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The benefits of using MOODLE in teacher training in Romania

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Abstract

The utilization of the e-learning environments for teacher training programs is at the beginning in the Romanian system for teacher continuous formation. Also, the rules for approving this kind of formation program are not approved yet, due the ongoing modification to The Law of Romanian Education. There are a lot of e-learning environments in our academic institutions, but now the free resource Moodle for e-learning course management system gain new users every day. Some of the benefits which recommend Moodle for being implemented in the Romanian's programs for teacher training are the subject of our paper: different types of assignments, chats, forums, databases, glossaries, lessons, multiple types of tests with one or more items, quizzes, wikis, surveys and the SCORM/AICC module.
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Keywords: Moodle platform; e-learner; telework;

1. Introduction

In this moment, in Romania, it was approved a new law of education. The methodologies regarding the distance learning formation programs will be upgraded in a short time. Some NGO and many Romanian Universities (such as: faculties from POLITEHNICA University, Technical University of Civil Engineering Bucharest, National Defense University, and The National School of Political Studies and Public Administration of Bucharest) have ongoing at distance programs. They have created their own learning platform or they are using Moodle platform (because is a free platform, and, also, a simple platform). More and more students are access and use the Moodle Platform and it is important to find their opinion about it. The trainees from the courses T&T – Telework and Training for trainers and decision makers and managers (Romanian teachers trainers), expressed their opinions about the Moodle platform and the course Syllabus (Paragină, F, and collaborators, (2011)). Is very important to underline that the participants were not completed any survey about Moodle platform, but they completed opinions as comments without any suggestion from us, in their homework essays. The trainees had to solve different types of

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assignments, chats, forums debates, glossaries, lessons planning, multiple types of tests with one or more items, quizzes, surveys, and also about the SCORM/AICC module.

2. Approach methodology

The remarks from this paper were collected from 76 teachers and school counselors' learners, who graduated or not graduated the training course from the Moodle platform (see Table 1). The total number of registered trainees was 118. The university teaching group was not included. There were 32 trainees from the 118 registered; who un enrol themselves from the course activities, and their data were lost.

Table 1. Distribution of T&T Learners' sample

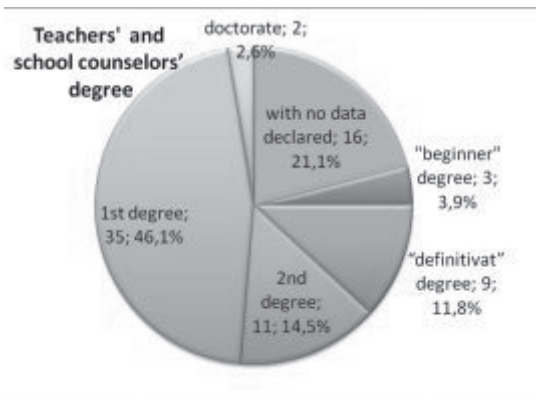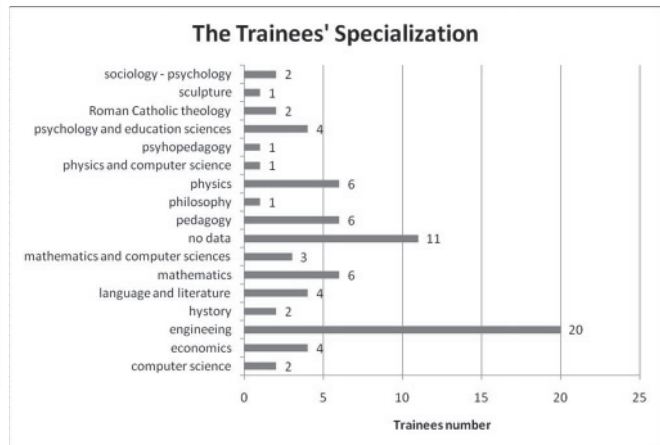| Course	Enrolled	Graduated	Sample participants
Vocational training	54	45	54
Scholastic teaching	42	10	22
University teaching	22	12	0

