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Evaluation of Moodle Features at Kajaani University of Applied Sciences – Case Study

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to examine the Moodle features that are implemented in the Moodle version used at Kajaani University of Applied Sciences. Using the qualitative weight and sum (QWS) approach, a sample of 30 university lecturers were surveyed on their responses to Moodle usage. The paper intended to discover what features are mostly adapted and used by the lecturers. The Moodle learning management system implemented at KAMK includes 12 features for creating activities and six features for adding resources that are investigated in the paper. The measurement criteria of the Moodle features in the paper are considered subjective and qualitative. The author used 6 symbols for 6 qualitative levels of importance for the weights of features: E = essential, * = extremely valuable, # = very valuable, + = valuable, | = marginally valuable and 0 = not valuable. The result of the evaluation shows that Moodle is generally used for delivering course content, course progression plan, grading, creating activities, collecting course feedback and communicating with course participants. Among several features, only a few of them such as assignment, feedback, quiz and workshop modules are considered very essential and are heavily used.

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1. Introduction

E-learning plays an important role in learning process. It facilitates in acquisition and distribution of knowledge by the means of electronic devices¹. Several universities and educational institutions around the world are adapting e-learning environment as their major teaching and training tool. It complements to the conventional classroom teaching methods². Learning management systems are complex applications that offers tools to aid in the delivery of online courses³.

E-learning platforms have greater impact in teaching and learning methods in higher educational institutions. The past few years have brought advancement and growth in terms of using learning management systems (LMS) and online education. The availability of open source learning platforms and their ease of customization have increased the usage of E-learning platform⁴. The integration of LMS has forced to redesign strategies and curriculum. The successful implementation of information and communication technology in education makes education accessible to a larger audience without time and space barriers⁵.

Several learning management systems both commercial and open source such as Docebo, Moodle and Canvas are available today. Moodle is one of the most popular open-source learning platform with a huge number of implementation. It has 80,364 registered sites in over 235 countries. It hosts 12,380,436 courses and has 105,100, 7222 users. A majority of universities, universities of applied sciences, educational institutions, and vocational schools in Finland has implemented Moodle⁶.

Learning management system in this research work refers to Moodle Learning Platform. According to moodle.org, Moodle is an open source-learning platform for creating personalized learning environment. It provides flexible tools to support both blended and online learning⁷. The Moodle platform implemented at Kajaani University of Applied Sciences, Finland (KAMK) is customized in several ways to fit educational needs for delivering regular courses, 100% online courses as well as to support blended learning. KAMK practices a learning paradigm that utilizes the advantages of e-learning. It seamlessly integrates the modern ubiquitous ICT means into traditional courses to supplement traditional learning and encourage self-learning behavior of students. Blended learning is an optimal solution for course delivery. It is the combination of traditional face-to-face classroom teaching and e-learning⁸.

KAMK is a university of applied sciences located in Kajaani, Finland. It was established in 1992 and has 5 faculties: Engineering, Information Systems, Business, Tourism and Sports and Health. KAMK has 2000 students and 235 staff members. It delivers 9 bachelor degree programmes in Finnish, 3 bachelor programmes in English and 5 Master's programmes in Finnish. It is one of the best universities of applied sciences in Finland for several years and running⁹.

This paper presents an evaluation of Moodle features: activities and resources by university lecturers and teaching staffs at KAMK and main purpose for using Moodle learning management system. Activities in Moodle refers to a group of features in a Moodle course, generally an activity that students will conduct. The standard Moodle 2.4 includes 14 different types of activities: assignments, chat, choice, database, external tool, feedback, glossary, lesson, quiz, scorm, survey wiki and workshop¹⁰. The customized Moodle version for KAMK includes 12 different types of activities: assignment, choice, database, feedback, forum, glossary, lesson, quiz, scorm package, survey, wiki and workshop.

The **assignment** module allows creating an activity in the form of an assignment. Students can submit assignment that can be a digital file such as word processing document, images, spreadsheet or audio video clips. Students can also submit assignment alternatively by typing text directly into the text editor. The assignment can have a flexible or a strict deadline as configured by the lecturer. Lecturer can review assignments, grade them numerically or using a custom scale, leave comment or feedback and upload files with corrections. The grade for each assignment is recorded in the gradebook.

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