

## Product review – Dokeos (Nov 08)

This time we take a look at Dokeos. Whisper it – could it be easier to use than Moodle?

### What breed of tools does it belong to?

You might not have heard of Dokeos but it is a firmly established player in the LMS market. It is used in over 6,000 installations in 60 countries, serving 1.3million users and 122,000 courses. The largest known installation serves 29,000 users at Ghent University in Belgium, a country where it is widely adopted. Dokeos is in use at the Belgian ministries of Health, Defence, Internal Affairs, Unemployed Services and Federal Police.

Dokeos bills itself as an 'open source professional learning suite'. This comprises three core products: learning management system, rapid learning authoring tool and videoconferencing tool. This puts Dokeos firmly in the Learning Content Management System (LCMS) camp.



### What does it offer?



So let's look at each component in more detail.




#### Learning content management system

The content creation components include a set of authoring templates for different page types that include video, animation and graphical pages, a 'Mister Dokeos' character which you can use to facilitate learning activities, and online test authoring for many different question types.


The learning management components are quite impressive. In particular the learning path builder allows you to create a learning path by adding content, tests and activities. The system is SCORM compliant allowing you to import Articulate, Auralog, Captivate, Lectora, Skillssoft and any other type of SCORM content, and supports SCORM sequencing.



Reporting covers all standard SCORM data such as score, progression, time per module and more. All reporting data can be exported to Excel. We were particularly interested in the reporting as this is widely regarded as one of Moodle's main weaknesses and we were impressed by the simplicity of the basic SCORM report, below.

 Print
  Export as CSV-file

	<b>Informations</b>	<b>Tracking</b>	<b>Action</b>
	Name : Muriel Lancaster	Latest connection 2007-03-26 16:08:04	 Send mail
	E-mail : muriellan@gmail.com	Time spent on platform 0:40:22	 Videoconf.
	Tel. (516) 26 24 56 78	Progress 67%	
	Online : Yes	Score 48%	

**TNG Test | Coach : teacher**

Learnpaths	Time	Progress	Latest connection	Details
Meeting management	4h35'60"	67 %	2007-03-26	

Tests	Score	Attempts	Correct this test
Leadership	58%	3	
Organisation skills	25%	1	

Collaborative features of Dokeos include Agenda, Forums, Chat, Videoconference, Open Questions and Assignments. The simple interface design is easy to get to grips with. The administration interface is logical and well organised, split into core areas of users, courses, platform and sessions.

Naturally any open source LMS will invite Moodle comparisons. Moodle is an extremely flexible, extensible and configurable LMS. It is intended to be rebranded so out of the box it is simple and plain, indeed many would could it ugly. Moodle is also pretty daunting to new users due to the almost endless configuration options. In a nutshell, Moodle's unique selling points are also a major stumbling block for many users. In contrast, Dokeos looks better out of the box, but it is more basic and doesn't have the almost endless configuration possibilities that Moodle boasts. However, we know that many users don't want extensive rebrands and complex configurations, so for these users Dokeos is certainly investigating.

### Oogie Rapid Learning

This is a Powerpoint and OpenOffice Impress to SCORM e-learning conversion tool. There are quite a few Powerpoint to SCORM tools out there but we really like the OpenOffice Impress to SCORM conversion feature. OpenOffice is a great open source alternative to Microsoft Office and Impress is its Powerpoint equivalent.

You don't need any plugins or downloads to do the conversion, it is all done online. Once the presentation is converted you can still edit it by inserting tests between slides and recording audio. The resulting courses will then be tracked in your SCORM reports.

### Videoconferencing

The Flash based videoconferencing tool allows users to run virtual classrooms or virtual meetings. If you run WebEx, DimDim or Eluminate sessions externally then you'll certainly be interested in this feature.

The virtual classroom is intended for one-to-many training scenarios. Your slideshow appears in the main content area while participant videos, chat and slide details appear on a side panel. It has whiteboard widgets that allow you to annotate the main content area as you go.

The virtual meeting room is more interactive, allowing up to four participants to interact online.



### Open source maturity

Dokeos was formed as a fork of the Claroline LMS project but has since far surpassed it in popularity. The following Google Trends chart doesn't include Moodle, due to its massive popularity you can't even distinguish between these other LMS players. But when you drill down into the detail as we have done here it is clear that Dokeos is the rising star among the rest of the open source LMS products.



### Coder friendly

Dokeos is programmed in PHP, Javascript and HTML as is almost every other open source LMS apart from Sakai. Dokeos has a good amount of code commenting which is important if you are interesting in customising it for your own ends. According to the Ohloh source code analysis service, Dokeos has had 55 programmers over its history which is a pretty good number and puts it up among the likes of Sakai and Ilias in terms of programmer numbers, Moodle by contrast has 139. Most of the contributing organisations are from Continental Europe with a strong majority from Belgium, where the Dokeos company is based.

## **Well supported**

In terms of the open source community, the Dokeos forums are fairly well populated. There are over 4,000 registered members. While this pales in comparison with Moodle's half a million registered members, it does mean that the forums are pretty active and good place to look for support. Compared to the other non-Moodle open source LMS communities the Dokeos community has a smaller number of registered users but a much larger number of forum topics and posts, meaning the community is more active and supportive.

There are 40 or so extensions contributed by the community ranging from RSS Readers, polls, resource reservations, peer reviews and grade-book. A selection of style-sheets and icon packs are also available for download.

## **Verdict**

While Moodle is the number one open source LMS by a long way there are other open source LMS solutions worthy of consideration. Dokeos has some advantage in its simplicity and usability. It is not overly complex, is fully SCORM compliant and is strong on reporting. It also has some much-lauded features like a virtual classroom and rapid learning authoring that are in high demand right now. If you need a simple, rapid LMS solution that is ready to go out of the box, Dokeos should certainly be on your shortlist.

*Kineo Open Source has accepted no payment for this independent review.*

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