

Students' Perceptions toward Usage of Edmodo Social Learning Platform

Farah Mohamad Zain*

Abd. Latif Kasim

*School of Education and Modern Languages, Universiti Utara Malaysia,
06010 UUM Sintok, Kedah*

*Corresponding author: mz.farah@uum.edu.my

ABSTRACT

This study focused on the students' perception on the strength and weakness of Edmodo Social Learning Platform (ESLP) as well on factors inhibiting active participation of students in forum board. A total of 42 first year students of the School of Industrial Technology (SIT), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) enrolled for IMK209- Food Physical Properties course were involved in this study. Findings of the study was obtained through the descriptive analysis of the open-ended questionnaire revealed time constraints and technical aspects were found to be the main factors inhibiting the active participation of students in ESLP. The findings proved that the ESLP is accepted as a learning platform by the students and able to promote a high level of collaboration and interaction in teaching and learning.

Keywords: *Edmodo, social learning platform, perception.*

Received: February 2017

Revised: Jun 2017

Published: July 2018

INTRODUCTION

Web 2.0 was introduced by Darcy DiNucci in 1999 (Wikipedia, 2011). However, it became popular in 2003 through O'Reilly Media and Media Live, hosting the first Web 2.0 conference. Web 2.0 framework consisting of three main areas of collaborative/social, learner as designer and knowledge management (Tutty & Martin, 2009). Social or collaborative framework creates a workspace to support users in the learning process, self-assessment, collaboration and contribution. Learner as designer refer to situations where users use Web 2.0 tools to generate creative knowledge based on their

own interests and produce meaningful information and relevant learning outcomes. Knowledge management is the use of knowledge efficiently and wisely (Tutty & Martin, 2009).

Most of Web 2.0 tools are related to podcasting, blogging, tagging, social bookmarking and social networking. Social networking is one of the most popular Web 2.0 features and is today's favourite teenager. From Friendster to mySpace and the latest Facebook, social networking has indeed become one of the necessities in their lives. Although it was initially established for the purpose of communicating and sharing information with each other, now the social networking was also exploited in various fields such as business, politics, religion, entertainment and education.

Social networking is also considered as apps that are capable of expanding interactions and sharing space for collaboration, social relationships and information exchange in a web-based environment. This definition provides an understanding of the teaching and learning environment that utilizes the various tools and activities available within the network.

Edmodo is one of the Web 2.0 tools and also a web-based social networking application that is ideal for learning platforms. In January 2018, Rachelle has recognized Edmodo as one of '12 Digital Tools to Try in 2018'. Additionally, Edmodo is also listed in 'Top 100 Tools for Learning 2017' and ranked 41st. Edmodo social learning platform (ESLP) has the appropriate educational features as a teaching medium for all levels of education and training. It is free to use and lecturers have full control to connect other lecturers and students. In addition, ESLP provides a safe and functional as a learning resource, assessment and communication tool.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies on the use of ESLP in teaching are quite limited. Holland and Muilenburg (2011) studied the participation of students in literary discussions through asynchronous forum boards at ESLP. Participation and student engagement, the complexity of discussion and effectiveness of ESLP are discussed. The study by Kongchan (2008) explores the possibility of teachers who are not a digital background using ESLP as a medium in conducting online classes including workshops on ESLP for other teachers. The findings revealed that ESLP was seen as a simple and user-friendly social learning platform. Teachers successfully use this program without any support from technicians.

Thongmak (2013) reviews the use of ESLP as a tool for collaboration and student views towards ESLP. The findings show that perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of ESLP are an important factor in influencing ESLP acceptance and use. Sanders (2012) examines the effects of ESLP on the student engagement and self-learning. The results of the study had shown that the implementation of ESLP in teaching and learning encourages student engagement and produces self-directed learning when ESLP features are applied. Nevas (2010) in his study examined the effects of micro blogging on student engagement and performance and found that communication between students improved when they performed challenging tasks progressively in the ESLP. Balasubramanian, Jaykumar, and Fukey (2014) in their study found that ESLP as a learning platform to create a responsible learning environment that students would prefer to use while supporting the RASE models (Resources, Activity, Resources and Evaluation).

