are culturally different from the culture that develops the learning content, especially when they must deal with curricula that are developed from and upon a different cultural basis (Olaniran, 2009). Student exchange programs have helped a lot in the cultural exchange even though few of the countries have realized the achievement through such programs. Introduction of Erasmus programs in the European countries and bilateral programs in other countries succeeded in the intermingling of culture and cultural knowledge sharing. This paper is not on culture or e-Learning nor was it on management, specifically rather it's on the integration of all through e-Learning to improve cultural awareness to those who have been in the above mentioned programs and those who have not been opportune but will have the means through the available e-Learning infrastructures.

Cultural e-Learning

Culture in particular encompasses the majority of our life, starting from what we eat down to our social amenities and religious affairs, it is a huge and complex topic to deliver in any medium, and therefore, integrating culture to e-Learning will require great effort and dedication from material preparation, material format up to the delivery of the material. For such reasons if people from both cultures are to identify with the software, the content should be carefully written so that there are no clashes of cultural identity (Al-Hunaiyyan, Al-Huwail ,Al-Sharhan, 2008). In the design of such a system the designer has to take precaution of some areas that has ethnic impact to certain ethnicity or group. It is not all about putting content on an e-Learning media rather all the technological, cultural differences

should be in consideration; modelling and simulation of such a system will have to be in an ethnic permissible format, because the culture that is presentable in some countries might not be acceptable in other countries. The selection of modelling technologies that can model a cultural belonging exactly as the way it should be. Designers and instructors of cross-cultural online learning should become familiar with the need for cultural awareness and sensitivity, and the potential influences of effective communication and collaboration on learning resulting from appropriate training (Chen, Hsu, Caropreso, 2006). We always like to acquire more of knowledge in particular to understand ourselves, sometimes we study others' culture and even write about it, so as to make others learn from our knowledge, some of those writing are done without the actual physical knowledge of the exact place or locality. Looking to the other side of the coin we have another such a person that happens to be in other places, seeking knowledge that also have the passion of culture even though they lack the passion of putting things to paper. For such people we can create a room through the electronics learning paradigm to make them share their knowledge that will definitely be full of other cultural perspectives. This is very important because considering the cultural learning and awareness are not confined to training and design only. Also naturally we happen to be more attentive when acquiring something that come from the source rather than unverified imaginative forms of knowledge. These include the role of the instructor and the level of interaction. Intercultural competence has to do with the capacity to understand more than what the words record in spoken or written language. It has to do with the human communication process and therefore goes beyond linguistic competence (Belisle, 2008). Having an e-Learning system that will manage our Erasmus and exchange student experience will contribute a lot to the cultural awareness.

Management of Cultural Experiences

Information management among all has also pioneered many parts in our daily life. It has become the source of our modern development, though, for the past it has played a key role in human development. Today the huge struggle and war of success has been pinned to information success, which

can only be achieved through effective management of the information. It has always been stated that “information is power” but we are all a witness that information is not only a power rather power, money, and life in general. Before the advent of sophisticated, intelligent technologies, different means and methodologies have been adopted in retaining information for future generation and implementation. Experience management in other ways can be seen as opportunity management that if well documented can save us a lot in life, we lost many opportunities not because we do not know but it is because we are not able to preserve or share them with others. Documentation of this kind of knowledge or information can help our life struggle both in seeking knowledge, health, and business. With faster access to needed information, managers can make better decisions about procedures, future directions, and developments by competitors, and make them more quickly (Reddy, et. al, 2009). Consequently, the manager or system operator can use the time and resources s/he would have used in monitoring or fixing problems for other key uses (Nowduri, 2010). The management of cultural experiences can also be classified in its value of information, legal requirements, and its sensitivity. To manage experiences is to capture, preserve, store, protect, and deliver the right knowledge and culture to the right people at the right time. These can appropriately be achieved by having a system that is dedicated to collecting cultural experience from various people, and it can help in future decision on cultural e-Learning technology development.

