

E-LEARNING AS A SUPPORT FOR CZECH POINT SERVICES

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***Abstract:** This paper narrows the e-learning support for the public administration services in Czech Republic. There are many contemporary approaches in studying the public administration subjects in Czech universities. One of them, and maybe the most successful, is the e-learning in the form of Learning Management System. E-learning enables students and employees to study online courses with many advantages. The fashion of public administration (eGovernment) naturally calls for online form of study. Firstly, the paper outlines the advantages and the downsides of e-learning. Secondly, it describes the Czech POINT platform and the requirements, which modern learning platform should fulfil to satisfy potential users of eGovernment services. Lastly, it suggests a vision, advantages and a solution for a successful education portal serving public administration employees, students and citizens.*

Keywords: Czech POINT, eGovernment, e-learning, LMS, public administration.

INTRODUCTION

Currently, public administration in the Czech Republic as in many other European countries deals with a huge task of eGovernment implementation (Šperka 2014). This task requests an amount of employees, which could properly manage the changes in day-to-day praxis in offices, mainly, in the citizen-to-state relation. One of the most important parts of eGovernment project in the Czech Republic is a Czech POINT project (CzechPOINT@home 2014), which enables citizen to communicate with the State in one place. The employees should be trained to satisfy the citizen requests and on the other hand the citizen should be informed,—which services are to be requested at Czech POINT offices. Here arises the need for a reasonable education platform. We suggest the e-learning form of education to support public administration services and information dissemination.

According to the technical and technological background e-learning could be divided into three groups:

1. CBT - Computer Based Training;
2. WBT - Web Based Training;
3. LMS - Learning Management System.

LMS (Learning Management System) is the ideal group of electronically based education. From the student's viewpoint is the situation is the same as in the case of WBT, which means the online education. Many differences are visible from the tutor's and the course developer's viewpoint. LMS is a special software system, which enables immediate course change by means of the content, the communication between tutors and students, and the communication possibilities among students. LMS is installed on the application server and this ensures the accessibility almost from everywhere with the Internet connection. Important components of LMS are the tools for monitoring the studying progress, and the statistics of example tasks and final tests. In the process of deploying the LMS, the most important substance, is to integrate the LMS into the web portal of the organization.

This paper focuses on the e-learning introduction and the possibility to use LMS as an educational portal for public administration purposes. The paper is structured as follows. In the first section some current e-learning trends will be presented. The second chapter characterizes a brief list of Czech POINT services, which should demonstrate the number of tasks the public administration employees should deal with. The third chapter depicts a suggestion of an educational portal, which might help in educational process in public administration. Lastly, the conclusion summarizes all ideas presented in this paper.

1. E-LEARNING TRENDS

1.1 E-learning advantages and downsides

The advantages of e-learning:

- The access to studying materials anytime from any place.
- Studying materials, supporting sources and books are published on the Internet, so they are accessible almost from everywhere on the 24/7 basis.
- Studying materials are actual every time. The content actualisation is immediate and the process is low-cost.
- Studying progress according to the individual speed. The e-learning courses are organized in a long-time studying period. This ensures students to create their own studying plan, which respects spare time activities and studying habits.
- Lower costs for printing and distribution of studying materials while studying online. Low costs for renting lecture rooms, for accommodation and board.

- The interactivity of courses is higher than in the case of present form. It can be increased with the use of multimedia (audio, video, etc.) and indirectly to support the students' captivation to study regularly and effectively.
- Many possibilities to test obtained knowledge.

The downsides of e-learning:

- The immense creation of studying content. Time dependent process of creation for every specialist. The multimedia studying content is often built with web-oriented technologies or with special program equipment, such as with Flash, Captivate, DrawSWF, CamStudio, etc.
- The accessories dependency. The main downside of e-learning is the dependence on hardware and software equipment of the computer, which operates with e-learning content. But the majority of computers and e-learning environments needs such software equipment which is open-source or free to download and to use, i.e., OpenOffice, Adobe Flash Players, audio and video codecs, etc.
- E-learning form of study is not appropriate for some courses. Especially for the courses, where the human factor is necessary, e.g., for the communication courses.
- E-learning is not suitable for some student groups. Especially for the students, who refuse to operate with information and communication technologies, for disabled students, etc.

