Using Moodle in your classroom

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Moodle is a course or learning management system that is being utilised by many educational institutions to present information and learning experiences for students. It was created by Martin Dougiamas, a computer scientist and educator while working at a university in Perth, Australia. Moodle is open source software, meaning that it is free to use.

Uses for Moodle are many and diverse. You can teach totally online courses or supplement face-to-face lessons in a traditional classroom setting. It is technology designed to help teachers reach across the digital divide to enhance teaching and learning in any classroom.

This article is going to take a 'Moodle-like' approach to introducing you to Moodle. The following information has been extracted from an online source and provided here as an introduction to your initial training in using Moodle in your classroom. This is followed by a short list of other online resources with a brief review. Together, this article and the supplementary resources will constitute a Moodle 101 course.

Be careful though! This style of learning is addictive and highly engaging. I guarantee the learning path you are about to take will be different for each participant and you will supplement your own learning by digressing from the tasks set before you as your interests and natural curiosity are ignited. As Plutarch wisely wrote, "The mind is a fire to be kindled not a vessel to be filled!"

Why use Moodle?

Why use Moodle? Consider the following discussion on the differences between today's students and their teachers. (Source: The Benefits of Using Moodle in the Classroom) http://imoodle.ning.com/profiles/blogs/the-benefits-of-using-moodle.

"We need to take a closer look at our students, the so called digital natives. They were born after the mid-1980s which means they have been immersed in technology and new technical devices since the time they were born.!"

"They process things at "twitch speed" which means they are not used to waiting and wondering. They're always doing, testing and trying to make things work, right now. They download things on demand, watch shows instantly and receive instant gratification."

"Our students enjoy random access because they're comfortable with hyper texting. That means they can jump from page to page and subject to subject quickly and easily. Our students use parallel processing. Meaning that they mentally process and do many things at once and they're able to make learning connections between those things."

"They process information by looking at graphics first because they're used to being plugged in visually. They believe learning is interactive and should be fun and challenging at the same time, like a good game. They're motivated by moving to the next level, beating their own score and figuring out the game."

"Our students stay connected and plugged in and are used to finding the information they want or need when they want or need it. They don't always see the need to memorise facts since those facts are readily available to them via the internet."

Digital immigrants

By contrast, we (teachers) are considered digital immigrants. People born before the mid-1980s. We grew up and adapted to new technology rather than it being second nature to us. We learn to learn much differently.

We work at conventional speeds because we didn't grow up in a "hurry up" society. We usually take it slow and work methodically. We do things step-by-step. Directions, steps and guidelines are important for us in doing everything from working on a car to learning a new software program. It's important for us to master each step completely before moving on because, after all, it was the one chance we might get to gain that information.

We mentally process in a linear fashion rather than the parallel process or random access the digital natives use. This means we want to have all the pieces of the puzzle in place and making sense before we can be fully comfortable with knowing something. We rely on text to teach and graphics as enrichment… the exact opposite of our students.

We like to work and weren't raised in an environment too scared to play as the digital natives. We're used to putting in the hours and effort to work through new concepts and do not expect immediate retention or gratification. We are not used to looking for connections and patterns in everything we do like the digital natives. We're used to things existing in relative isolation."

Online resources for learning how to use Moodle in your classroom

What is Moodle? Explained with Lego – what is it, what are its main features, the thinking behind it and some facts on the world of Moodle (length 2:43 minutes) http://human.edublogs.org/2008/09/30/moodle-explained-ith-lego/

Moodle in the Classroom Middle school teacher Molly Tipton uses *Moodle* in her 8th grade social studies class. In this video Molly answers commonly asked questions for first time Moodle users. http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z9XfwBzt1mY

2 Minute Moodles A collection of short and simple tutorials to get you using Moodle quickly and easily. http://tomazlasic.net/moodle/moodle-tutorials-2-minute-moodles/

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