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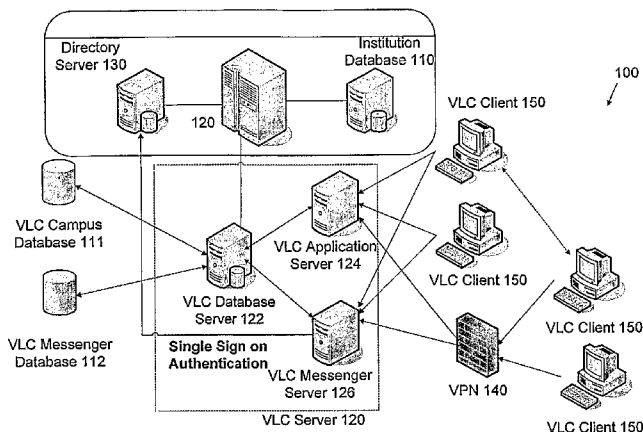
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(54) Title: INSTANT MESSAGE FOR A VIRTUAL LEARNING COMMUNITY



(57) Abstract: [00106] The present invention provides an Instant Messaging (IM) System (100) for a Virtual Learning Community (VLC). Clients (150) or user of the VLC are differentiated in their roles, and appropriate rules are set for each role by a Role Extension engine (124c). A user (150) is now allowed to appear with separate roles across separate groups. The Role Extension engine (124c) returns a structured contact list (192a) to a user and an Activation engine 124g updates the user presence information in a VLC Messenger Database 112. A roster engine (14, 25,26) then updates the presence of all the clients who has logged-on to a VLC Server (120), which comprises a VLC Database Server (122), a VLC Web Server (124) and a VLC Messenger Server (126). With the Role Extension engine (124c) together with VLC Client Application Tools (151), a lecturer or teaching assistant (TA) is able to monitor a virtual classroom in session and records students' attendance, inputs and participation. A lecturer can review the TA assessments and publish the students' progress report for continuous assessments. Classroom interaction is now enhanced, for example, a lecturer can take control over a student's desktop, mark a point on the student's desktop and broadcast the captured desktop to his group of students.