

Edmodo: The Facebook of Learning Platforms

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Title	Edmodo
Developer	Edmodo, Inc.
Contact Information	https://www.edmodo.com/contact
Type of Product	Web-based social networking learning platform
Platform	Web-based online platform Mobile applications available for <i>iOS</i> (8.0 and later), <i>Android</i> (2.3 and later) and <i>Windows Phone</i> (<i>Windows 8</i> and later)
Price	The website and mobile applications are free to use without limitations. Some third-party applications within the platform offer premium or subscription options after an initial trial period.
Help Center	https://support.edmodo.com/hc/en-us

Introduction

Considering the large number of research articles and how-to papers on the topic, integrating technology into instruction and creating e-learning content seem to be topics of interest to many educators today. However, the sheer number of tools available can be overwhelming, especially when taking into account the additional learning curve of the “digital immigrant” generations (Prensky, 2001). Therefore, it is important to look at the options available to teachers with these points in mind.

Edmodo is a free, online e-learning platform that allows teachers to create and share content with students and to track learning. *Edmodo* offers accounts for teachers, students, and parents, and its familiar looking interface and relative simplicity make it a strong candidate for teachers looking to take advantage of the learning opportunities afforded by this type of tool.

In addition to its basic functions, users have pointed out that *Edmodo* is useful as a tool for back-channel communication (Stevens, 2012, p. 5), a blog or wiki (Son, 2011, p. 3), a social learning platform (Dowling, 2011, p. 7), and a microblogging platform (Newgarden, 2009, p. 13; Stevens, 2009, p. 13; Dowling, 2013, p. 2). This illustrates how *Edmodo* can be understood differently depending on the features the user chooses to focus on. In the present review, *Edmodo* will be examined as a social network learning platform, and in the following sections, the workings and limitations of the site are addressed.

General Description

Registering for *Edmodo* is fast and requires submitting only basic information (see Figure 1).

After registering for a teacher account, instructors can create and manage online classes and document student learning. Teachers can invite students to join their classes through a uniquely generated group code to ensure that only appropriate people have access to the course (see Figure 1). Upon registering, students receive a code that their parents can use to see course progress; however, they need to verify their relationship to the student during registration. There is also the option to link the Edmodo account with a *Microsoft Office 365* account.

Edmodo for Students	Edmodo for Parents
Join your classroom in less than 2 minutes	Join to see your student's progress
<input type="text"/> First Name	<input type="text"/> First Name
<input type="text"/> Last Name	<input type="text"/> Last Name
<input type="text"/> Group Code ?	<input type="text"/> Parent Code ?
<input type="text"/> Username	<input type="text"/> Relationship to Student v
<input type="text"/> Email (Optional)	<input type="text"/> Email Address
<input type="text"/> Password	<input type="text"/> Password
<input type="button" value="Sign Up For Free"/>	<input type="button" value="Sign Up for Free"/>
Or you can <input type="button" value="Sign Up with Office 365"/>	Or you can <input type="button" value="Sign Up with Office 365"/>

Figure 1. Student and parent account registration process on Edmodo

The basic mission of *Edmodo* is to provide instructors and learners with a learning management system (LMS) that utilizes the users' familiarity with social networks like *Facebook* to help establish a learning community. The similarities with established social networks like *Facebook* are immediately visible in the familiar blue header and the layout of the main sections (see Figure 2). This is an important feature from a design standpoint as it helps to minimize the learning curve experienced by learners new to e-learning.