Figure 1. The trainees' degree

Figure 2.The trainees' specialization

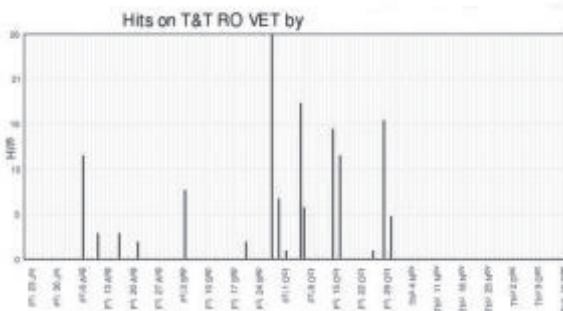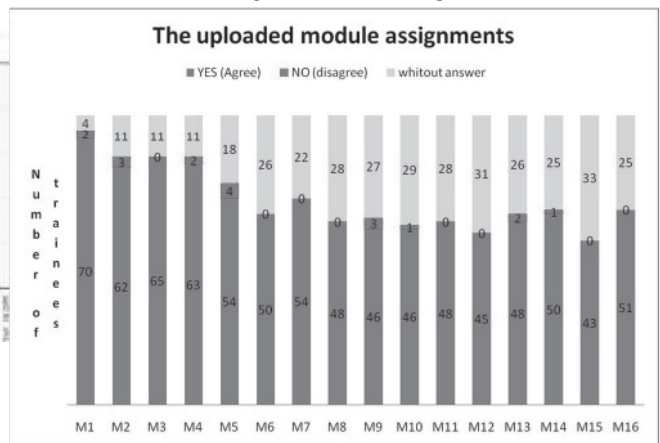
Figure 3.The registered activities of a trainee

Figure 4.The trainees' uploaded module assignments

Table 2. Distribution of Moodle platform's benefits remarks function of the trainees' qualifications

The statement	Remarks depending on trainees qualification (% -Number of yes/76 students)						
	Total (all categories)	with no data declared	"beginner" degree	"definitivat" degree	2nd degree	1st degree	doctorate
The subgroup percent from the sample	**100 %**	**21,1 %**	**3.9 %**	**11.8 %**	**14.5 %**	**46.1 %**	**2.6 %**
The Moodle platform is due	88.2 %	21.1 %	3.9 %	11.8 %	13.2 %	35.5 %	2.6 %
The Moodle platform is difficult	32.9 %	6.6 %	0 %	10.5 %	5.3 %	9.2 %	1.3 %
The Moodle platform is for the future	6.6 %	1.3 %	0 %	2.6 %	0 %	2.6 %	0 %
The Moodle platform is clever for their own course	11.8 %	1.3 %	1.3 %	2.6 %	1.3 %	5.3 %	0 %
to work at home is an advantage	39.5 %	6.6 %	3.9 %	6.6 %	5.3 %	15.8 %	1.3 %
The Moodle platform offers opportunities for teleworking	23.7 %	2.6 %	2.6 %	1.3 %	2.6 %	10.5 %	0 %
The contact with the unwanted people is minimum	7.8 %	0 %	1.3 %	1.3 %	1.3 %	3.9 %	0 %
More time for family and his own person	32.9 %	6.6 %	3.9 %	5.3 %	1.3 %	14.5 %	1.3 %
Information presented is quite, clear, brief	21.1 %	5.3 %	0 %	3.9 %	5.3 %	6.6 %	0 %
In information transmission the Moodle platform offers speed	40.8 %	3.9 %	3.9 %	7.9 %	5.3 %	17.1 %	2.6 %
The Moodle platform offers multimedia support	25 %	6.7 %	1.3 %	3.9 %	3.9 %	7.9 %	1.3 %
The Moodle platform offers a quick check of the homework	30.2 %	3.9 %	1.3 %	3.9 %	5.3 %	14.5 %	1.3 %
The Moodle platform offers a increase of the autonomy	32.8 %	5.3 %	3.9 %	3.9 %	3.9 %	14.5 %	1.3 %
The Moodle platform offers a flexible schedule	38.1 %	5.3 %	3.9 %	6.6 %	3.9 %	17.1 %	1.3 %
The Moodle platform reduce conflicts with peers, colleagues and superiors	10.5 %	1.3 %	1.3 %	0 %	1.3 %	5.3 %	1.3 %
The Moodle platform offers efficiency and profitability	15.7 %	2.6 %	1.3 %	1.3 %	0 %	9.2 %	1.3 %
The Moodle platform offers flexibility	19.7 %	3.9 %	1.3 %	1.3 %	1.3 %	10.5 %	1.3 %
Moodle course platform allows discussion groups for the teachers' categories	5.2 %	0 %	0 %	1.3 %	0 %	3.9 %	0 %
Homework can be adjusted to the students' levels of knowledge	3.9 %	1.3 %	0 %	1.3 %	0 %	1.3 %	0 %
Moodle course platform removing emotional barriers	1.3 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	1.3 %
Moodle course platform offers a good monitoring activity	3.9 %	2.6 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	1.3 %
Moodle course platform optimize the teaching – learning process	6.6 %	2.6 %	0 %	1.3 %	0 %	2.6 %	0 %

The Romanian teachers' and school counselors' qualification is represented by their didactical degree or teachers' degree: beginner degree, "definitivat" degree, 2nd degree, 1st degree and doctorate. The sample composition from this point of view is given in Figure 1. In Figure 2 the trainees' specializations are included. This data were given by the trainees in their course registration form. Some of them did not complete their specialization and/or their teacher's degree. Every registered trainee had its own data base with its logon entries and uploaded homework. The course teacher has the possibility to view the student activities in a graph (see Figure 3.) The days

when the student was logon are represented on the horizontal axis and the number of the activities on the course Moodle platform is represented on the vertical axis. The trainees' uploaded module assignments graph from Figure 4 represents the students' homework in which they had positive remarks about distance learning on a Moodle platform and telework, also, (yes, agree); negative statements (no, disagree) or they avoided to express their opinion. The trainees' homework task items fulfillment dependence of their age was subject of another paper (Paragină, F. and collaborators, (2011)). The course content, 16 modules, is a part of a book printed both in hard copy and e-book (Savu, T., (2010)). The benefits for e-learning using the Moodle platform were sometimes presented by the trainees as benefits for telework because they were adult trainers and they wanted to use this kind of training for their job activities.