Al-said (2015) in his study of bachelor's degree at Taibah University found that they had a positive perception of ESLP as an app for the M-learning environment as it had many benefits to supporting learning processes such as facilitating and improving the effectiveness of communication in learning. They also appreciated ESLP because it allowed them to learn through flexible time.

Cankaya, Durak and Yunkul (2013) in his study of 22 undergraduate students found that students had a positive attitude towards the use of ESLP in education. For example, they think ESLP is fun and almost all students want to use ESLP in the future after they become teachers. Wolfer (2012) in his study of the effects of using micro blogging (through ESLP) on student engagement and understanding found that the collaboration and knowledge sharing influenced student engagement positively in discussions at ESLP. According to Bita, Seyyed and Ali (2015), the use of ESLP as a technology tool can support writing capabilities. The results show that using different colors while providing feedback helps students to realize their mistakes.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Most of online courses are supported through Learning Management Systems (LMS) such as Moodle because of the features of competency, safety and organization (McLoughlin & Lee, 2010). However, this platform has generally been used as a static source of content without social networking features

such as Facebook or YouTube (Brady, Holcomb, & Smith, 2010; Schroeder, Minocha, & Schneider, 2010). Other studies also criticize LMS for not giving motivation, enthusiasm or personalization (Naveh, Tubin, & Pliskin, 2010), as well as preventing pedagogical support with default settings and familiar features. Meanwhile, social networking platforms provide students with social communication, autonomy, online discussions and management (Brady et al., 2010; McLoughlin & Lee, 2010). The social networking platform has the potential to facilitate interaction and collaboration by focusing on the use of technology to support education. Social networks create an informal and relaxing environment but promote effective learning. In addition, social networks also help students and lecturers build good relationships and overcome constraints (Bosch, 2009).

The most dominant social networking tool among university students and researchers is Facebook as it was initially designed to cater for the needs of students communicating and building networks (Clark & Gruba, 2010). However, the use of Facebook in education is not as widespread as in other areas due to privacy concerns (Duncan & Chandler, 2011; Nentwich & Kong, 2012). Other social networks that appear and are best suited for application in the teaching and learning process are Edmodo social learning platforms (Motteram, 2013) as this platform facilitates grading process, able to evaluate student performance and complement lecturer learning plans. In addition, ESLP also provides a comprehensive environment for online education experience and keeps students safe and focused. However, the study on the use of ESLP in teaching is still quite limited (Evriklea & Jenny, 2014) mainly refers to its acceptance, collaboration and interaction pattern and its impact on knowledge generation.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

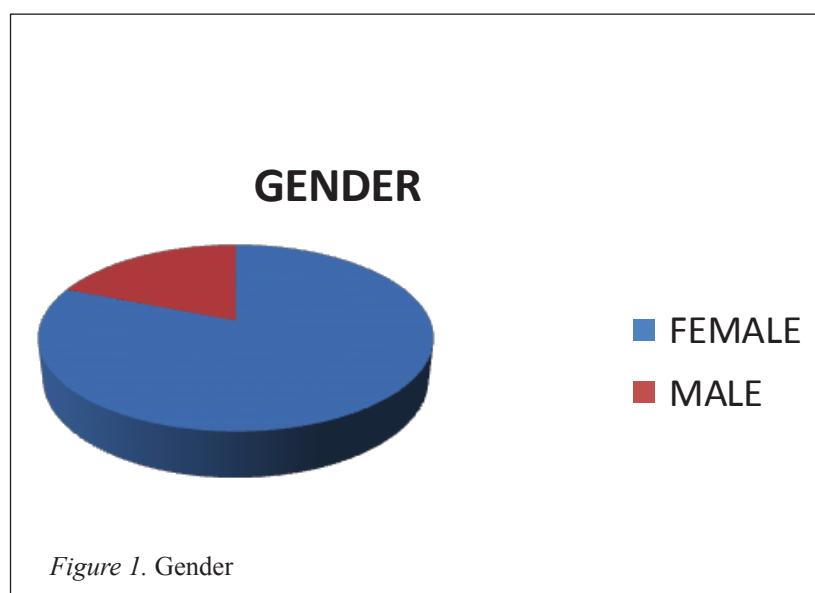
This study involved 42 students at the School of Industrial Technology, Universiti Sains Malaysia who enrolled for IMK 209-Food Physical Properties. Research briefings to all students registered with this course were delivered by IMK 209 course lecturer Prof. Dr. Abd. Karim Alias at the lecture hall. The briefing is also relevant to the use of ESLP. The lecturer also informed students about the various activities to be undertaken through ESLP during the 14 weeks of the IMK 209 course. In order to answer the question on student opinion about ESLP, researchers use open-ended questionnaire method. The questionnaire was aimed to look at students' perceptions on ESLP advantages, disadvantages, collaboration in ESLP and