1.2 E-learning trends

E-learning like everything in our neighbourhood is changing and developing in a rapid way. The main reason is the development of the information and communication technologies. E-learning is also adopted for the students' assessment, e.g.; polls, examples, tests, etc.

The most common types of e-learning in general are:

- **Blended learning** – a new form of teaching based on the techniques combining the presence form of teaching with e-learning form. This enables to integrate the advantages from both types of teaching, online and traditional. The practical realisation might use the e-learning courses in preparing phase of courses. At this moment it is necessary to keep the e-learning course accessible throughout the whole studying period. It is appropriate to release the materials time-to-time from presence form of teaching into the e-learning form to lower the costs for printing and distribution.
- **M-learning** – indicates the e-learning form of teaching, which disposes with mobile technologies, such as, cell phones, smart phones, tablets, PDAs, etc. This form is dedicated especially to the younger generation of students, which are prone to use all these modern devices. M-learning is limited with technical

parameterization of these devices, which influences the performance and the Internet connectivity possibilities. This handicaps are more and more minimized with the technology improvement.

- **Rapid eLearning** – this form of e-learning is characterized by the short time for the creation of the course, which what is a significant difference between rapid e-learning and the classical e-learning form. Mostly, the lifetime of the studied content is very short.

In the next section some of Czech POINT services will be introduced to explain the need of e-learning in public administration services and to clear the enormous need of education in public administration.

2. A BRIEF LIST OF CZECH POINT SERVICES

According to Czech POINT webpage (2014) - Czech Submission Verification Information National Terminal, a Czech POINT is a project whose aim is to reduce the red tape in relation citizen-public administration. Currently, a citizen must often visit several offices to handle a problem. Czech POINT serves as an assisted place of public administration, enabling communication with the State through one place so that "not citizen, but data should circulate".

