

## **STUDENTS' PREFERENCE FOR TOOLS ON LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

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### **Abstract**

Many universities are using a learning management system (LMS) to manage their students' learning. The LMS is given a different name by the different university. The facilities that the students are given access to are also different. This study attempts to see what do students prefer to have on their LMS. A total of 42 students responded to the survey, and they ranged from first to fourth year students. A great majority of them would like to have facilities such as their time-table, a to-do list, a media player (e.g. podcast), an online writing tool, an online dictionary and a file storage capacity to be included as part of the facilities provided on their LMS. To make learning more attractive to the digital natives, universities may want to consider providing these facilities on their Learning Management System to their students.

**Keywords:** Learning management system, student preference, managing learning

### **Introduction**

Technology is becoming part of us. We tend to use the technology in all aspects of life. For a student, one of the common technological tools used is the learning management system. Life will be much easier when students know how to use it well and get the best of it in an educational setting. LMS is one of the ways of

managing learning. However, according to Godwin-Jones (2012, p.4), most LMSes are meant for “course management and administration.” But recently, it has been made more interactive to make learning more attractive. Since universities can select the features that they want, their selection may be different from the selection made by another university. The universities may have their own reasons for choosing the applications of the facilities on the LMS. The students, however, may have their own preference where these applications are concerned. Thus, it would be interesting to know what they would prefer to have on their LMS.

### **Literature Review**

The online learning management system (LMS) has been vastly used by many universities across the world including Malaysian universities. Both Malaysian public and private universities have their own LMS including the International Islamic University Malaysia (iTa’leem), Universiti Teknologi Mara (iLearn), and Taylor’s University (Times). Each university develops its own LMS to enable its students to communicate virtually with their lecturers. LMS is defined in Latent Semantic Analysis (LSA) webpage as “... an infrastructure that presents and manages the educational content and also determines and evaluates the educational object or individual and organizational study purposes; it also follows up the trend of improvement towards the fulfilment of those purposes in addition to collecting and presenting data in order to appraise learning process of an organization as a whole unit” (as cited in Forouzesh, M. & Darvish, M., 2012, p.496). LMS has been used for several years for the following functions as mentioned by Szabo & Flesher (2002), “...delivers and manages instructional content, identifies and assesses individual and organizational learning or training goals, tracks the progress towards meeting those goals, and collects and presents data for supervising the learning process of organization as a whole” (as cited in Watson & Watson, 2012).

Due to the rapid growth of technology, LMS evolved to make it easier for lecturers and students to share learning contents, to engage in discussion forums and to keep track of learning progress. Therefore, it is important to build an LMS that meets students’ learning needs. Bailey (1993) gives a general outline how a well-developed LMS should be.

- Each lesson must meet educational purposes.

- The standardised lesson plan should come together with complete lessons.
- Lesson materials should cater for students' different learning abilities.
- Students' assessment grades should be included in the LMS.
- Lessons should follow students' progress.

According to Bostock (2000) (as cited in Greasley, A. et al. 2004, p.975), elements that should be included in an LMS are;

- Computer mediated communications (CMC). This includes e-mail and bulletin board facilities. Some support real-time messages between users who are online.
- Publishing (i.e. dissemination of learning materials). Provision of online documents required by students such as lecture slides, module outlines, case studies and assessment materials.
- Computer assisted assessment (CAA) such as multiple-choice questions.
- Course management facilities to control access and submission of work by students.

Most LMSes provide such elements. However, most users (i.e. the lecturers and students) use it as a platform to share and obtain lecture slides. Lee et al. (2012) in their study found that most of their respondents used the Web Based Learning Environment (WBLE) for downloading teaching materials although there are other features available for them to make use of.

To make learning more interesting and meaningful, the institution may want to consider offering functions that can serve students' needs. Thus, this research hopes to give more insight into what the students would prefer to have on their LMS to facilitate learning.

### **Problem Statement**

One of the apparent problems of a Learning Management System is that it is not based on students' preference. The lack of some tools on this system may make the system unattractive to the students. Hence, they may opt to use another application that is more attractive and interactive to them. Adzharuddin & Ling (2013) highlighted that to make it more effective universities would have to give a proper training and guidance to students and lecturers on how to use the LMS besides having a team that is always ready on-call to solve any issues that may arise. Other

than that, in order to make this system useful to students, there is a need to take into account students' intentions and to understand the factors that influence students' beliefs regarding e-learning (p. 251).

In order to facilitate students' process of learning, an LMS has to provide the important tools that are usually used by students in order to maximize its efficiency. The comprehensiveness of the system ought to be based on students' preference to make its use relevant to their needs.

### Objectives

The main objective of this research is to investigate students' preference for tools on their university's learning management system. Specifically, the study attempts to:

- (i) examine students' level of satisfaction towards their existing university LMS and;
- (ii) determine the learning tools that students prefer to have in their learning management system.

### Methodology

The survey method was adopted in this study. Google form was emailed to researchers contact lists who are from various public and private universities in Malaysia via the social network. A total of 44 students responded to the questionnaire. The analysis facility on Google form was used to analyse the data obtained. The details of the students' background are as shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1:Details of the Respondents**

		Number	Percentage (%)
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male</b>	3	6.8
	<b>Female</b>	41	93.2
<b>Year of Study</b>	<b>1</b>	10	22.7
	<b>2</b>	7	15.9

	3	20	45.5
	4	6	13.6
Field of Study	Arts/Social Science	29	65.9
	Science and Technology	14	31.8

### Analysis of Results

Below are the findings of the study based on the 44 students' responses to the questionnaire.

