

Engaging International Students through e-Learning: Pedagogical Aspect

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Abstract

This paper investigates attitude of students to MOODLE. The aim is to find out if MOODLE assists students to understand the course contents better. The extent to which cultural, technical and linguistic factors may affect pedagogical advancements where eLearning is concerned for students for whom English is a second language is described. Factors include communication and collaboration amongst peers, interactivity, and understanding level of the content on MOODLE.

Keywords

E-Learning, MOODLE, pedagogical factors, International students

Introduction

Around 268 schools, polytechnics and universities in New Zealand are using MOODLE, an online learning mode which helps educators to facilitate course materials like lectures, combined with other collaborative tools such as forums, discussion boards, chat, videos and other multimedia clips.

This paper explores on the idea on how MOODLE can facilitate and yet constrain the teaching and learning process based on individual preferences. By discussing the challenges involved with making MOODLE an effective eLearning

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strategy, this paper will present factors which minimises students being innovative while learning through MOODLE.

Methodology

A mixed approach is used for this research.

Secondary sources

- Quantitative: statistics and other related databases.
- Qualitative: Field notes, observation records and other personal, research-related documents.

RESULTS

Factors	Findings
Interactivity	Facilitated group decision practices, discussion threads are used minimally amongst students. MOODLE mainly used for assignments and research report
Communication	MOODLE is not fully responsive to student needs in terms of communication. Students liked face-to-face communication better to allow for critical thinking
Group work	This does not rate highly. The 'shyness' factor overrides collaboration
Personalisation	Cannot be customised to suit individual student needs. Structures not utilised efficiently

Table 1: Pedagogical Factors

Findings

MOODLE does not allow for critical thinking which occurs in face to face situations where students are allowed to think aloud and voice their opinions. Educational organisations are quite forceful in terms of MOODLE usage, not many Seminars or Help facilities are provided to improve skills or learning new things.

The user manuals of MOODLE are quite technically detailed, making it too cumbersome for students to explore any features such as language settings or creating threads. Furthermore, possessing advanced technical skills do not fully promote effective learning as there is language difficulty to understand what is required.

There is a need to find critical factors which motivate students to serve their personal need as per the educational satisfaction level.

Restrictions of MOODLE could be viewed as a limitation in terms of its capacity in supporting daily management of learning activities and providing an effective collaborative learning environment. The expected learning outcome may be hard for students to measure in terms of what is put up on MOODLE and what actually happens in the class.

Conclusion

While online learning is an organised, synchronized and orchestrated way to promote the learning aims of the students, it can only be assumed that optimal learning stemmed from individual student preferences rather than a personal drive to be resourceful while using MOODLE as an eLearning tool.

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