Figure 2 shows the teacher interface of *Edmodo*, which has the most features of the three possible account types (teacher, student, and parent). It can be divided into ten major sections. The left side of the header (1) covers the home, class progress and library menus, the middle (2) is occupied by the search engine of the site, while on the right (7) *Spotlight* (an option to upload, publish and share materials), notifications and the user profile can be found. On the left of the screen there are options to display a teacher profile (3) and manage groups and communities (4). The middle of the screen is reserved for classwork options (5), including notes, assignments, quizzes, polls, and the ability to send alerts about what should be done. Below, the newsfeed of the

communities the user has joined will appear (6), which in this case is illustrated by Language Arts. Finally, on the right side of the screen, one can invite colleagues (8) and contact the help center (9). The last section on the right margin consists of the application store, the application manager and launcher, the calendar in the form of *Edmodo Planner*, and an option to link *Microsoft Office Online* with classes (10).

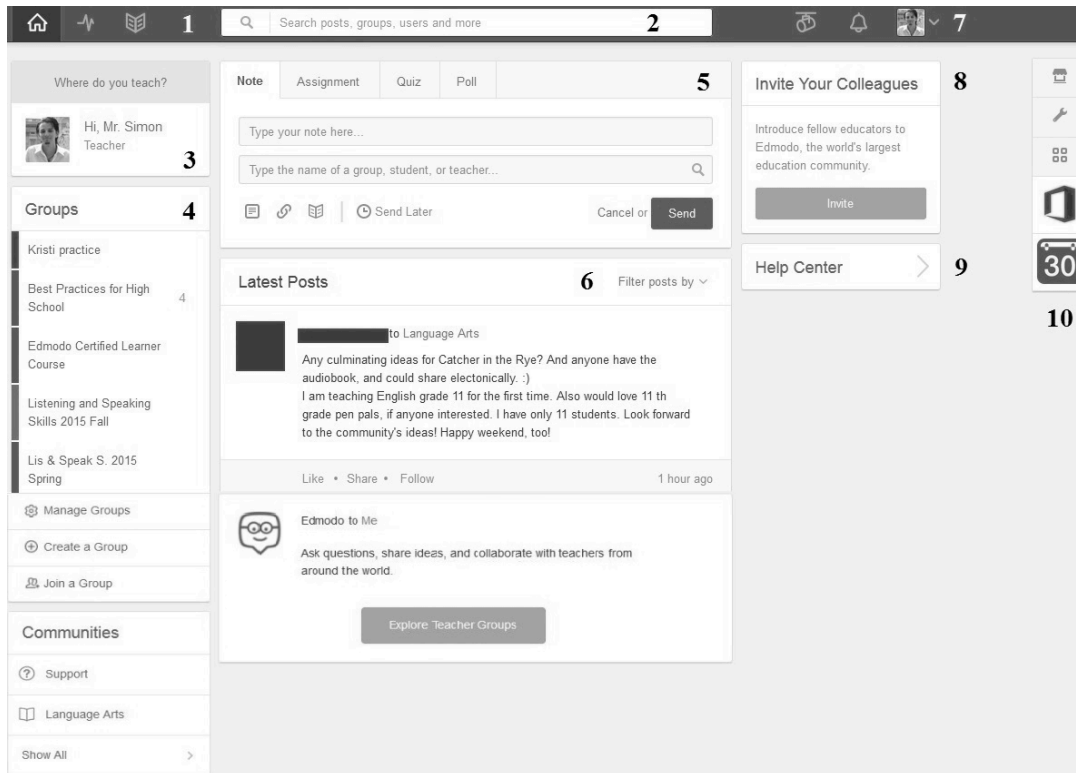


Figure 2. *The teacher interface of Edmodo*

Features

Edmodo is a versatile learning platform that can be used for a number of learning purposes. One simple possibility is to set up a library of different folders containing files and links for students to access via *Edmodo*. Both students and teacher can link their libraries with their *Google Drive* or *OneNote* accounts. Another commonly used feature of *Edmodo* is to deliver and collect assignments and quizzes. Assignments and quizzes can be scheduled to appear at a preset time, and relevant files can be added to them. *Edmodo* also offers the ability to set up polls, which can serve as a tool to discover and discuss students' positions on issues.

