How can effective Moodle use make for a satisfactory online student experience? Students' experiences with Moodle

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Background

I was primarily motivated by the lack of standardization across different school departments and by having difficulty navigating through Moodle given different course layouts, various course templates and unintuitive file management. The aim of this research was to recognize opinions of students on particular aspects of Moodle and come up with recommendations improving usability, understandability, ease of navigation and engagement with platform.

Methodology

The data was collected by conducting 36 comprehensive surveys of students' experiences with the virtual learning platform. Participants had to answer 22 questions.

Literature review

Moodle Audits from 2017 and 2019 by Rose Heaney. She focused on particular courses and provided recommendations on what to improve. Most of the recommendations from the 2019 Moodle Audit are similar to what my research discovered. Improvements recommended by Rose Heaney for courses she audited overlap with the needs students demonstrated.

Findings

The most common reasons for students to mark a course positively were (they also indicate which aspects are the most important for students):

   a. it contains all the materials I need for successful study (reading lists, lecture slides, lecture recordings, links to external video and audio)
   b. it allows me to submit assessments easily
   c. it contains rich revision materials (access to past assignments and feedback, past exam papers, lecture recordings, lecture slides)

The most common reasons for students to mark a course negatively were (the main areas in which Moodle should be improved):

   d. It is difficult to navigate
   e. Sections are not logically structured
   f. It does not allow to communicate easily with fellow students or staff

Moodle features, namely Blogs, Forums, Turnitin and especially Wiki have been marked as the most difficult to use, so improvements in this area would be the most beneficial in terms the whole user experience.

Recommendations

1. Talk to Heads of Departments and consider introducing a standardization of how the information is structured in every Moodle course as it would, in my opinion, significantly improve student experience
2. LSE should take a different approach towards how Moodle courses are designed and develop best practices in terms of how the information is structured and how departmental templates are designed
3. LSE should look into how Blogs, Forums, Turnitin and Wiki are designed and what exactly causes the students to mark these the most difficult to use

Further steps

1. As this research is only a general one on how students experience different aspects of Moodle I recommend conducting research for each of the features, namely Blogs, Forums, Turnitin and
2. Conduct research with UX/UI experts on the best way of structuring the course information inside the course – I am providing a list of the courses, which students marked as the ones they liked the most:

PH203	HY116	LN120
LL109	EC100	ST107
MA100	GY144	LL109
MA100	GV101	ST107, MA107
HY323	EC100	
EC210	AN102, AN100	

These courses should serve as a benchmark in further studies on how structures and templates should be designed.