

Davide Sciortino

Student Number 2028899

BMSW4003 DIGITAL SKILLS AND RESEARCH METHODS

LECTURER: MR SYED JAFFERY

The use of Moodle e-learning platform: a study in a London University

Abstract

This article describes a study carried out at the Trinity Saint Davide University, London, that analyses the functionalities and tools of the Moodle platform and their use by the students. The data was collected based on a questionnaire applied to 10 students. The results show that despite Moodle has a great potential, it is mainly used as a repository of materials. However, students recognize the importance of the use of other functionalities of this platform in order to promote the success of the teaching/learning process.

1. Introduction

Nowadays it is not possible to think about the teaching and learning process without associating it with the Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs). Actually, ICTs are present in all processes that involve

collection of data, processing of information and knowledge creation, being the teaching and learning one of the most typical processes having these characteristics. ICTs play an important role in education, having a special relevance in the instructional component, supported by Learning Management Systems (LMS), such as Moodle. However, these platforms have many capabilities provided that they are used in their fullness. For example, interaction, feedback, conversation and networking are some of the possible actions using learning platforms. Furthermore, they provide a lot of opportunities to explore new methods of teaching and learning. Particularly, the Moodle platform adopted by the University of Trinity Saint David (TSD) integrates several modules which allow creation, organization, delivery, communication, collaboration and assessment activities. The present paper analyses the main functionalities and tools available in the Moodle platform and their use by the University. Additionally, it discusses the results of a study carried out through the application of a questionnaire to students with the objective of characterizing the use they make of the Moodle and of its main tools. In this way, the paper intends to contribute to a systematization of the activities and the respective modules provided by Moodle, as well as their importance in the students' perspective, revealed in an exploratory study.

2. E-learning platforms

There are different expressions used to describe educational computer applications, such as e-learning Systems, Learning Management Systems (LMS), Course Management System (CMS) or even Virtual Learning Environment (VLE). In these systems, students can access courses' contents in different formats (text, image, sound), as well as interact with teachers and/or colleagues, via message boards, forums, chats, video-conference or other types of communication tools. These platforms provide a set of configurable features, in order to allow the creation of

online courses, pages of subjects, work groups and learning communities . In addition to the pedagogical dimension, these systems have a set of features for registering, monitoring and evaluation activities of students and teachers, enabling the contents' management via Internet. An e-learning platform represents a system, which provides integrated support for six different activities: creation, organization, delivery, communication, collaboration and assessment. Regardless the type, several studies revealed the existence of strong advantages on using e-learning platforms , however, their adoption involves some challenges to the institutions as well as an appropriate choice of the technologic platform. Concerning open-source solutions, there are some studies that identify the Moodle (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment) as the most used platform in higher education, as well as the most easy to use .

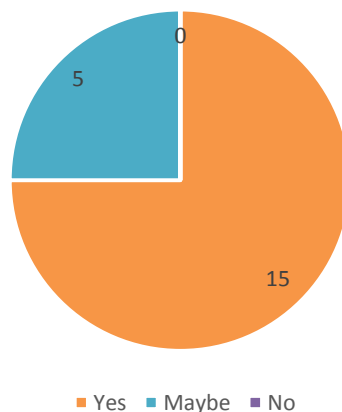
2.1. Moodle platform

The Moodle represents one of the most widely used open-source e-learning platforms, that enables the creation of a course website, ensuring their access only to enrolled students .This Learning Management System software automates the wide administrative tasks in educational institutions. Moodle is the abbreviation for Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment and is free. Moodle was created by Martin Dougiamas in 2002 to help educators create online courses with focus on interaction and collaboration construction of content. This platform allows the exchange of information among users geographically dispersed, through mechanisms of synchronous (chats) and asynchronous communication (discussion forums). In a functional perspective, it has easily configurable features, allowing the creation of student assessment processes (quizzes, online tests and surveys), as well as managing their tasks with their timetable, besides offering a wide variety of complementary tools to support the teaching and learning process.

The Moodle platform is characterized by a set of functionalities grouped in two different classes: resources and modules. Resources represent instructional materials that are usually created in digital formats and then uploaded to the platform. Web pages, PowerPoint files, word documents, flash animations, video and audio files represent some examples of these resources. Modules are components created via Moodle in order to provide interaction among students and teachers towards manipulation and content transformation . Regarding the activities of the learning platforms presents a classification based on six classes: Creation, Organization, Delivery, Communication, Collaboration and Assessment.

The data was collected through a questionnaire and applied to 10 students of London Saint David Trinity University.

Is Moodle helping you in finding informations
and uploading assessments?