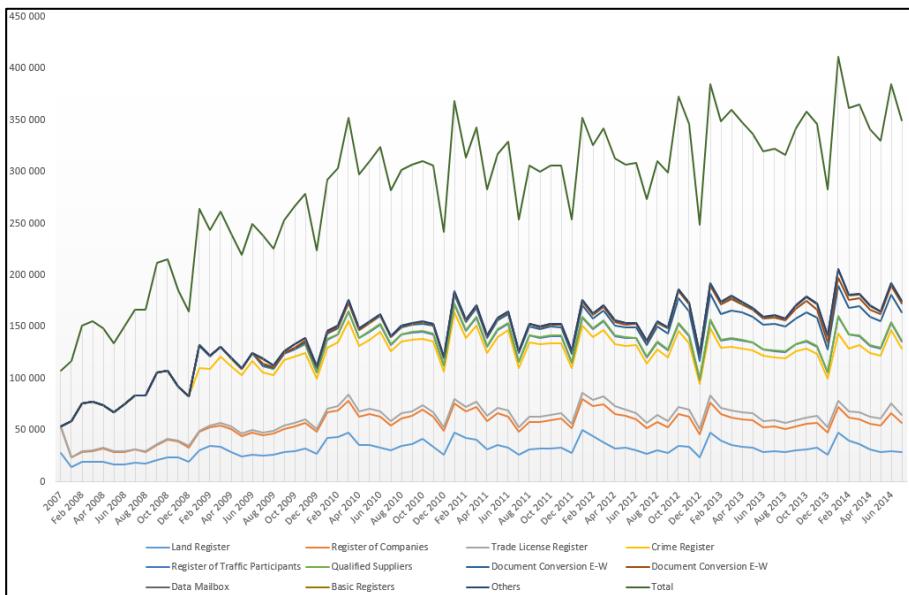


Figure 1. Numbers of Issued Listings – Czech POINT 2007-2014

*Source: Own work based on data from
<http://www.czechpoint.cz/web/?q=node/488>*

The aim of the project is to create a Czech POINT guaranteed service to communicate with the State through one universal place, where it is possible to obtain and verify data from public and private information systems, certified check of documents and papers, to convert written documents to electronic form and vice versa, to obtain information on the administrative proceedings in relation to the citizen, and to submit filings for initiating proceedings administrations. It is therefore a maximum utilization of data owned by the state so as to minimize demands on citizens (Figure 1).

The Czech POINT project brings significant facilitation of a communication with the state. In some situations citizen should visit only one office. In the final phase of the project the citizen might transact business from home via the Internet.

What offers Czech POINT:

- Excerpt from the Land Register.
- Excerpt from the Register of Companies.
- Excerpt from the Trade License Register.
- Excerpt from the List of Qualified Suppliers.
- Excerpt from the Insolvency Register.
- Excerpt from the Crime Register – natural persons.
- Excerpt from the Crime Register – legal persons.
- Excerpt from the Point Driver's Status.
- Submission according to the Trade Licensing Act.
- Register of Traffic Participants of the Module Car Wreckages ISOH.
- Authorised conversion of documents.
- Excerpts from basic registers, such as excerpt of data from the Register of Inhabitants or excerpt of data from the Register of People.
- Verification of signatures and documents, etc.

Listings you can get at the contact points of a CzechPOINT are primarily intended for the use in Czech Republic. There many services listed under Czech POINT office possibilities. That means the employees should use many connected information systems to obtain requested data. This brings enormous need to teach the employees in order to fulfil all tasks.

In the next section the need for an educational portal in public administration will be introduced with some detailed vision, advantages and proposed solution.

3. E-LEARNING BACKGROUND IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION TRENDS

A modern public administration (EEA blog SK/CZ 2014) puts high demands on state employees. It creates the need of a permanent education, absorbing new information (facts, law acts, norms, rules, etc.), habits, and procedures. This brings the same requirements onto the educational system resp. universities. The life-long learning of the employees is substantially supported by the European Union in Czech Republic nowadays. And the financial support is streaming into this area.

An important task of public administration is to provide the citizens and organizations with sufficient information and explanations in a correct form (e.g., in the legislature area, which is complicated and complex). European Union also supports many forms of electronic form of education, communication and dissemination of information. Modern organizations understand the education as a never-ending process, which can be actually adopted to the state of the organization, to the needs, aims, priorities, and different directions. This is why are these systems becoming more important, especially, with the connection to the knowledge management systems, ERP systems, and managerial systems of the organization. The question is how to support an effective and systematic education in public administration.

3.1 Vision

For the education of a good quality we suggest to use an e-learning platform. This e-learning platform should serve as an education portal, which will provide the organizations and universities an educational content, studying courses and tools supporting the educational process. The e-learning platform should be chosen according to high international standards and should be a verified system. This platform could be divided into two parts:

- **Public part** – will serve citizens and will principally provide:
 - publicly available educational content,
 - publicly available studying courses with the possibility to enrol and to obtain a certificate,
 - information.
- **Private part** – will serve the public administration employees (signed in the system) and will provide:
 - studying electronic courses and educational content,
 - catalogue of courses with searching and signing-in options,
 - individual studying plans of employees,
 - tools for watching and updating of the employee profile,

- tools for the tutors to create and to publish the courses and other educational activities,
- community tools,
- tools for monitoring the educational process,
- reporting tools,
- testing and certificating tools,
- tools for the organization and technical maintenance, and source management.