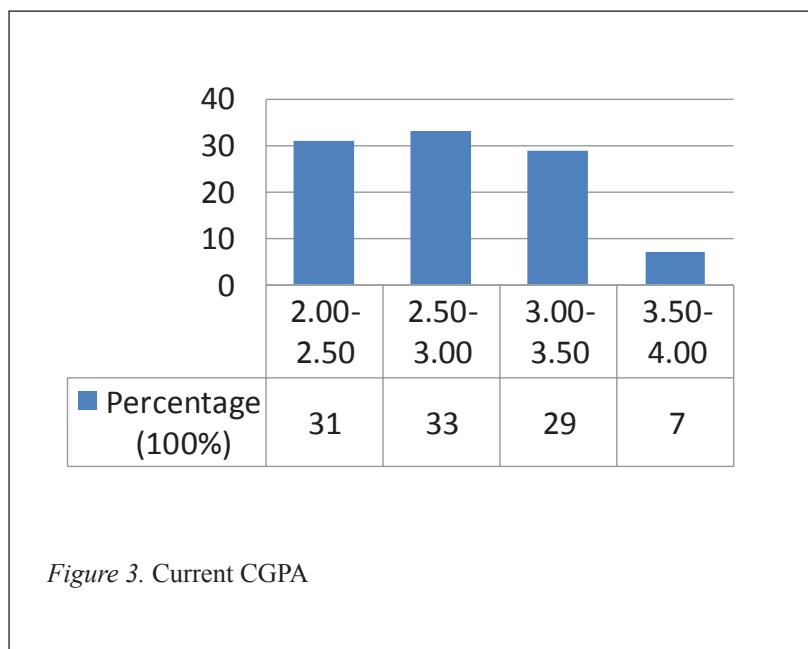
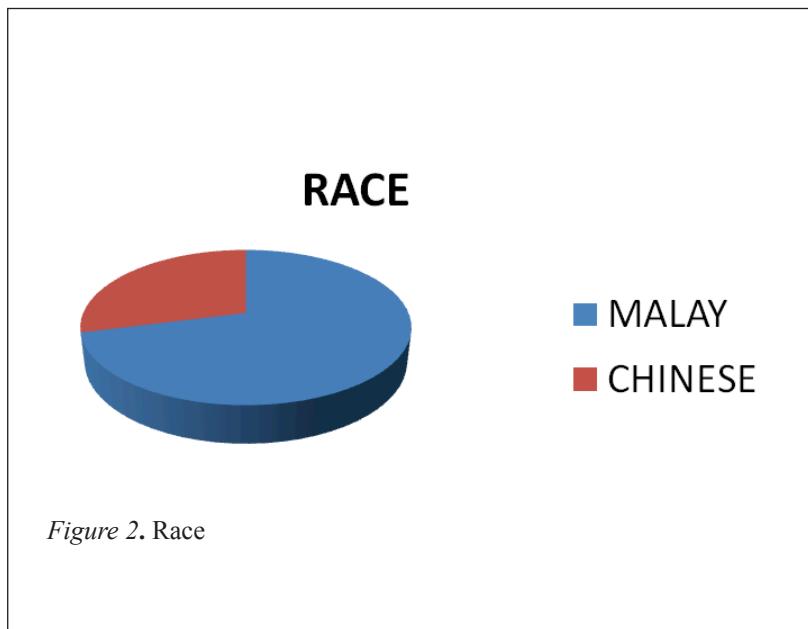
the lack of active involvement among students. An open-ended questionnaire provides an opportunity for students to express their opinions or views on the questions raised. In this research, researchers have formulated questions to get a feedback from students after they have used ESLP. This open-ended questionnaire consists of four questions that require students to submit their answers with explanations and opinions. This questionnaire was adapted from the Noorizdayantie (2012) study which deals with the advantages and disadvantages of using e-learning platforms. The data obtained were analyzed using descriptive analysis. This analysis is in quantitative form through frequency for the main themes presented by the students.

