1. The students and the curriculum

These activities were used by a group of both British and international (Chinese) learners as part of a fully online staff development course. All learners were experienced educators. LAMS was incorporated into Moodle, which was the learning platform being used.

2. The teaching and learning aims

The overall goal of the course was to deepen participants’ understanding of international e-learning, specifically between the UK and China. The learning objectives linked to the use of LAMS were:

- Students and tutor will gain some experience of using LAMS to design learning activities for their students.
- Students and tutor will critically evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of LAMS as a result of their use.

3. The inquiry/ inquiries

The learning design consisted of the re-use of one of the DeSILA team’s training sequences (on e-learning). The sequence was intended as a broad introduction to the tool which students were then required to use before designing their sequences. Course content and materials were deliberately slim, as the course adopted an approach of collaborative knowledge construction, whereby all education professionals would work together to learn from each other through feedback and communication. The tutor commented:

“The learning on the course is being achieved by collaboration and joint knowledge construction and so what is more important than the content or the materials is the process by which people learn. People learn in this course through computer supported collaborative learning and so the really important part of the course is not in the materials or resources, it is in the learning community and the communication, because that is when you get the conceptual understanding being developed and the deconstruction and reconstruction of knowledge and that is where people are developing new knowledge.”

4. What happened (the process)

Prior to the beginning of the activities, a link to the sequence was pasted into the virtual learning environment.

The following features of LAMS were used:

(1) **Notice board:** This introductory section of the sequence highlights the objective of this e-learning task, which was to explore the perceptions of e-learning through a combination of internet, research, collaboration and reflection.

(2) **Survey:** Students were provided with a survey which was designed to identify their initial perceptions of e-learning. There were 8 e-learning definitions, allowing students to tick as many as they felt applied. They were also encouraged supply their own definitions in text format.
(3) **Resources + Forum:** Students were asked to review web pages which had content on e-learning definitions and then use the forum to share their comments with the rest of the group. They were also required to reply to two other people’s comments before moving on.

(4) **Notebook:** Students were asked to jot down their own personal definition of e-learning in their own notepads as reflective pieces which would be shared with other students at the end of the sequence.

(5) **Share resources:** Students were directed to 4 different BBC online news articles and asked to read at least 2 of them. They were also required to search and upload one BBC article which they considered to be relevant to the topic. This e-activity was manually held by tutor so all students could only enter the chat section of the sequence when everyone had completed the e-activity. In this way, students who finished the task quickly could carry on reading other articles added by others while they waited to move on.

(6) **Chat:** Students were asked to chat with peers about their discoveries and findings on e-learning.

(7) **Notice board:** Students were told to use the notebook tool to summarise their thoughts as a result of the chat and save it, then to open a Word document and compose a 250 word reflective entry.

(8) **Submit files:** Students were asked to upload their 250 word reflective pieces for assessment.

(9) **Voting + Notebook:** Students were required to vote by ticking statements in a survey that most accurately described their reaction to this LAMS sequence. They were given the option of providing any additional thoughts in their notebooks regarding the LAMS sequence.

5. **Reflections**

The British and Chinese professionals evaluated the sequence slightly differently – whilst the British learners were concerned about the linearity of the tool, this seemed to be better suited to the more teacher-driven approach adopted in China. The tutor felt strongly that LAMS in the version used did not lend itself to an inquiry-based learning approach, as it did not offer enough in the way of students branching off and pursuing their own interests. However, the experience of using LAMS within Moodle led to some good insights about what LAMS offered compared to Moodle. It was very beneficial to use LAMS within Moodle.

6. **Any other comments**

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