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Assignment 1 Essay on Technology to Address DE Concern

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Issue 3 Perception of the Effectiveness of LMSs

Introduction

The perception of the effectiveness of Learning Management Systems (LMSs) has been a concern in academia since the inception of distance education. The acceptance of technology is proportional to its perceived usefulness and satisfaction. This acceptance varies depending upon whether the user is a student or instructor. Learning management systems facilitate an active learning environment while addressing the learning styles of the tech savvy student; and the needs of the instructor. Although LMSs have a number of strengths, there are weaknesses that expose the necessity to further investigate methods to enhance and support the online learning environment. This essay will discuss the various perceptions of a LMS, and the associated strengths and weakness.

Perceptions of the Learning Management System

Learning management systems allow educational institutions to develop online courses that integrate a variety of resources. The core function of a learning management system is to administer courses and support users. A notable function is the ability to generate reports and send alerts to students. (, ????)The perception of the effectiveness of the LMS is directly associated with quality and simplicity of these functions. There have been major advances in technology; yet there are many who **struggle with the acceptance of a LMS**. According to Ball and Levy, “The major issues that might influence instructors’ acceptance of LMS might be **related to the instructors’ characteristics**” (2008, p. ?). These characteristics consist of user self-efficacy, propensity toward e-learning, experiences, teaching style and personal innovativeness (Ball & Levy, 2008). Furthermore, the administration of educational institutions plays an extensive role in addressing these concerns. Consequently, it is imperative that these characteristics are acknowledged and addressed. Exploration of these characteristics can reveal methods of how the LMS can accelerate the learning process and improve the perception of its effectiveness. Researchers Sumner and Hostetler (1999) propose motivators, training, technology alignment, organization support and technical support as factors that influence instructors’ use of technology. A successful LMS is gravely dependent upon the instructors’ acceptance.

Accordingly, choosing a quality LMS and obtaining proper training will help to alleviate concerns regarding effectiveness.

Strengths of a Learning Management System

Engaging Learning Environment

Educational institutions around the world utilize learning management systems to create an engaging learning environment. Students are privileged to **interact with students and instructors** from different locations across the globe. The diverse cultures permit students and instructors to benefit from the different perspectives and experiences. Studies have shown "...on average, students in online learning conditions performed modestly better than those receiving face-to-face instruction" (Murray, Pérez, Geist, Hedrick, &Steinbach, 2012, p. ?).

Researchers Al-Busaidi and Al-Shihi, suggest "LMSs provide essential advantages to any educational institutions in general and instructor in specific (2010, p. ?). From a **managerial perspective**, a LMS can be used to track student progress, analyze learning outcomes, evaluate retention, and recognize achievements and determine areas of development. **From a student perspective**, the LMS offers an added advantage over face-to-face by making education more accessible. Universities that use a LMS can offer a more diverse selection of online education programs and courses. The flexibility of the LMS is a valued alternative for many students because they can attend classes and courses at their convenience, and plan their schedule that meets their life style. Students can view lectures and participate in discussions 24 hours a day, unlike the constraints of the traditional classroom. These strengths give the online learner an advantage in achieving their personal and educational goals.

Easy Navigation and Tools

Thoughtful planning and design makes teaching and learning easier and effective. An online course design includes logistics, student population, technology, learning objectives, assessments, instructional strategies, and course content. It also consists of a modular approach described by Zsohar and Smith as a "mechanism that incorporates thoughtful flow and continuity of content". These researchers confirm that "Online learners benefit from clear assignment guidelines and deadlines" (2008, p. ?). An effective LMS will address the learning styles of today's tech savvy student and even the less experienced instructor.

A highlight of the LMS is its **ability to facilitate individual and group activities**. Features such as welcome announcements, calendar, and online discussions are value tool for teaching and learning (Zsohar & Smith, 2008). Online learners benefit from both individual and group activities (Zsohar & Smith, 2008). The successful implementation of these features will support the LMS as an effective delivery of online courses.

Weaknesses of the LMS

When educational institutions transition from traditional settings to an e-learning environment, instructors are immensely impacted. There is a shift from content provider to facilitator. A reluctance of faculty to partake in a learning management system has been acknowledged in literature. Some of these concerns can be contributed to **personal preferences and inability to manage technology**.

A considerable amount effort is dedicated to design and development of online courses. Zsohar and Smith (2008) stress the **time-intensive** nature of developing and managing online course. Another concern is teaching beliefs related to student learning and motivation. **Teacher beliefs** shape instructional behavior. As such, incorporating new tool such as a LMS will clash with those instructors that “beliefs do not coincide with those underlying that technology” (Lawrence & Lentle-Keenan, 2013, p. ?).

Researchers have identified faculty **inability to manage technology** as a significant concern. Faculty who never taught online may experience some anxiety while learning to manipulate a LMS. Support is need for those with **limited background** in the use of asynchronous online courses (Zsohar & Smith, 2008). To compensate for their lack of knowledge, instructor may use the less evasive tools of the LMS while **avoiding advanced features** such as wikis, glossaries and workshops (Lawrence& Lentle-Keenan, 2013). Faculty serves as a vital element of student success. The weaknesses of a LMS can be reconciled by self-awareness and motivation.

Conclusion

The perception of the effectiveness of Learning Management Systems (LMSs) has been a concern in academia since the inception of distance education. The acceptance of technology is proportional to its perceived usefulness and satisfaction. This acceptance varies depending upon whether the user is a student or instructor. Learning managements systems facilitate an active learning environment while addressing the learning styles of the tech savvy student; and the needs of the instructor. Although LMSs have a number of strengths, there are weaknesses that expose the necessity to further investigate methods to enhance and support the online learning environment. This essay will discuss the various perceptions of a LMS, and the associated strengths and weakness.

- An appropriate delivery medium contributes to the totality of the learning experience.
- The evolution of LMS has provided an infrastructure that readily supports online course offerings.
- “It is most important that learners can access the material, so understanding the learners and thinking about potential barriers is key

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