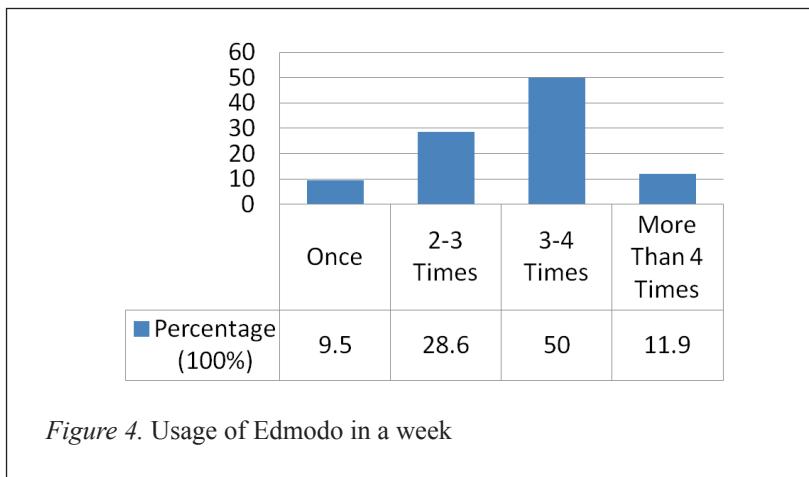
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Student Demographics

The results of the demographic are shown in Figure 1, 2, 3 and 4. The figure indicates that most of the students were female (81%) with majority of them was Malay (71%). Most of them were average student with CGPA ranging 2.00-3.00 with 64%. The usage of ESLP in a week quite regularly with 62% of them used at least three times a week.







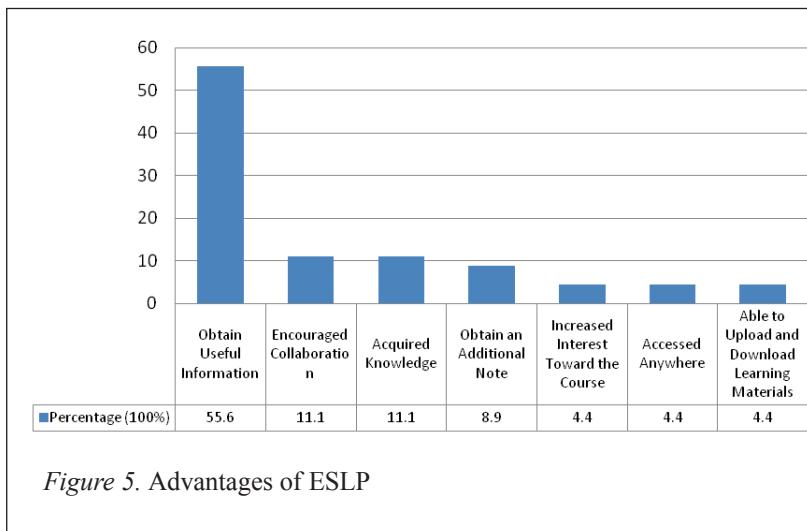
Descriptive Analysis

There are four open-ended questions given to students which include the advantages and disadvantages of using ESLP as well as student perceptions about the collaboration taking place in ESLP and the lack of active participation of students. This analysis is intended to examine students' views on the use of the platforms they have been through throughout a semester. Students are required to give perceptions of each question.

Each student view is categorised according to the general criteria and the frequency of each of these criteria is calculated. The findings from feedback received were analysed by percentage of the total frequency recorded.

i. *The Advantages of ESLP*

Figure 5 shows the findings from open-ended question related to the advantages of using ESLP. A total of 55.6% ($n = 25$) students stated that they were able to obtain in the IMK Able to upload and downloading the ESLP while 11.1% ($n = 5$) students thought that the use of ESLP encouraged collaboration between students and lecturers and acquired knowledge (11.1%). In addition, 8.9% ($n = 4$) of the students explained that they obtained an additional note for the IMK 209 course in the ESLP from the sharing of lecturer and students. Other responses to the advantages of using ESLP stated that the use of ESLP increased interest in the IMK 209 course of 4.4%, ESLP can be accessed anywhere at 4.4% and ultimately ESLP is able to upload and download learning material files shared by lecturer and students at 4.4%.