#### Students' Level of Satisfaction towards Their University's LMS

Before analyzing students' preferences for the different learning tools, it interesting to know how satisfied are they with their university's LMS. The analysis on this is presented below.

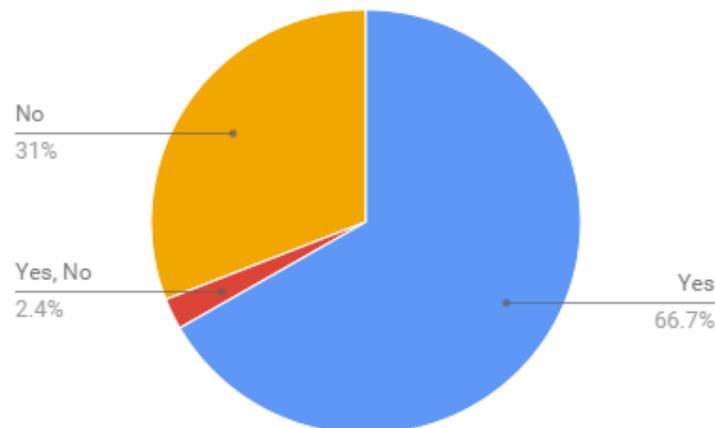


Figure 1. Students' level of satisfaction towards their university's LMS

Based on Figure 1 above, most of the students (66.7%) were satisfied with their existing university's LMS. However, 31% of them were not satisfied with their university's LMS. This reflects the need for the university to reconsider what facilities are offered on their LMS.

Table 2 below presents what students prefer to have for their LMS.

**Table 2: Students' Preference for Learning Tools in Their University LMS**

	Number		Percentage (%)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
Chat	32	10	76.2	23.8
Calendar	30	14	68.1	31.8
To-Do List	31	13	70.5	29.5
Timetable	37	7	84.1	15.9
Personal Publication Tools	32	11	72.7	25
Social Group Marking	36	7	81.8	15.9
On-campus News	35	8	79.5	18.2
Online Library	35	8	79.5	18.2
Writing Tools	39	4	88.6	9
Media Player	34	10	77.3	22.72
Language Tools	42	1	95.5	2.3
File Storage/Sharing	39	5	88.6	11.4
Quiz	32	12	72.7	27.3
Polling	36	8	81.8	18.2
Evaluation of lecturers' teaching performance	35	9	79.55	20.45
Evaluation of learning environment	31	12	70.45	27.3

From the table, it is clear that the majority of the students preferred to have all the facilities to be incorporated in their university's LMS as the percentages for a 'Yes' answer were higher for all 16 facilities listed.

Among these learning tools, the three most preferred were language tools, for example, dictionaries, writing tools like online word processors, and file storage/sharing with preference percentage of 95.5%, 88.6%, and 88.6% respectively. On the other hand, the least popular but preferred facility was calendar with a percentage of 68.1%.

Most of the students also preferred to evaluate their lecturers' and their learning environment on their LMS.

## **Discussion**

Based on the first objective of this research, that is, to examine students' level of satisfaction towards their existing university LMS it has been found that majority of the students were satisfied with their university's LMS. This is because this system serves as a bridge between students and lecturers in learning (Cavus, 2007, p. 302). As mentioned by Adzharuddin & Ling (2013), LMS is an important tool for students as this system allows them to get instant notifications regarding their daily assignments as well as it allows lecturers to contact their students during out of class hours which makes it easier for lecturers to instantly update students pertaining to their coursework (p.251). As pointed out by Hong et al. (2001) universities are using the Web and Internet as additions to classroom instruction, this is done to give learners the ability to connect to information (instructional and other resources) and to deliver learning experiences (as cited in Paris, 2004, p. 223).

The study also shows that the learning tools that most of the students prefer to use in their learning process are dictionaries, writing tools like online word processors and file storage/sharing. These three tools are important to make learning more effective. Mokhtar, Rawian, Yahaya & Abdullah (n.d.) mentioned that a dictionary is the most preferred strategy used to learn English. A similar finding was made by Scholfields (1997) who reported that ESL learners usually use dictionaries in order to check spelling, to know the meaning of unfamiliar words and to know the meaning of words that are only known partially (p.139). Nation (1989) reported that dictionaries

can help learning. Fraser (1999) in his study, also pointed out that referring to a dictionary to confirm inferences is a valuable metacognitive strategy for lexical acquisition. File storage/sharing is also vital. Al-Zoube (2009; 60) pointed out that “Google Docs can be used as web-based office to share documents with peer learners and for collaborative report writing. This tool is helpful since it enables the students to collaboratively online. Al-Zoube (2009; 58) also stated that, “Many applications such as word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, databases and more can all be done inside a web browser, while the software and files are housed in the cloud”.

## Conclusion

One of the apparent problems with the Learning Management System tools that are chosen by a university is that it is not based on students' preference. This study shows that there are rooms for improvement where the LMS is concerned. The students' opinion is important as it would help to make their learning experience more meaningful. In order to facilitate students' learning, it is advisable for the university to provide the important tools that are deemed useful by the students to enhance their learning.

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