The education portal will ensure the planning, realization and management of all types of educational activities. It will ensure the experience and information sharing among participants across different organizations. The public administration institution will be able to offer its activities, courses (through the catalogue of courses) to other institutions. The education portal will be centralized, but it will ensure simply creation of an own domain for particular institutions. In the frame of own domain the institution might manage and realize the education according to own needs. The portal will enable the institutions and offices to carry out the education systematically and according to their plans. They will get the overview about competencies and knowledge of their employees, and about the actual and future needs. They can plan individual and group activities accordingly. The core is the competence profile of an employee, which describes his knowledge, skills, competencies, and certificates. The career development could be precisely followed and planned through the comparison between the competence profile and the requirements for a specific position, project or a function. The portal also motivates the employee to the self-study. It permits to uncover personal spaces in knowledge and dispose with suitable courses and information.

3.2 Advantages

The development of an education portal in public administration could bring the following advantages:

- Savings through sharing and optimization of sources.
- Planning and evidence. The support for the whole educational process, regardless of the realization form.
- The support for an effective distance learning.
- Maximum exploitation of many standards. A possible use of educational content from different domestic and international vendors.
- Maximum exploitation of sources, e.g., brand-board internet connection, existing information and educational content, workstations, methods, and tutors.

- Support for local activities, decentralization, and distributive approach. It also enables a centralized control.
- Multi-domain approach under one roof. The platform for sharing the information, knowledge, cooperation between institutions. The possibility for unification of procedures.
- Support for the community forming.
- Unified approach to competencies and to the competence profiles in the public administration.
- Support for self-study.
- Possibility to search for the people with specific competencies for particular tasks or projects.
- Effective and clear education planning according to the future needs and sources (missions, projects, legislature changes, etc.).
- Unified access to the information dissemination, and to the lectures and courses.

3.3 Solution

For the development of the education portal we suggest using to use the Learning Management System, such as Moodle. The LMS solves the problematic issues of education on the whole. It ensures to manage the educational process, regardless of the educational form (presence training, distance training, electronic education, or virtual classes). The realization of education (providing of educational content) is a natural substance of such a system. The attention is paid on the independency of content creator, which means we can use different content from different vendors. For this purpose some international standards for educational content were created (QTI, AICC, SCORM, etc.). The certification of the system for basic standards is natural.

The features of a suitable LMS:

- The core is a portal integrated for other systems, configurable according to the organization needs.
- A process-orientation. The LMS supports a successful implementation of educational processes, regardless of a process form.
- The LMS does not prefer one educational form among others. It enables to combine the educational forms. It is possible to combine the forms even in a case of one course.
- Strong support for individual management of education directly for the employee (self-study). Individual use of communication in a community.

- The development and update of educational methods.
- The composition of courses based on different types of educational content, and educational forms.
- The support for cooperation with the content vendors.
- Special support for knowledge tests.
- The support for different communities – educational or technical.
- Skill and competency management.
- Planning of education according to the competence profile.
- Auto-evaluation.
- Multi-domain approach. Enabling to execute more portals on one LMS (e.g., for different institutions, resorts, etc.).
- The management of educational sources (tutors, lecture rooms, workstations, etc.).
- Knowledge management.
- Monitoring, analysis, and reporting.
- Workflow development and role management according to the needs of an institution.
- Integration with ERP, mainly on HR modules and other systems of an organization.
- Certification for international standards.

CONCLUSION

The paper presented e-learning possibilities to overcome the immense loading of issued listings in public administration in the Czech Republic. One of eGovernment areas was introduced, namely Czech POINT services. To ensure the citizen proper services the employees (and students) should be trained in enormous skills, competencies and knowledge concerning public administration services. We suggested using an e-learning platform (LMS) in educational process and to serve the employees, students and citizen. We also proposed a vision, advantages and solution for an education portal, which should represent a sharing platform to streamline the services.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was supported by the grant: Innovation of Study Programs at Silesian University in Opava, School of Business Administration in Karvina, Reg. no. CZ.1.07/2.2.00/28.0017.

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