

HP LABS, CALIFORNIA, FUNDS AN E-LEARNING PROJECT FROM CESGA TO IMPROVE RURAL SCHOOLS.

- Silicon Valley funds Galicia Supercomputing Centre technological project to be developed in Boqueixón-Vedra rural schools in Galicia (NW Spain).

Santiago de Compostela, 7 July, 2010.- In June, HP Labs, Hewlett-Packard's R+D division in Palo Alto, California, approved three projects for the area of “cloud technology and education” presented at a global level. One of these proposals was presented by Galicia Supercomputing Centre, more precisely, from its e-learning and systems areas, and it is aimed at designing and evaluating a cloud-technology-based solution for online collaboration and learning service provision to Grouped Rural Schools networks. The other two proposals selected for HP Labs founding were made by an American and a Taiwanese university.

Every year, HP Labs launches a call for several collaboration projects with research entities. HP Labs IRP 2009 Call included a category on cloud computing for education for which tens of organisms harshly competed, reason why this philanthropic grant has been of great importance for the Spanish research community. “For HP, these activities are part of the support to R+D+I and to technology transfer, which have always been the base for our company's business strategy”, highlights Isidro Cano, HP supercomputing director in Spain.

This project has the support and active collaboration of the Xunta de Galicia (Galicia regional government) through two departments: the Directorate-General for Education, Professional Training and Educational Innovation and the General Secretary for Technological Modernization and Innovation. José Luis Mira Lema, Director-General for Education, showed himself convinced that “the results of this project will provide highly interesting information on the use of cloud technology in education, as well as in the solution to specific needs of rural educational communities”.

Cloud computing is a type of technology of recent appearance that allows access to a set of computing services and responds to user needs in a personalized and flexible way through the Internet. Users, in this case members of the educational community (children, parents, teachers), will have the possibility to access all the services available in the system (applications, resources, etc.) without the need of being experts or having to install any specific program, since all these resources and services are executed on remote servers configured in the cloud (this is, on the Internet).

This system seems very adequate for the specific needs and typology of Grouped Rural Schools (CRAs). A CRA is a public educational center located in a rural area that offers pre-elementary and elementary education and is made up by several schools in different small towns and villages that operate as a single school in the administrative and functional levels. This model has been in use in Spain since the 90s and has given viability to the maintenance of old one-room schoolhouses in villages in which there were not enough children to keep a school with all resources necessary running, offering at the same time teaching quality and a school model very integrated in its local community.

PILOT PROJECT IN BOQUEIXÓN-VEDRA

The initiative to be carried out by CESGA will introduce and evaluate a pilot project that, during academic year 2010-2011, will provide access to online advanced resources and tools facilitating collaborative work among all members of CRA community and that will enable the execution of live simultaneous activities in all schools through the Internet, integrating them into School 2.0,

which will facilitate students and teachers from all schools to interact at any moment anywhere.

“Rural Schools Virtual Communities for Education in the Cloud” project will allow the implementation and evaluation of cloud technology potential in rural schools, where resources, materials and tools adapted to school and its needs will be placed on a virtualized and scalable technological platform, allowing all members of the educational community to have a simple access, through a web browser, to an online space where all resources and applications necessary for educational activities, information and collaborative work among all CRA schools will be available. In order to achieve this, this collective's needs will be previously analyzed and all the applications or resources necessary will be developed.

Cloud technology SaaS model avoids installing software in every computer, making it accessible on the Net for all members of the educational community. This limits software license costs granting that all resources are available for all schools and computers. It also reduces the number of technical problems related to software installation and upgrading due to the lack of technical staff in this kind of schools. The project has a budget of 67,000 €, 40,500 of them being provided by HP Labs and the rest of them being provided by CESGA. The educational center selected to participate in the pilot project is Boqueixón-Vedra CRA, integrated by seven rural schools (Lestedo, Sarandón, Sergudo, San Xián de Sales, San Fins de Sales, Camporrapado I and II).

About CESGA

Galicia Supercomputing Center (CESGA) is a Foundation in which the Xunta de Galicia and the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) participate. Since its creation in 1993, CESGA has the goal to contribute to the advance of science and technique through research and application of high performance computing and communications in collaboration with other institutions for the benefit of society. CESGA is a Unique Scientific and Technological Infrastructure recognized by the Ministry for Science and Innovation (MICINN). Equipment managed by CESGA has received foundation from the Xunta de Galicia, CSIC, MICINN and European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

More information:

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