



Edutech Mandate & National Course Platform : A Brief Overview

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The Edutech Mandate

- Ongoing SVC mandate since January 2000 (web site : 1997)
- Activities :
 - ◆ Evaluation of course platforms
 - ◆ Software tools : evaluation, information & training
 - ◆ Swiss Virtual Campus & Edutech web sites
 - ◆ Administration, support & training for Vista national platform
 - ◆ Technological support for SVC projects
 - ◆ Technology watch
 - ◆ General support for SVC programme
 - ◆ Others : networking & community building, AAI, ...



Technology : Some Observations

- The “big” question : use an existing course platform or not ?
 - ◆ often a problematic issue
 - ◆ no single best platform
 - ◆ part of e-learning strategy at university level
 - ◆ platform choice has only a limited impact on the quality of the course
- Requirements for technological support group
 - ◆ knowledgeable about current and emerging technologies
 - ◆ must be very flexible, open to new ideas, willing to learn
 - ◆ must have a pedagogical “feeling”
 - ◆ beware of (too) qualified technical staff



More Observations

- Content creation : costly and often underestimated
 - ◆ how to develop reusable content ? is it possible ;-) ?
- Technical support also needed for students
 - ◆ technical functions have to be explained
 - ◆ helpdesk for technical questions
- Main difficulty not with technology, but with pedagogy
 - ◆ pedagogical AND technological support must be available right from the start of the project
 - ◆ good pedagogical design requires knowledge, experience & creativity



Motivation for National Installation

- Modern elearning platforms...
 - ◆ complex technology (installation, maintenance, adaptations, extensions)
 - ◆ require training and support infrastructure
 - ◆ expensive maintenance and licenses
- Guideline for new projects
- National project SVC requires national infrastructure
- Sustainability of SVC investments
- Promote and support cooperation between universities



Aims

- Offer 1-3 elearning platforms
- Target public: course developers / students at
 - ◆ SVC projects
 - ◆ universities
 - ◆ universities of applied science
 - ◆ federal institutes of technology
- Well maintained, updated and secure servers (24h service)
- Fast, national internet connection

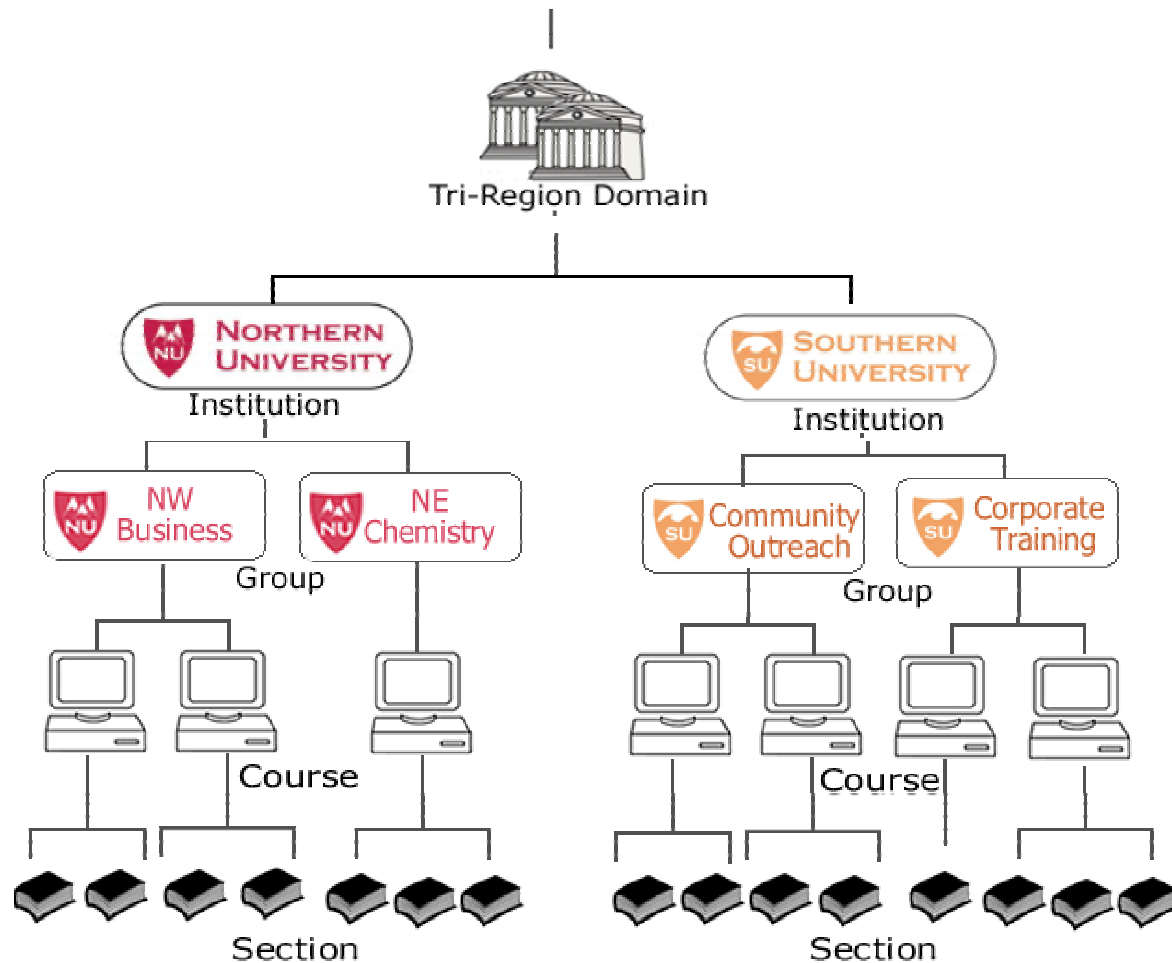


First Installation: WebCT Vista

- Phases:
 - ◆ autumn 2002: evaluation
 - ◆ spring 2003: decision SVC steering committee
 - ◆ summer 2003: decision CUS
 - ◆ autumn 2003: start 2 years pilot phase
 - ◆ 2005 end of 2007: production phase (to be decided)
 - ◆ 2008 - ... (being planned)
- WebCT Vista
 - ◆ large functionality and still easy to use
 - ◆ supports multiple independent instances (Mandantenfähigkeit)
 - ◆ solid technical architecture
 - ◆ interoperability



WebCT Vista Server





Experiences

- About 25 course migrations WebCT CE -> Vista
- Development of new courses planned
- Experiences
 - ◆ automatic migration works for ~90% of WebCT CE courses
 - ◆ manual postprocessing always required
 - ◆ “hacks” are difficult to migrate



Perspective

- Pilot project WebCT Vista
 - ◆ financial planning until 2007
 - ◆ ... and beyond 2008
- Implement other elearning platforms
- Alternative offerings: videoconferencing, groupware, image databases, ... ?
- National content repository ?
- Future tendency to national or decentralized infrastructure ?