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Dutch Board of Examinations (the CvTE) Expanding Interoperability with Adoption of IMS Global's Assessment Standards

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At the moment, the CvTE is responsible for national exams and tests in primary education, general secondary education and adult education, exams for students of Dutch as a second language, and secondary-level state exams held outside of schools in the Netherlands. Students are required to take and pass national examinations to ensure their proficiency in certain core skills. These exams are important for determining proficiency and preparedness for college studies. The Board of Examinations oversees the quality of those national examinations.

“Although the examinations and tests, which are administered throughout the year, are available in pencil and paper, digital versions have increasingly become available and are gaining in popularity,” says Rob Looij, project manager for the CvTE. “The 2013-14 exams are being provided electronically on a newly built platform called **Facet**.”

In 2009, the CvTE became increasingly interested in interoperability standards because, in the future, several exam providers will be offering exam content. Also, the Dutch government is pushing for the adoption of open source and more open standards.

The CvTE began their search by looking at standards provided by both the **IMS Global Learning Consortium** and the ADL Sharable Content Object Reference Model or SCORM. “We looked at the 2.1 version of IMS’ **Question and Test Interoperability**[®] (QTI[®]) standard, as well as the maturity of both standards. Based on our conversations with the IMS staff, and their moving toward development of the 2.1 version, it gave us the confidence that QTI was the best standard to adopt,” said Rob Looij.

The CvTE, Cito and IMS joined forces and agreed to establish a special regional group for Dutch organizations working with the CvTE on this project, called the Dutch Exam Profile workgroup. The actual development and implementation was done by Cito, a leading testing and assessment organization by law responsible for the development of national exams, and Trifork, the company that built Facet, the project’s QTI platform. On top of QTI 2.1, extensions were necessary because the 2.1 (Draft 2) standard did not meet all the requirements by the Dutch assessment experts and content specialists, for example in the formatting of questions. The work of defining and supporting the Dutch Exam Profile (or DEP) of QTI has become a reality.

Swift progress is being made and will continue in the coming years. In 2014, Facet is being used at 190 schools in the Netherlands. In 2015, that number will more than triple as 600 schools will be able to provide electronic assessments with innovative items to the tune of nearly 1.5 million exams being administered. By 2017, all schools will be using the new system for the computer based national exams and tests.

“Adopting the QTI standard saved us a lot of work,” says Rob Looij. “The formatting of complex questions is a good example. The work on new tests that we’re now building would be much more complex without the standards offered in QTI 2.1/DEP. The formatting of these questions is very complicated. As new challenges emerge, we feel confident that QTI will help to offer the solutions to those challenges.”

“QTI makes our life easier. We can now open up for new content providers, without having to worry about consistency and interoperability,” said Nynke de Boer with CvTE.

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— *Nynke de Boer, Manager of Computer Exams at Bureau van het College voor Toetsen en Examens*

“IMS and the QTI standard have come a long way. Cito has long been adopters of the earlier versions of QTI (v1.2), mostly for our authoring solutions, and the level in which it has developed since is impressive. Earlier versions being more abstract, the latest versions support roughly 90% of all required (expression of) functionality “out of the box.” This provides a solid foundation to start from and to build atop of,” said Mark Molenaar with Cito.

“IMS Global has been very supportive from the start. We’ve been in talks with IMS and its members to get some of the extensions we’ve implemented for DEP as part of next versions of the standard,” continued Mr. Molenaar. “By doing so we’re further broadening the standard to strengthen the assessment community worldwide.”

About IMS Global Learning Consortium (IMS Global)

IMS Global is a nonprofit organization that advances technology that can affordably scale and improve educational participation and attainment. IMS members are leading suppliers, institutions and government organizations that are enabling the future of education by collaborating on interoperability and adoption initiatives. IMS sponsors the Learning Impact Leadership Institute, a global program focused on recognizing the impact of innovative technology on educational access, affordability, and quality while developing the people and ideas that are going to help shape the future of educational technology. For more information visit www.imsglobal.org or contact info@imsglobal.org.



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