3. The Moodle platform advantages and disadvantages

In 2010, the participants at T&T training program organized by CTNAM posted remarks which underlined the benefits for the course in the Moodle platform. They are showed in Table 2. In Table 3 are listed the disadvantages observed by the trainees.

4. Conclusions

The Moodle platform is a good option in distance learning for teacher training and it can be considered as a part of a trainers' telework activity. The very well qualified (1st degree and doctorate qualification) trainees' opinion was representative for the sample. It can be taken out two images regarding the Moodle platform utilization: one for promoting the utilization and one for rejection it.

Table 3. Distribution of Moodle platform's disadvantages function of the trainees' qualifications

The statement	Remarks depending on trainees qualification (% -Number of yes/76 students)						
	Total (all categories)	with no data declared	"beginner" degree	"definitivat" degree	2nd degree	1st degree	doctorate
The subgroup percent from the sample	100 %	21,1 %	3.9 %	11.8 %	14.5 %	46.1 %	2.6 %
Higher costs for the course realization	25.0 %	3.9 %	2.6 %	5.3 %	2.6 %	9.3 %	1.3 %
The need to be promoted on social networks	2/6 %	0 %	0 %	1.3 %	1.3 %	0 %	0 %
At the beginning it is needed someone who has worked with Moodle before	7.8 %	0 %	0 %	2.6 %	2.6 %	2.6 %	0 %
High student motivation is necessary to prevent the loss of interest and abandonment	13.1 %	1.3 %	0 %	2.6 %	1.3 %	7.9 %	0 %
Low interaction between students	15.7 %	3.9 %	0 %	3.9 %	2.6 5	5.3 %	0 %
Lack of motivation in learning	11.8 %	2.6 %	0 %	1.3 %	2.6 %	5.3 %	0 %
Moodle platform involves the danger of lack of initiative	3.9 %	0 %	0 %	1.3 %	0 %	2.6 %	0 %
Moodle platform offers storage space too small for homework	1.3 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	0 %	1.3 %	0 %

4.1. Positive conclusions

The teleworking with Moodle platform permits saving time and money for the trainer, even if that implies higher costs for the telecourse realization. Telework with Moodle is due, even sometimes difficult. To work at home is an advantage and the telework offers both to the trainer and for the trainees a flexible schedule and more time for family and they own person. The information transmission has a higher speed in distance learning. The telework is

complete and it offers the increase of the autonomy; quick check for homework task, multimedia support and possibilities to use any kind of argumentation. The telework is quite, clear, brief and there are opportunities in Romanian pre university educational institutions for teleworking, even if that implies a lot of hard work, or is too scientific. Also, the telework on Moodle platform offers flexibility, efficiency and profitability, and it is something clever for the own course of each participant. The telework reduces conflicts with peers, colleagues and superiors, the contact with the unwanted people at minimum and removing the emotional barriers. It optimizes the teaching-learning process and it can be consider that the telework is something for the future which offers the possibility of a green job contract and so, telework is a useful business.

Moodle course platform allows: activities' monitoring, upgrade to the latest technical concepts and specialization without expense or business agreement, discussion groups for the teachers' categories and to adjust homework to the levels of the students. The platform allows and they permit.

4.2. Negative conclusions

Sometimes is difficult for participants to deal with a Moodle platform, because not all have an IT formation or the others abilities needed. Is necessary a lot of hard work, it implies higher costs for the telecourse realization.

A lot of participants are not able to estimate the costs of implementation and it is necessary update or clarification of the knowledge because the content is too scientific, or the students design a class project for teaching without using the computer. So, it is needed someone who has worked in Telework before. It is possible in telework to have low interaction between students, and student motivation is necessary to prevent the loss of interest and abandonment, or lack of motivation in learning, or also the danger of lack of initiative.

Sometimes, for participants with low experience, it is not enough one demo session. Also, in computer sciences laboratory, there are problems with the Internet access, in face to face activities. The Moodle course platform administrator set a small storage space for homework. For good activities, knowledge for the Moodle installation is required and sometimes you need to promote the course on the social networks. Another threat, it is the danger in which the, computer becomes a new organ of the body.

5. Acknoledgements

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