It can be observed that the students who use the tools give more importance to their implementation in the learning process than those who do not use them. This fact can be interpreted as the students having experience with forums in other contexts and being able to imagine their use on the learning context better than with other tools.”

Online learning is convenient: this is obviously the greatest benefit of online learning; as long as you own a computer and have an internet connection, it doesn't matter in which part of the world you are.

Learners can access information from anywhere, anytime. For a long time students had to leave their comfort areas and attend lecturers. This change in environment causes lack of concentration to students. In contrast, E-learning enables students to choose the best environment for study and this promotes their ability to understand. As a result, students enjoy the learning process as compared to the conventional classroom learning.

It is flexible: learning becomes easier when aligned with one's learning needs and preferences.

Online learning allows learners to study at their own place, whether they are students, busy adults, or employees.

It's cost effective: the cost effectiveness of online learning is quite impressive, no more travel and accommodation expenses, reusable online content, it can be tailored to different needs. Different people learning in different ways, and online learning does everything in its power to ensure that all learning needs are met. Online students are able to study at home and this saves them the travel accommodation costs. This is in contrast with the classroom environment where learners have to pay for transport and accommodation costs as well as any other costs associated with the learning process.

It's immediate. Not only learners are able to begin their online learning immediately, but they are also able to see immediate results; whether self-paced or instructor-led.

It's unrestricted. With online learning location is no longer a barrier, neither are culture and nationality. Accessibility to learning materials is another benefit of online learning. Students participating in online study have unlimited access to learning materials and this makes them have the ability to study effectively and efficiently. Traditionally, learning institutions were limited on the

number of students that could study in the classroom environment. Vast number of students can now study in the same institution and be able to access the learning materials online. The use of online media for training enables vast number of students to access materials online and this promotes the learning process. Students using the web to study at most of the time are likely to be exposed to the vast online educational resources that are available.

Immediate updates. Today's online learning is better than yesterday's; and online learning of tomorrow will be better than today's.

Students in online programs can effectively manage their time, learn the materials, and complete assignments on their own schedules.

Top 5 disadvantages of Online Learning

'It may be a solo act'. Is it true that, although online learning might be convenient and flexible, it is also a solo act.'

Some people absolutely need personal contact with their educators or trainers in order to earn successfully.

It may be impersonal. No matter how hard we try to fully transfer human communication to online platforms, no matter how natural it seems to form relationships behind computer screens, a virtual environment is just not human.

Nothing can replace human contact. Too much time spent in front of a computer screen may be harmful.

Being constantly online is the new reality, but the truth is that using a computer or a tablet all the time can cause poor vision, strain injuries, and other physical problems.

It requires self-discipline. If your eLearning audience lacks self-discipline, it is unlikely that they will be motivated to self study.

Traditional learning and training have the benefit of easily tracking both progress and falling behind ,this works for many learners as well, as some people prefer their progress to be closely monitored in order to perform.

Possible lack of control. No matter how carefully you design your eLearning course, there is no guarantee that your messages will get across. There is always the risk of your learners just going through the material without paying any attention. It is difficult to measure program results.

Question remains: are students learning what instructor is saying that they should be learning?

Student must be self-motivated and disciplined to progress through his/her program in a timely manner.

SUMMARY:

This study analysed the main functionalities and tools available in the Moodle platform and their use at the University Trinity Saint David London. Trinity Saint David's Moodle contains some of the main tools of the standard Moodle platform, like Assignments, Chats, Forums, News and Quiz/Survey. Moodle is being used mainly as a repository of materials and information. The facts are that there are advantages, and disadvantages to every type of learning environment. Students have to analyze both the pros and cons, factors which contribute greatly to making an informed

decision, about the direction or her career path. Students have to decide how they are going to accomplish their goals: online, in the classroom or a combination of both. In conclusion, online learning is beneficial to the students, tutors and the institution offering these courses. I would therefore recommend that online learning be implemented on all learning institutions and research on how to improve this learning process should be carried out.

References

Conrad,D. (2006). E-Learning and social change, Perspectives on higher education in the digital age. New York: Nova Science Publishers

<https://www.hurix.com/benefits-moodle-based-learning-management-system/>

<https://moodle.com/lms/features/>

<https://www.beamstacks.com/blog/moodle-advantages-and-disadvantages-learning-system/#:~:text=Disadvantages%20Of%20Using%20Moodle,-Even%20though%20the&text=The%20first%20big%20issue%20is,all%20classes%20in%20a%20city.>

<https://www.opentextbooks.org.hk/ditatopic/25441>