

The Virtual Car Dealer as a Complement to German Vocational Training

More and more learning environments and learning portals have been developed in the past years. Some of them have been put on the market. The primary technical guideline for most of these developments was: »The sky's the limit«. From the initial concept to realization, it was mostly individuals with technical backgrounds who set the direction of development and determined the appearance of the subsequent system. Because of this, some of the systems were not accepted by the target users of the learning systems.

In order to avoid being caught in the same trap, the Fraunhofer IGD Darmstadt is developing systems and components in an interdisciplinary way which have a stronger link to the real needs and requirements of users and learners. The development team consists of IT specialists, electrical engineering technicians, physicians, designers and educationalists who have the necessary know-how regarding the mechanisms and requirements of learners in further education.

The development of a 3D world in the context of vocational training was an important step towards an interactive learning environment. The »Virtual Car Dealer« project has been designed as a complement to vocational training and was presented for the first time at the IAA 2003 in Frankfurt, Germany.

The virtual world of learning which is provided by the »Virtual Car Dealer« bridges the gap between vocational schools and companies and is being implemented as another container for learning content which may also be used for quality assurance issues. The use of a 3D world of learning will motivate the learner continuously over a longer period of time than other applications. Learners may use avatars within the »Virtual Car Dealer« as electronic representatives, and these

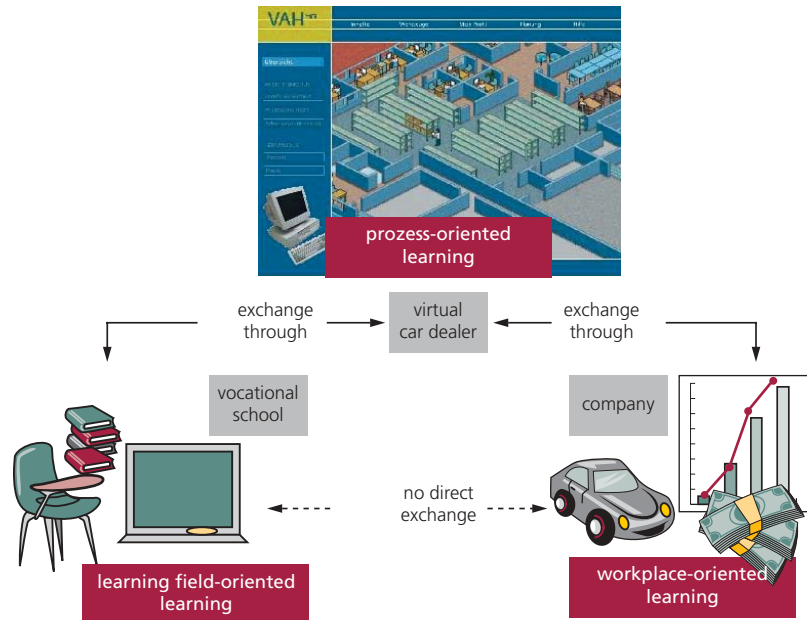


Figure 1: The »Virtual Car Dealer« as a bridge between school and enterprise (schematic)

avatars may interact with each other. The multi-user part of the system enables the learner to deal with cooperative and »hands-on« learning scenarios. Learning content may be memorized better when presented within a virtual world.

The combination of existing learning offers and the school-related learning material that is currently being used, as well as other external learning material, may be bundled within the »Virtual Car Dealer« and used for education in the classroom as well as in companies. The system has initially been developed for car dealers. It will be adapted to other vocational education fields in the next version and may, in principle, be used for any vocational training.

Contact

Dr.-Ing. Christoph Hornung
 Dipl.-Berufspäd. Nikolas A. Rathert
 Fraunhofer IGD Darmstadt, Germany
 christoph.hornung@igd.fraunhofer.de
 nikolas.rathert@igd.fraunhofer.de