

On-Line Distance Learning Environment and Tools to Create It: Design Based on Theory and Practice

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Abstract

In the 1997 European Commission Multimedia Joint Call Proposal “Educational Bank of Europe¹”, the authors of this paper were asked to develop a new, ideal authoring tool, based on a pedagogical approach as a basis for design, for creating on-line learning environments (the “Network Education Databench”). The proposal was not included in the small percentage of projects selected for funding, but we believe that the rationale for its development is highly valid and that powerful authoring tools are still needed for designers and developers of distance education materials. We also believe that educational needs rather than technological developments should increasingly drive the design of tools for on-line teaching and learning. In this paper, we will outline some pedagogical needs that could drive the design of on-line environments and the development of tools to create them. Such a summary could also help educators select from the range of distance education authoring tools already available.

Keywords: Authoring tools; on-line teaching and learning; distance education materials.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH, THEORY, AND PRACTICE

¹ Pétur Thorsteinsson was the main author of the proposal. Pétur is well known in Iceland as an educator but especially for his role in establishing the Icelandic Educational Network in 1992. Its roots go back to 1988, when IMBA, the Icelandic schools computer centre, began operation at Kópasker, in north Iceland where Pétur Thorsteinsson was principal. The Icelandic Educational Network was established primarily to meet the needs of educational institutions and their workers.