Cultural Experience and Student Exchange Programs

This is a broad topic that comprises of other broad topics, to make this topic more manageable, boundaries and area of restriction will be further delineated. Because of its vastness a lot of frameworks have been adopted to specifically concentrate on each and every culture. The main focus here is on student information management, but wait a minute, did I say student information management; this is something everyone is aware of. Right from the start of human in seeking knowledge on earth, mentors have been documenting and managing their student’s information. That is right, and if you come into same conclusion with the above statement, you will soon

realize that, students are still missing a vital part of their student life. We all know that keeping student's records, such as starting and ending date, class of certificate, and success and failure of the student throughout the years of studies are all kept intact and they can be traced back whenever required. The vitality of the above secured document makes a lot of us think, in a student life, there is nothing useful apart from that, for example when seeking for a job or any political position. We are yet to foresee other aspect of school life to be helpful, not only for the formally mentioned aspect but also for our upcoming young energetic leaders of tomorrow. Those are the students underway for their tomorrow, preparing for the varsity life, registered or in the registration process. The movement of student from one school to another seeking for knowledge and gaining experience is named after the founder's name Erasmus. It has become common practice in all parts of the world, but it is known to originate from Europe. This kind of life experience must have carried vital information that can be beneficial to others.

Need for a Web Based Experience Management System

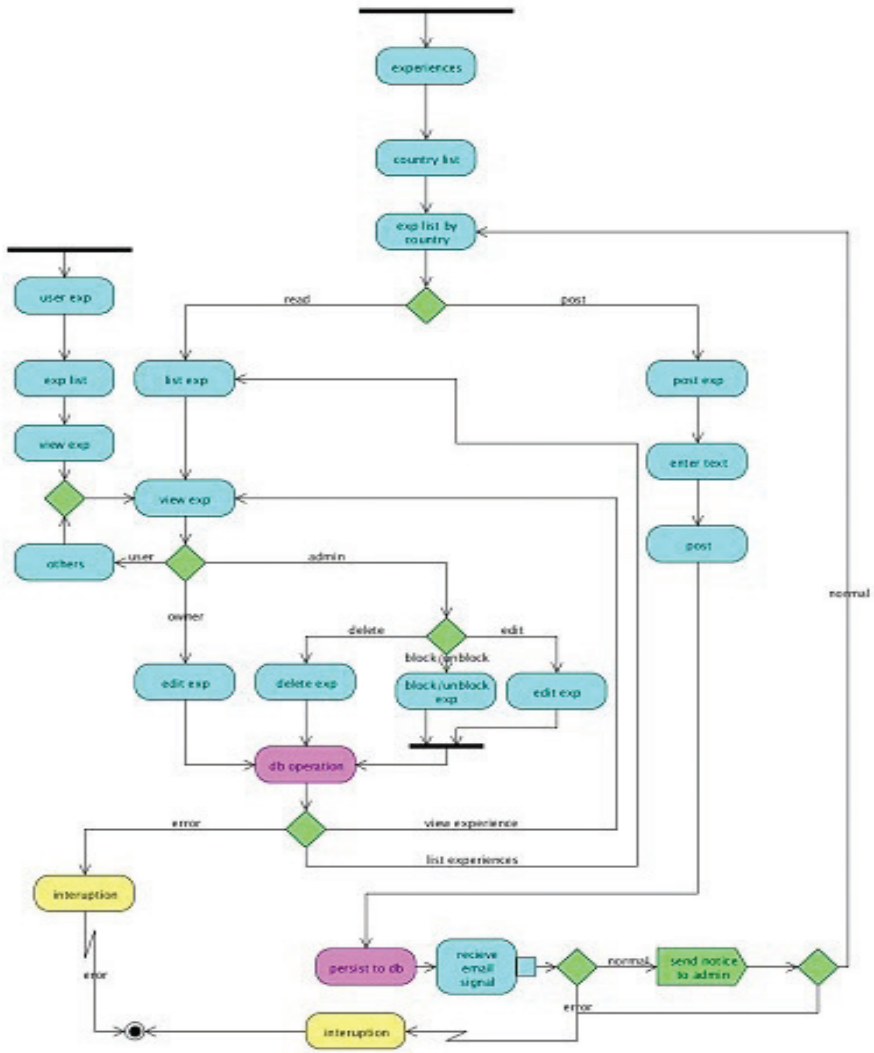
Experience management system will give exchange student the ability to express and pass on their experience through e-Learning arena to their colleagues and other interested parties. Such a system should also help other student who is planning to go for such a great program preparing for the upcoming social and cultural norms.

