Moodle is an open source Learning Management System used and tested by 31,685,885 users and 1,888,393 teachers from 210 countries (http://moodle.org/stats/). Yes, that huge community is a pillar of Moodle's sucess. Numerous discussions 'what is the best learning management system' are happening all around the globe, and… in more than a few discussions, the conclusion is that
Moodle is the winner
(
1
,
2
). Some people are skeptic, however: how can a free opensource software be better than one expensive closed proprietary software? Simply it can. For example
Apache web server
is used by 30.000 more web servers than Microsoft's servers (30% difference); two years ago Microsoft paid $15 billion for FaceBook – an social website build up on free open source PHP technology. So, yes, the open source can be the best solution.

And it is used by countless for profit and nonprofit corporations, same as the University of Illinois, the Columbia College and many other universities and schools all around the globe. …

News? Since recently, Google applications can be integrated into domain and in Moodle . So we
did it
. We can use all
Google Applications – education edition
, we can use iGoogle, and we can create a personal learning and working environment.

Personal Learning & Working Environment is a concept based on Web 2 .0 and social software. It provides a 100% customizable place where all the tools for learning, working, communicating and entreating are. There is no reason to go to a specific website, save your documents on a specific computer, or communicate with friends by software installed on a computer. Everything a learner or any citizen of the World needs is in their Personal Learning & Working Environment. Wherever they are, all they need is a computer or mobile phone with internet access.

LMS vs PLE. Personal learning environment is a way different approach than traditional learning management system. In a traditionally structured e-course, only an instructional designer and/or mentor have rights to make changes like start a new activity or make a new group. Furthermore, users have to come to a specific course to do a specific activity and if they participate in more than a few communities/activities… they will find it time consuming and probably - annoying. It is not very convenient to visiting numerous courses, remembering numerous web addresses/links – especially in the context where competition like

FaceBook
provides users with all they need in just one click. Or even better, they can integrate FaceBook into their
iGoogle
page – together with all e-gadgets they like (
Twitter
, Facebook…).

Combination? Although completely different, it seams that LMS and PLE make perfect combination; freedom to customize your web/e-learning environment with guidance provided by well deigned (and well mentored) Moodle course.

How does it look like?
This is an example of my Personal Learning and Working Environment.



1. A theme specific for each institution can be made. I am using the Cabrini Connections theme I made. If you wan to add the same theme to your iGoogle page, please choose [Change theme] button and search for the Cabrini Connections theme.
2. A gadget that shows the latest activities from e-Jump 2.0 Network. If I click on the icon, I will get the full text.
3. The e-Jump 2.0 network is gadget that is informing me about any new discussion started

in the NETEL course – where I participate as a student.

4. A gadget that shows news from a course I am mentoring. It is the same as 2) just my role is different.

5. Gmail. Off course, if Google Apps are in domain, instead of @gmail.com you will have @yourSchool.hr. Cabrini Connections in our example.

6. Google docs (7 GB of space)

7. Google calendar; personal calendar, group calendar, school calendar – all together and all easy to manage

8. Google Talk – to chat with your peers, friends, students, teachers…

9. Facebook + thousands of additional gadgets. Just Click [Add Stuff] button and chose what you want to add to your Personal Learning & Working environment

10. All applications can be grouped, maximized, minimized, reorganized to fit your (or your students) standard

11. Informative and entertainment gadgets like CNN News, YouTube, Weather, Bookmarks, ToDo list and anything you can find in [Add staff].

Therefore, all I need – including Moodle and e-mail, My Documents - I have in my iGoogle page.

What do you think?

It is good to have all those features –all in one place. Right?