

Classification of virtual learning environment

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Introduction

Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) are more popular in e-learning atmosphere. VLEs are influential learning systems in higher education institutions. It also referred as learning management systems (LMS) and course management systems (CMS). Main function of the VLE is to streamline the course management aimed for various learner groups. VLEs are electronic platforms which can be used to afford and footpath to e-learning and enrich face-to-face education with online components. The functions of the VLEs are computerized the learning administration by helping and recording the learner's bustle. Formal education and corporate training have different needs and these needs have to be satisfied using VLEs. Teachers are responsible to develop the learning contents in VLE. It provides flexible delivering materials, learning activities and support the tools to create and monitoring. Blackboard and Moodle are commonly employed system in current VLE.

Sri Lankan higher education system emphasizes on learner-centric learning. In this concept learner plays a vital role in the learning process and learners are projected to actively involve in the learning process. They have more accountability for their learning process and teachers are accountable for learners' learning and they frolic the protagonist of "facilitator" who directs the learning process instead of information provider. Learner-centric learning will bestow the learners a deeper and better off learning experience, as there is better participation and involvement in the learning process (Brown S., 2008). The learner-centric learning atmosphere uses the web 2.0 technologies such as blogs, wikis, and social software which helps to publishing the content over the internet (Alexander, B., 2006, Yang, S., 2009). This technology can improve the interactive communication and collaboration among teacher and learners who either possess associated learning resources, or help to discover and obtain it, or are willing to exchange and share with others in the online learning environment. Web 2.0 allows the learner to read and write in the web using create, publish, exchange, share and cooperate on information. This makes the learners become the consumers and producers of learning resources and satisfies the learner-centric learning concepts. Thus, web 2.0 offers a learning atmosphere and have the capability to fundamentally change the nature of learning and teaching, through the invention of learner controlled learning.

Methodology

VLEs are motivated as the platform for learner-centric learning in the present learning environment, because it helps the learners to control and manage their own learning activities. This comprises the support for learners to fixed their learning objectives, manage their material and communicate with others via learning groups and provides a suitable environment to practice social skills in the learning and accomplish their learning goals. To succeed learner-centric learning, institution have to employ the suitable VLEs according to their learning needs. VLEs are classified according to the architecture of the system. The first classified approach is web-based with loosely joined or tightly joined web services. ELGG and PLEX systems are located udder this category. Second classified approach is based on the platform that supports a rich facility for extension points. Moodle and Blackboard are located in this family. Final classification, highlighted the Social Software concept based system.

Result and Discussion

The classification of the VLE's helps the educational institute to properly identify the system within the budget, existing resources, target groups and the needs. This classification helps to maximize utilization of the employed VLE. It motivates the learner-centric learning atmosphere especially in Sri Lankan higher education scenario.

Conclusion

VLE supports the lifelong learning that is mainly informal and occurs over the life of the learner. To achieve this goal, institutions have to concentrate on adopting the proper VLE system. This classification technique guide the VLE implementers and learners to properly identify the suitable learning system with the minimal cost and utilize the whole features maximize the usage. This could motivate the learner-centric learning atmosphere in the web-based environment.

References

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