Perhaps the most useful feature of *Edmodo* is its quiz creation tool (see Figure 3). If the user clicks on the quiz option in the middle of the screen (see point 5 in Figure 2), five possible question types appear to choose from: multiple choice, true or false, fill in the blanks, matching, and short answer.

Figure 3. *Quiz creation on Edmodo*

With the exception of the short answer option, the quizzes can be automatically graded using answers preset by the teacher. This means that students can get instant feedback on their performance (see Figure 4). The short answer question type allows for more complex items; while this option requires manual correction, it also gives teachers the ability to write comments on the students' answers and give partial scores as well.

Figure 4. *Example of the instantaneous feedback Edmodo provides for gap-filling item types*

Quizzes require the teacher to set a time limit and provide a short description. After this, there are three more options available: previewing the quiz to make sure everything appears as it should, the option to randomize questions, and an option to print the quiz for in-class use. By applying multimedia possibilities and linking audio files in the description, it is also possible to create listening tasks within the quiz function. Overall, item creation is quite intuitive and happens through an easily navigable menu. In addition to the results accessible by viewing individual students' answers, *Edmodo* also provides a highly useful feature for item validation purposes in the form of pie charts depicting students' performance (see Figure 5). This information makes it possible for teachers to improve their questions where needed for further implementation.

