DOES THE USE OF SCREENCAST-O-MATIC ENHANCE THE STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE?

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INTRODUCTION

Soong, S.K.A. et al (2006) discovered that the use of video recorded lectures enhanced the student learning experience. Rethlefsen, M. L. (2009) reviewed a number of screen casting tools and found screen cast-o-matic (SOM) to be particularly effective as it scored very highly with regards to usability. SOM is a presentation recording tool that allows users to record all of their actions on computer as well as audio commentary and save the recording for future playback. SOM is widely used by teachers, students and 'You Tube' users to explain key concepts (SOM website). Therefore, I decided to use screen cast-o-matic (SOM) software in my class to see if it would enhance the student learning experience.

RATIONALE FOR STUDY

A number of international students are usually absent on the introductory lecture to the Islamic finance module. As this a key lecture for the module in which we discuss the fundamental prohibitions of Islamic Finance, any students that miss the lecture are greatly disadvantaged. Therefore, I decided to use SOM software to capture the key threshold concepts from the first lecture for students to view via Moodle. It would be useful for both absent and present students to review key points from the lecture.

METHODS

To incorporate the use of a SOM capture for the introductory lecture to the Islamic Finance module. The first step was to familiarise myself with how the software works and then decide which slides to use in the capture. As the recording can be re-played it will be particularly useful for international students for whom English is not the first language. Also, from previous student feedback it has been noted that I do talk quite fast and watching the SOM, the students would be able to pause the recording at anytime and replay if needed. To measure the impact of the innovation I plan to distribute a short questionnaire to students asking them whether they found it beneficial. Also, I can monitor their activity on Moodle to see whether they actually viewed the capture and if so how frequently.

RESULTS

The SOM software was very easy to use and extremely intuitive. It allowed you to pause the recording at any time which was invaluable. However, a key challenge was to stay within the allowed 15 minute framework so careful slide selection and timing was essential The SOM recording was captured and uploaded into CURVE due to its size (25 MB) and linked into Moodle. It was made available to students in the second week and a feedback questionnaire was posted both onto Moodle and distributed in class in week 3 of the module. At this stage, 19 out of the 25 students (76%) completed the questionnaire and indicated that they found the recording 'very useful' and that it had 'enhanced their learning experience'. Of the students that had attended the first lecture, 88% indicated that they had learned something further from watching the recording. Also, the students that were absent in the first lecture stated that it helped them to understand the key points from the lecture which they had missed. Eighty nine percent of the respondents were international students for whom English was not the first language (figure 1).

Ninety five percent of the respondents stated that they would like to see the use of such videos again and 95% said that it helped to improve their understanding of the subject. Regarding the clarity of the presentation, 61% of the students stated the presentation was 'very clear' and 33% stated that it was 'quite clear' whilst 6% stated that they were 'not sure' (figure 2).

Figure 1
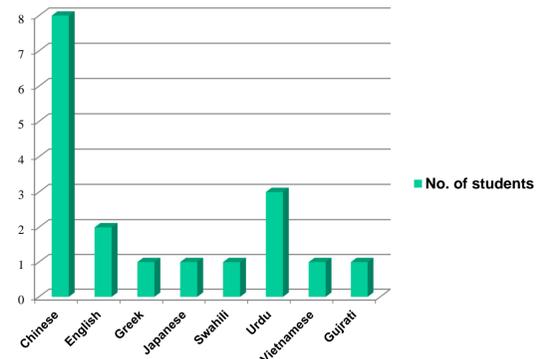
Upon being asked as to what the most important aspects of the presentation were, the main theme of the answers indicated that it gave students the ability to write and understand key points they may have missed in the lecture. It also gave them the opportunity to replay the recording as many times as they wished to help understand difficult parts. Student activity was monitored on Moodle and it was evident that many of the students viewed the presentation multiple times within the space of a week.
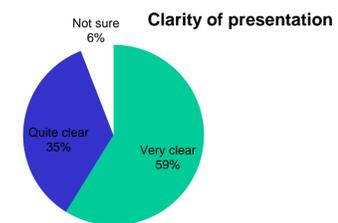

Figure 2

Feedback also indicated that it would act as a useful revision tool and students stated that they would like to see similar recordings for other modules too. They also mentioned how it was a good recap of the lecture and that the learning points were made quite clear.

Upon asking as to how the presentation could be improved, many students stated it was fine but one student did say that it could have been slower or perhaps I could have highlighted some of the text I was referring to. Unfortunately, the SOM software does not allow you highlight text as you are talking. Also, neither does it allow 'custom animation' within the slide as you would in a live presentation which is one disadvantage of the software.

Peer feedback indicated that the recording was very clear and well paced with a good tone and flow. However, one suggestion for improvement was that some of the text appeared to be underlined in red as it was not recognised by the dictionary which could easily be removed in future via spell check.

CONCLUSION

The use of SOM software really did enhance the learning experience for the students. Eighty eight percent of the students that had attended the lecture actually learned something more by watching the capture. Many students watched the presentation several times and all the respondents stated that they would like to see the increased use of such videos. The software was easy to use but recording the capture was somewhat time consuming which I believe is due to inexperience. In future, I would feel confident in preparing a similar recording knowing the value it added to my students.

REFERENCES

Swee Kit Alan Soong, Lay Kock Chan, Christopher Chees (2006) *Impact of video recorded lectures among students*, Centre of Educational Development, Nanyang Technological University

Rethlefsen, M, L. (2009) Product Pipeline: Screencasting opens up a world of new instructional options, Netconnect http://www.screencast-o-matic.com/