This finding revealed that ESLP was useful to supplement traditional learning method since it provides various features supporting the teaching and learning process. In addition, it was considered a comprehensive content since obtain useful information recorded the highest percentage (55.6%). The findings of this study were supported by Enriquez (2014) that found ESLP suitable to use to send assignments, sit on the online quiz, and facilitate participants to access learning materials provided by course lecturer. In addition, activities and discussions in the ESLP motivate them to learn more about this course. Kongchan (2012), Sanders (2012), Cruz and Cruz (2013) have proven many benefits of employing Edmodo as a technology tool for classroom teaching and learning. Hence, researchers conclude that although ESLP only serves as a support system for conventional learning, it helps students to gain information and knowledge that enhances the construction of student knowledge.

ii. *The Disadvantages of ESLP*

Figure 6 shows the findings on open questionnaires related to disadvantages of using ESLP. It was found that 42.8% ($n = 18$) students argued that Internet speed problem in USM caused them difficult to log in to ESLP. While 26.2% ($n = 11$) students stated that the information or learning materials shared are too much that sometimes make them confused. In addition, 21.4% ($n = 9$) students face the time constraints for them to engage in discussions at ESLP and read all the learning materials shared by lecturers and students.

4.8% (n = 2) think that the influence of social networks like Facebook and twitter makes it difficult for them to focus on using ESLP. Other responses to the disadvantages of using the ESLP stated include a less attractive display (2.4%) and have no smartphone to enable them to access ESLP (2.4%).

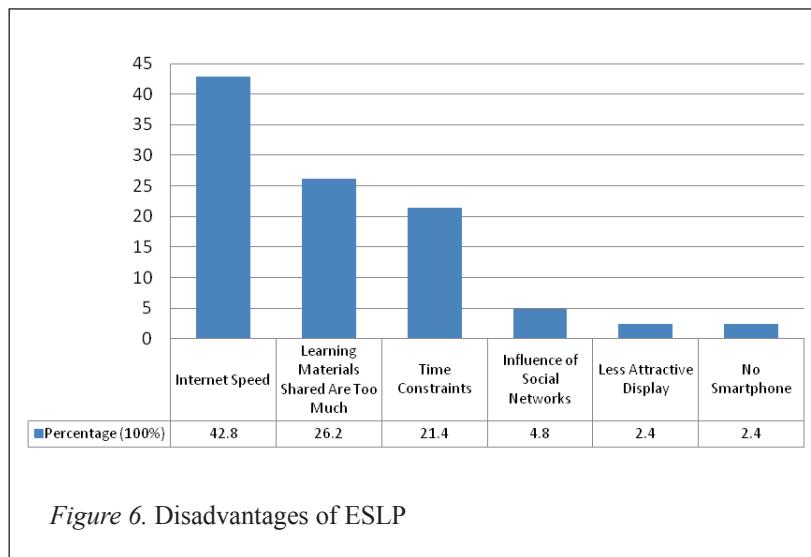


Figure 6. Disadvantages of ESLP

This finding revealed that the lack of Internet speed in USM (42.8%) makes it difficult for them to engage in activities in the ESLP. Perhaps in the future, researchers hope this problem can be overcome to enable teaching and learning based on the internet to run smoothly. According to Enriquez (2014), weaknesses in using ESLP are time constraints, difficulty in following ESLP procedures, plagiarizing other work and not all students have access to the internet.

Table 1 shows students' overall perception on the advantages and disadvantages of using ESLP.

Table 1.

Perception towards ESLP

Advantages	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Obtain useful information	25	55.6
Acquired knowledge	5	11.1
Encouraged collaboration	5	11.1
Obtain an additional note	4	8.9
Increased interest toward the course	2	4.4
Accessed anywhere	2	4.4
Able to upload and download learning materials	2	4.4
Total	45	100
Disadvantages	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Internet speed	18	42.8
Learning materials shared are too much	11	26.2
Time constraints	9	21.4
Influence of social networks	2	4.8
Less attractive display	1	2.4
No smartphone	1	2.4
Total	42	100

iii. ESLP encouraged collaboration

This open-ended question also looks at the extent to which students and lecturer are collaborating in the ESLP. Table 2 show the findings obtained from student feedback. It was found that 69.05% (n = 29) students thought that the use of ESLP encouraged collaboration between students and lecturer while only 9.52% (n = 4) students did not support the opinion that the use of ESLP encouraged collaboration.