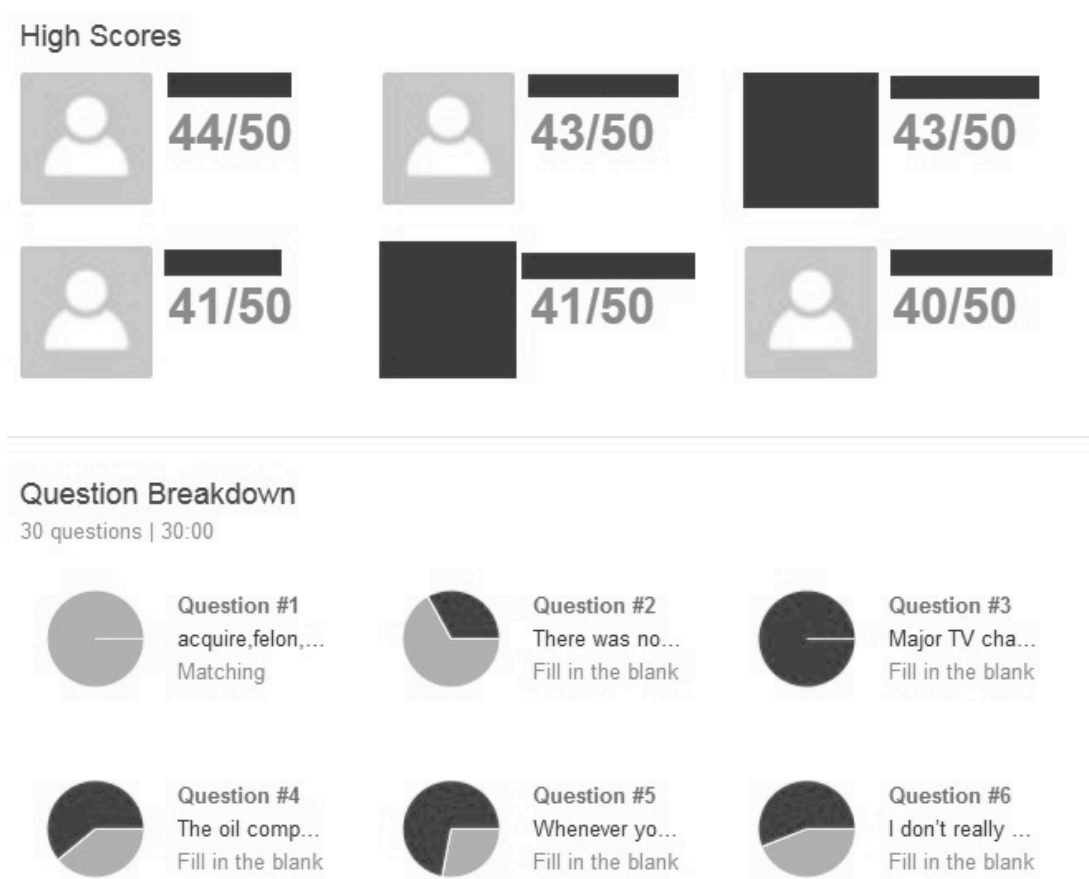


Figure 5. Sample from Edmodo's pie chart and score statistics

Keeping track of student performance is a key feature of any LMS. *Edmodo* creates a progress table for every course (see point 1 on Figure 2) where students' scores on quizzes and assignments are tracked and an overall percentage score is calculated (see Figure 6). Teachers can see the scores of the class as a whole or of individual students, and the progress gradebook can be exported as an Excel file for further analysis.

Progress / Listening and Speaking Skills 2015 Fall



Grades		Badges				
New Grade		Online vocabulary test 2	Peer reviews for week 6	Home practice listening task 5 (October 14)	Listening task 2 (October 14)	Peer reviews for week 5
Student	Total					
 	71%	35/50	10/10	10/19	-	10/10
 	80%	41/50	10/10	-	13/20	0/10
 	57%	32/50	0/10	-	-	0/10
 	45%	-	0/10	-	10/20	10/10
 	84%	44/50	10/10	-	16/20	10/10
 	65%	42/50	10/10	-	6/20	10/10
 	44%	32/50	0/10	-	-	0/10
 	69%	40/50	10/10	-	10/20	10/10

Figure 6. A sample from the progress table on the teacher interface on Edmodo

There are several other options for course customization using *Edmodo*. First, as a possibility for increasing student motivation and engagement, teachers can opt to add badges, which students receive after attaining certain achievements. *Edmodo* has a number of standard badges that are available in all courses, and it is also possible to create, assign, and share new ones across courses.

Second, a number of applications are available from the site's app store that enable the delivery of more personalized course content (see point 10 on Figure 2). These are sorted into the different subject areas that are available on *Edmodo* and, depending on the application are either free, or have a trial period and then a premium (pay) option. Making use of them enables users to overcome some of the limitations of the site.

Limitations

While *Edmodo* is a very useful tool in many ways, it does have some limitations. If one considers some of the MOOC platforms like *Coursera*, *edX*, or *Udacity*, one limitation is immediately apparent: *Edmodo* lacks the video lesson feature. Although *Edmodo* does not claim to compete with those platforms, nor is it aimed at instructing large numbers of students simultaneously, offering such a feature could further the interactiveness of the learning experience, which is perhaps of particular importance to language teachers. Similarly, there is no possibility to stream lessons as can be done using *WizIQ*. The limited means of interaction on the site also keep *Edmodo* from being a fully constructivist Web 2.0 tool.

Overall Evaluation

The limitations of *Edmodo* mean that, depending on the teachers' aims and the course requirements, the basic site may not be sufficient for some and a possible expansion of features using additional tools or may be necessary. For example, conference sessions can only be held with additional solutions like Skype. However, *Edmodo* has a number of features that make it a versatile tool for incorporating e-learning strategies into traditional settings, for augmenting face-to-face lessons, and to afford opportunities for collaborative and cooperative learning in small groups.

Conclusion

Edmodo is a highly useful and intuitive LMS that can function as the main platform for many types of e-learning projects. It makes it possible to create courses with a number of features, supporting both face-to-face and online initiatives. The educational possibilities of its features outweigh its limitations, many of which can be mitigated with additional tools or software. The user interface's similarity with that of *Facebook* makes it intuitive for students to use without interfering with their private social networking. Various subject areas are supported by active online communities of teachers, which make it possible for educators to network and share experiences. Although *Edmodo* may not be perfect for everyone, it is arguably the best free social network learning platform currently available.

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