

Collaboration as the means for pedagogical change in using a virtual learning environment (VLE)

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The adoption of a virtual learning environment (VLE) e.g. Blackboard, Moodle etc. by higher education institutions (HEIs) is widespread. Nevertheless, the global acceptance of VLE does not guarantee that the quality of its adoption will be automatically achieved. The quality of adoption is directly linked to the decisions made by academics on the pedagogical approaches they employ in the implementation of VLEs. Thus it is important to look at how learning technologists or academic developers could support the academics in making those decisions. This paper is part of an on-going study on the collaborative practices between academics and a learning technologist in the implementation of a VLE. Three cycles of the action research will be presented as case studies. The findings from the case studies include the need for the collaborators to participate in a joint inquiry to improve on the usage of the VLE and to be mutually engaged throughout the process. This joint inquiry is realized in a form of a community of practice instead of approaching it from a project development point of view. Engagement in a community of practice allows the collaborators to learn from one another and this affects significantly how the VLE is utilized. The joint inquiry allows the academic to feel a sense of ownership and personal development that enable the collaboration to be sustained to achieve greater results. Interactions in the form of casual conversations, both online and face-to-face, strengthen social proximity and are important elements for the development of the collaboration.

Keywords: collaboration, virtual learning environment, community of practice