For students who supported, they felt that collaboration occurred because of the interaction between students and lecturer (19.05%), through the

discussion in the forum board at ESLP (16.67%), information sharing between students and lecturer (14.29%), to change ideas (9.52%) and opinions (9.52%) and ultimately the question-answer process between students and students-lecturers.

For students who do not support, some students are inactive to engage in discussions (11.90%) and students are more often involved in face-to-face rather than online (2.38%). For these factors, they assume that the use of ESLP does not encourage collaboration between students-students and students-lecturer.

Table 2.

Perception about Collaboration between Students in ESLP

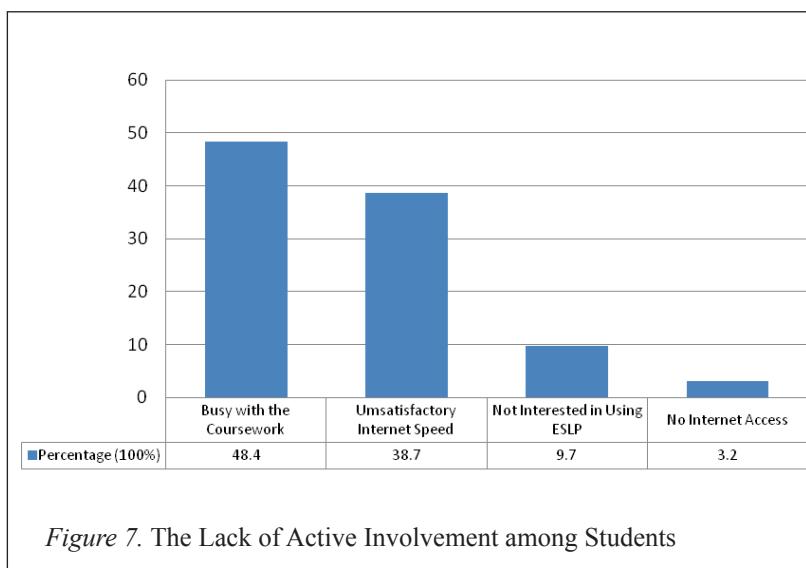
	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Collaboration	29	
Interaction between students-lecturer	8	25.8
Collaboration takes place through discussion in the forum board	7	22.6
Collaboration occurs when sharing information	6	19.4
Collaboration occurs when exchanging ideas	4	12.9
Collaboration occurs when exchanging opinions	4	12.9
Question-answer process between students and students-lecturers	2	6.5
Total	31	100
No Collaboration	4	
Inactive students	5	83.3
Involved in face-to-face rather than online	1	16.7
Total	6	100

According to Looi and Yusop (2011), ESLP contains a collaborative learning feature in which discussions can occur in small groups. This is supported by

Enriquez (2014) where ESLP is a supplementary tool in addition to face-to-face discussions and provides collaborative platforms for students and lecturer. Therefore, the researchers conclude that when students discuss, share information, exchange ideas and opinions, collaborate between students and lecturer, thus proving the role of ESLP in promoting constructivism learning approaches.

iv. *The lack of active involvement among students*

Figure 7 shows the findings related to the lack of active involvement among students in the ESLP. It is found that 48.4% (n = 15) think that they are very busy with the coursework and have no time to read all the learning materials provided in the ESLP. While 38.7% (n = 12) stated that the unsatisfactory Internet speed enabled them to actively engage in the ESLP. In addition, 9.7% (n = 3) students are not interested in using ESLP and 3.2% (n = 1) students stated that there is no internet access at their place.



CONCLUSION

ESLP provides opportunities for greater collaboration and ways to facilitate teaching and learning. This research can help stakeholders in e-learning

especially in the administration, lecturer, teaching designers, content specialists and information technology to better understand the collaborative effectiveness, the advantage of using ESLP as well as the importance of interaction between students and students-lecturers. As well as improving the effectiveness of the learning process, the collaborative approach is able to develop social skills, communication skills, leadership, teamwork and problem-solving skills.

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