System Detailed Flow Graph

The below diagram in figure 1 is a detailed interaction between users and the system. Though the log-in and registration aspect of the system diagram are not shown, after a successful registration or log-in to the system, a user can see already existing user written experiences. A user can always add an experience to the desired country and read any written experience from any country of interest. Likewise depending on the privilege of a user he can have permission to view written experiences only if he is not the author of the experience or have the right to view and edit the experience if he is the owner of the experience. An administrator can view, block/unblock,

and delete any experience, most especially if the author tends to violate any of the rules and regulation. As shown in the graph posted experiences are blocked by default unless otherwise unblocked after the control of the administrator. When an experience is posted in the system an email notice is sent to the administrator for control.

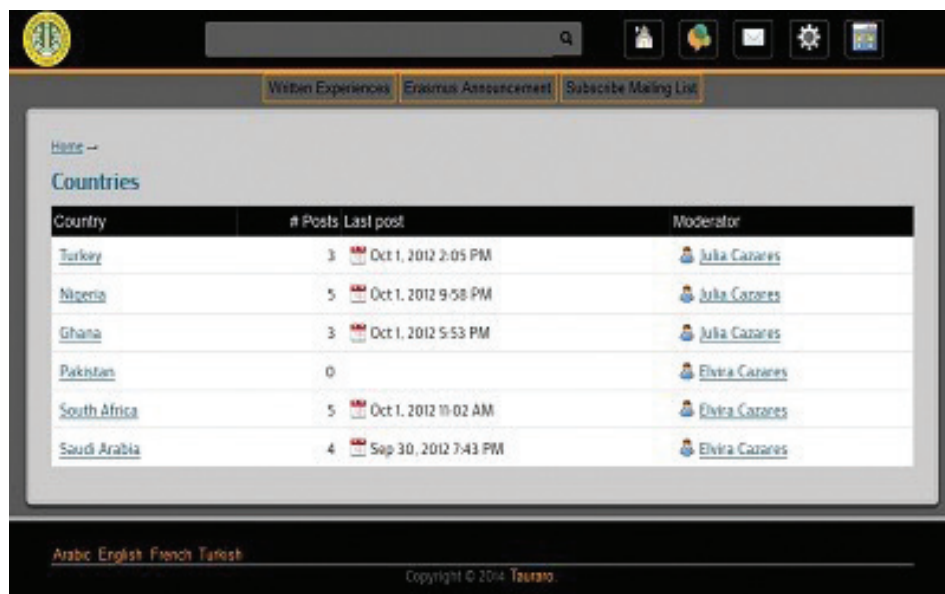
Figure 1: Experience management model detailed graph



Experience Management's System Countries' Interface

The interface in figure 2 is an experience interface based on countries and moderators of each country. A moderator is an administrator of a country that is responsible for the country administrative issues of contents management as shown in figure 2 below.

