Students' Attitude Towards Edmodo as a Supplementary Tool for Higher Education

Erman Uzun*

Computer Education and Instructional Technology Department, Mersin University, Mersin, Turkey

Abstract
Today the number of universities equipped with learning management system is increasing, however its potential cannot be used as it was intended. Edmodo is one of the learning management system that can be used to support social aspect of learning. Also, effective use of Edmodo like learning management systems needs to be studied over more to achieve better integration. Recognizing attitudes of the students towards this kind of supplementary tool in a higher education institution ensure quality and success. The purpose of this study was to investigate what the students' attitude towards Edmodo learning management system and to determine its accomplishment. Fifty college students in an "Introduction to Computer" course for pre-service teachers participated in the study. The author collected data through interviews and document analysis. Researcher interviewed with 10 of the students after the course and reviewed the students' posts on Edmodo. Interview records and document analysis on Edmodo posts were used to increase in depth understanding about students' attitude and accomplishment of Edmodo use as a supplementary tool. The results of these qualitative data collected via interviews revealed that students had a positive attitude towards Edmodo, and they thought that it is a good tool to improve students' learning opportunities through active participation and communication. They want to be active in classroom and they want to develop a warm relationship with instructors by means of this kind of learning management tools.

Keywords: technology enhanced learning; case based action research; Edmodo; learning management system.

Introduction

Planning should begin with the awareness and readiness of users of that technology. Students' attitudes and motivations toward these technologies and their usage play critical role to diffuse these technologies into educational settings. Understanding their attitudes and the reasons of avoidance provide us to present solutions. For this reason, opinions and expectations of these active users of this technology is very important.

Students mostly emphasize web based support tools. On the contrary, instructors especially wanted to use in-class tools to support their instruction. Web tools are commonly expected to be used by students, so that they may have easy access to the educational resources on the

* Phone: +90324 3412815-(1705), ermanuzun@mersin.edu.tr , Yenisehir Campus, 33343, Mersin/TURKEY

web. Although students' have high expectation to reach web-based resources, instructors tend to use of online resources less. General thought about quality of online courses could never reached F2F courses. However, approximately 62% of the academic leaders continues to believe online is as good as or better than face-to-face (Allen & Seaman, 2006).

The contradiction starts with that students want online technologies while instructors believe that the classroom technologies are more important. Initially, students want to see and use those technologies and believe that this will improve the quality of education. However, teachers generally have more conservative point of view on this issue. In order to overcome the conservative view of teachers, decision makers should locate and improve access and use of different techniques and technologies. Interaction and collaboration between individuals contributes to fostering change and transformation of this change in the organization. Technology integration is a long-lasting process and it needs support of the both decision-makers and users. Therefore, the important thing in this process is conducting continuous researches and getting feedback from students and academic staff. It is important to consider their point of view, so that the adoption and adaptation process might be shorten.

One of these tools that can be used to support learning environment is Edmodo. Edmodo highlights the social side of learning that is the reason why its interface is quite familiar to Facebook. In a recent survey, Edmodo was ranked one of the best learning tool by the professionals all over the world (Hart, 2015).

Edmodo is one of the best free tool that can be used by professors and students in many higher education institutions. Continuous developments were integrated to this social learning site, so researchers should evaluate the impact of these tools as a supplementary tool in educational settings continuously.

The advantages of this kind of supplementary tools that supports learning environments were investigated in many studies. According to Colorado and Eberle (2010), their advantages are: convenience, accessibility and flexibility. Moreover, effectiveness of online social learning environments that support face-to-face learning environments was emphasized by the students (Brady et al., 2010). However, they were criticized because it depends on internet facilities of the school, students' enthusiasm and instructors' knowledge and skills (Osciak & Milheim, 2001)

Method

Case-based action research as a qualitative research methodology were used in this study and in this article first cycle of this research were presented. This research methodology were used in this study because it is conducted to solve a problem or obtaining information in order to inform local practice (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). Although this methodology has limited in generalizability, local problems can be solved. In this case, our local practice is to increase effectiveness of an "Introduction to Computer" course that is given in all preservice teacher education programs. In this first cycle of case-based action research, researcher wanted to see the students' attitude towards Edmodo as supplementary tools for learning in higher education and its impact as a social learning environment.

Instead of linear models that are used in research, action research continues through cycles. In linear model only one intervention can be integrated, but cyclic structure of action research gives opportunity improve process unlimited times. Therefore, the action researcher will go through a series of phases and in this study first cycle of this case were presented. These
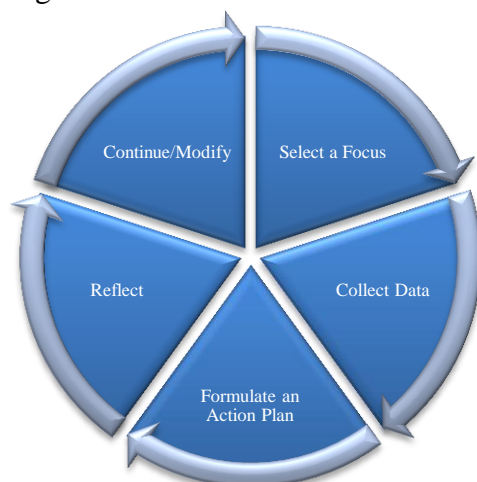
phases were presented in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Action Research Process (adapted from Gall, Gall, and Borg, 2003)

In this study researcher acts as a planner, facilitator, data collector and analyzer in this action research process. At the beginning of the study researcher identifies the problem and determine a set of solutions to eliminate these problems. In this study, researcher planned to see students view on the new tool to make correction in the action plan.