Figure 2: System Countries' Interface



The screenshot shows a web interface with a search bar, navigation icons, and a table of countries. The table has columns for Country, # Posts, Last post, and Moderator. The data is as follows:

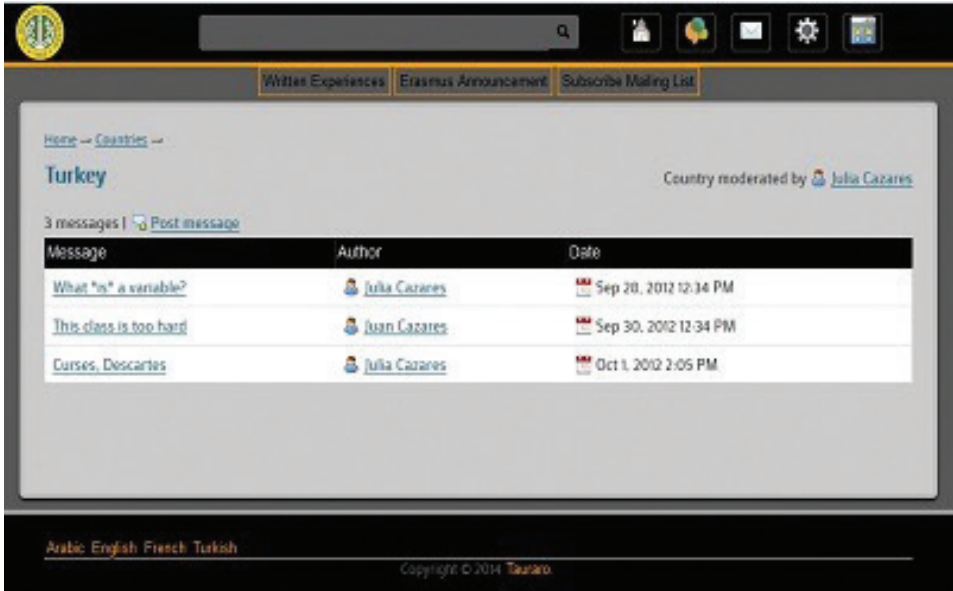
Country	# Posts	Last post	Moderator
Turkey	3	Oct 1, 2012 2:05 PM	Julia Carones
Nigeria	5	Oct 1, 2012 9:58 PM	Julia Carones
Ghana	3	Oct 1, 2012 5:53 PM	Julia Carones
Pakistan	0		Elvira Carones
South Africa	5	Oct 1, 2012 11:02 AM	Elvira Carones
Saudi Arabia	4	Sep 30, 2012 7:43 PM	Elvira Carones

At the bottom of the interface, there are language options: Arabic, English, French, Turkish, and a copyright notice: Copyright © 2014 Taurato.

Country Content View

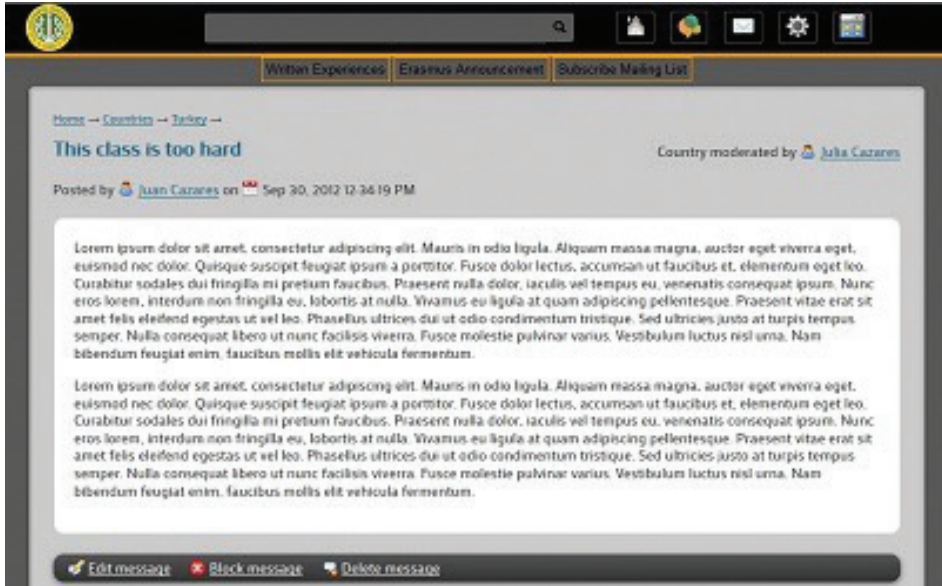
The content of a country will consist of students' written experiences in details as shown in figure 3 below. A user can click on any of the experiences to view the written content, the user can also have the privilege to edit if s/he is the owner, moderator, or general administrator.

Figure 3: View of a country's content



The View of a Written Experience

Finally, the classification of a content to a certain country is done to avoid confusion and give direction to authors. Selecting an experience to view will give you the detail of the content author, moderator, and administrator; this gives users the opportunity to contact the author, moderator, or general administrator for anything that has to do with the content. In figure 4, the view of content in the system inside a country is shown.

Figure 4: The view of a written experience in a country

Impact of Exchange Programs on Our Social and Cultural Norms

According to studies carried out on student opinions about international exchange programs within which the question and response are as follows: When asked to rate the relevance of the experience to their future job opportunities, 58.1% of the students rated it as very or extremely relevant, 33.1% rated it relevant, and only 8.9% felt it was irrelevant ($M = 3.75$, $SD = .98$) (Hoof & Verbeeten, 2008). This indicates that, such kind of experience worth recognition and management. Give a visit to someone that has undergone such kind of life, you will surely notice the life from the photo album. Such people always try to share what has amazed them during such program to family, friends, and acquaintance. The technological opportunity we are blessed with also opens doors of extreme relationship. Different people from different geographic arena might have an interest in one another, but cultural barrier can defeat the purpose. The elites, are those having a good understanding of different cultures, always abide by the rules and give due respect to human beings irrespective of where they come from and how they appear to them. Building a moral community does not stop at giving

children professional education only, rather it expands to introducing them to other cultural perspective, and this is the main idea with exchange and Erasmus programs. The students build their social understanding with one another, share their moral behavior and understanding of the different world they come from, sometimes they become future carrier advisors to one another that will open doors for international relationships and businesses. Hypothetically, in any case, those students are proven to be more open to the world and knowledgeable than their colleagues whom have not been in such a program. Moreover, as stated in a survey named “outcome assessment of a short-term U.S. Thailand student exchange program” pinpoints that at the tour’s conclusion, more than 75% indicated a moderate to high level of knowledge (Robbins & Orr, 2004). This is on social and cultural norms.

An area to notice is that people have been going for such life, and they keep on going; the more the population is increasing the more applications are increasing. People always face difficulties right from the application to the successful conclusion of such program. As technologies become more a part of our life, the area of difficulties is changing to different aspects. We use technology to document student’s information, sometimes social life, and more general school life. The later, is mostly used to be a paragraph/student statement and some pictures on a site. Giving student the ability to sit and write all s/he has across through their student life, all the pitfalls, and how s/he overcomes them can be a door to student success. With such information available for student, they will be able to make better decisions about procedures, future directions, and success of their studies. For this we need a system to fill this gap, not a student management information system, rather more specific “student experience management information system”. In this paper we are more specific to “Erasmus student’s experience management system”.

Conclusion

Much has been written about student, among the plausible need of student life, is the student cultural experience management system. This paper points out the need for a SCEMS that will manage cultural experiences from

exchange students and teachers, these people can be our students that go to timely study programs or our teachers that go for periodical teaching to other schools within and outside their countries' of residence. As we know culture is not only to be learned in books and classes, to better understand the culture you either get someone that have the experience of that culture or that belongs to that culture. We are trying to say that experience is the best teacher, and documenting and sharing of that experience can lead to a great success. Most of the people that have this kind of experience are always willing to share it with others, if so, then why cannot we afford to documents and manage their knowledge and thought. A sample system is shown to allow students and teachers to register and share their experience with other students and teachers. The system assigns an administrator that has to control any submitted post before the audience can see it, this is to avoid cultural right violation, as everything that people do does not mean that it belongs to their culture. Currently the system's cultural segmentation is country-wise, which is in a more general way. But in the near future, we will look toward implementing the segmentation in each country to be based on the different culture in that country.

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