Purpose

In this research the main aim is to investigate what the students' attitude towards Edmodo learning management system and to determine its accomplishment. While instructors use online technologies less, students mostly use online tools for their courses and they also expect more online tools from instructors. Students' view on the use of Edmodo as a tool to support their learning activities to fill the some of the deficiencies of preservice teacher education, and will increase the students' satisfaction. So that, it is possible to integrate relevant and needed educational tools to support learning activities.

The purpose of this study is to identify:

- What are students attitude towards Edmodo supported computer course?
- What are the accomplishments of using Edmodo?

Data Collection

In this qualitative study, three techniques were used to collect data. These are:

- Document Analysis
- Interviews

In document and artifact analysis researcher look at and analyze posts of the students' that were sent via Edmodo in order to obtain in depth information. Students' post include information about their use, habits and thoughts on the use of Edmodo. Actually, in this study the main data source was interview records to learn participants' thoughts, opinions, and experiences about Edmodo. It allows to enter the other person's perspective.

Context and Participant Selection

As it was stated above in action research the researcher intention is not to generalize findings. That means, this study is context dependent, and determination and framing this context is very important to replicability of findings.

This study includes 52 students from Mersin University, Faculty of Education. In 2013-2014 fall semester students who take the "Introduction to Computer" course participated to this research.

In this study, the aim is to provide to in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. Therefore, participant selection to reach rich data is very important. With purposeful sampling it is possible to reach information rich participants (Patton, 2002). This sampling technique is suitable for small-scale and in-depth research projects (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). For this purposes criterion sampling were used. 5 most active and 5 least active students were selected as an interviewee at the end of the semester.

Data Analysis

In this study, data were analysed with content analysis to see students' attitude and accomplishments of Edmodo. With this purpose, researcher transcribe interview records. Also related Edmodo posts used as a data source in this content analysis. Although this approach includes systematic process of collecting data, identifying categories, connecting these categories, and forming common categories that explains the process.

Limitations of the study

There are some limitations of this study. First limitation is due to the action research methodology. In this research methodology the findings have limited generalizability. That means, this study will not generalize for all educational settings, for all cases, but it is possible to made detailed definition of the case. Detailed explanation made it possible to transfer the findings to a similar case. Second limitation of this study is due to trustworthiness issues of the qualitative study. In order to overcome these issues researcher use peer debriefing and prolonged engagement.

Results and Discussion

"Introduction to Computer" courses are offered in the curriculum of different universities in preservice teachers. In Turkish higher education system, there are various courses offered in various disciplines and different grade levels with different methods of instruction.

In education, whatever you do, how well you design your lessons, effective learning does not guaranteed the improved performance (Rosenberg, Coscarelli, and Hutchinson, 1992). Actually in many cases instructional solutions could not solve every problem related to learning, so we need to overview the problems. However, because of some reasons the effectiveness of "Introduction to Computer" courses varies, and with this study students' attitude towards Edmodo were investigated. With the light of the findings of this research it is possible to determine intervention to improve effectiveness of the course for the new cycle of action research.

The results of these qualitative data collected via interviews and document analysis revealed

that students' had a positive attitude towards Edmodo and they thought that it is a good tool to improve students' learning opportunities through active participation and communication. Student C expressed that "*Although we had some difficulties to connect Edmodo, it entails us to come together whenever we want. I can ask and take response quickly…*"

Furthermore, at the end of the delivery of the course the majority of the students stated that Edmodo is a good learning tool to support face-to-face learning environment. Students thought Edmodo as an effective tool to support learning environment. Related to this finding, Student E stated that "*we have never use this type of tool in any lessons before, as a first experience we love to reach online course materials, communication opportunities and self-pace home projects…*"

Also, some students criticize the use of Edmodo in this course. Such as they thought that Edmodo use is time consuming, and it is difficult to follow the procedures of Edmodo. The reason of this existing situation was somehow related to the low computer competency level, limited Internet access at home or dormitories, and limited computer ownership of the students.

This situation shows that although technology changes traditional habits in instruction, students existing computer competency level cause obstacles in using this kind of tools. Study showed that all students want online access for course content, while they are not tending to online courses. They want to be active in classroom and they want to develop a warm relationship with instructors by means of this kind of learning management tools. Communication is a key word to activate and motivate students. Students have a positive view and have some expectations from those technologies that support classroom learning.

Interaction should be improved with considering students' computer competency and previous e-learning experience. Students' limited existing knowledge, skills, and experience may result in low-level of interaction because of the limited use of the communication tools. Many research studies revealed that effective distance education requires a highly interactive classroom (Friend & Johnston, 2005; Cavanaugh, 2005; Zucker & Kozma, 2003). In order to create, socially active distance learning environment, it should be designed to create rich opportunities for students to communicate and collaborate with their peers as well as a variety of resources.

In Turkey, many study revealed that students have problems in interaction during their courses (Akpınar & Özer, 2004; Hatunoğlu, 2006). However, in the Project Tomorrow 2010 Speak Up survey (2011). It was indicated that schools should be socially-based, un-tethered and digitally-rich learning environment. Although web environment thought to limit social aspect of learning, it can be argued that the use of CMC tools help diminishing this problem (Özden, Gedik, and Kocaman, 2012). This situation indicates, online and blended learning allow students to participate and communicate different ways such as social chat activities (Project Tomorrow, 2011).

Students' skills, knowledge, and expectations should be located in the center of the distance course design process. In this initial action plan to overcome pre-defined problem researcher collect data from the users of this system. Students expressed their positive attitude towards this new tool to support face-to-face learning opportunities. However, there is a fact that meaningful learning occurs both the instructor and the students need to be ready to learn (Özden, 2004). This research process itself is beneficial for students and instructor. In the new

structure of the course, new problems emerged such as "course delivery problems" and "students' readiness". It should be overcome in the new cycle of the study and needs remedial approaches in the new action plan.

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