

## EDMODO: INNOVATIVE ONLINE EDUCATIONAL TOOLS

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The emergence of new technologies has increased the interest in online education. In addition to regular school systems, new education platforms such as *Web-based classroom tools*, *Web-based learning technologies*, *Social Learning Community*, *Web-based learning networks*, *Educational Social Network Sites*, etc. are emerging. Those enable sharing, cooperation and new forms of synchronous and asynchronous communication. Thanks to their popularity, the number of integrated functions and the fact that they are accessible from the Web interface, the educational social networks appear to be the optimal and complex solution to instruction in an online environment in different school types and at different school levels. It was the popularity of social networks that prompted teachers to start looking for ways to implement them into the school environment (Balasubramanian et al., 2014). The following are some of the community education platforms: Schoology, iTřída, Clever, Classroom 2.0, Twiducate, Sophia, Edmodo, etc. This paper is aimed at the Edmodo community platform.

Edmodo is a free worldwide education network aimed primarily at primary and secondary education (the K-12 sector), but also at the university environment (Murar, 2015). It is popular abroad. Its interface is similar to Facebook (see *Fig. 1*). The similarity of both networks makes orientation in the environment easier.

The fact that Edmodo supports Windows, Android and iOS operating systems makes it compatible with the majority of mobile devices. As a result, the BYOD (*Bring Your Own Device*) concept can be applied. The teacher, student and parent (who can follow their child's activity) can access the network. Furthermore, the teacher specifies their position in the network by assigning roles (*Administrator, Principal, Teacher, Librarian, Tech Coordinator, Counselor, Coach and Tutor*). The user, most often in the role of Administrator, can create the school's admin account, making the following functions accessible:

- Analytics Module – an analytical device measuring the activity and involvement of users,
- Secure Domain – creation of a school subdomain, e.g. *schoolname.edmodo.com*,
- PD Tools – Teacher Badges, creation of Professional Learning Communities (PLC).

Edmodo, and a number of other platforms, is constantly being developed. One of the important changes that increased the effectiveness of Edmodo was making the platform compatible with Google Drive, One Drive and Microsoft (May, 2016). As a result, one can now log in to the network through their Google account as well as their school/company Office 365 account. Moreover, Microsoft Word, Excel and PowerPoint have become freely available, improving cooperation (see Office Online).

## Place for Education and Cooperation

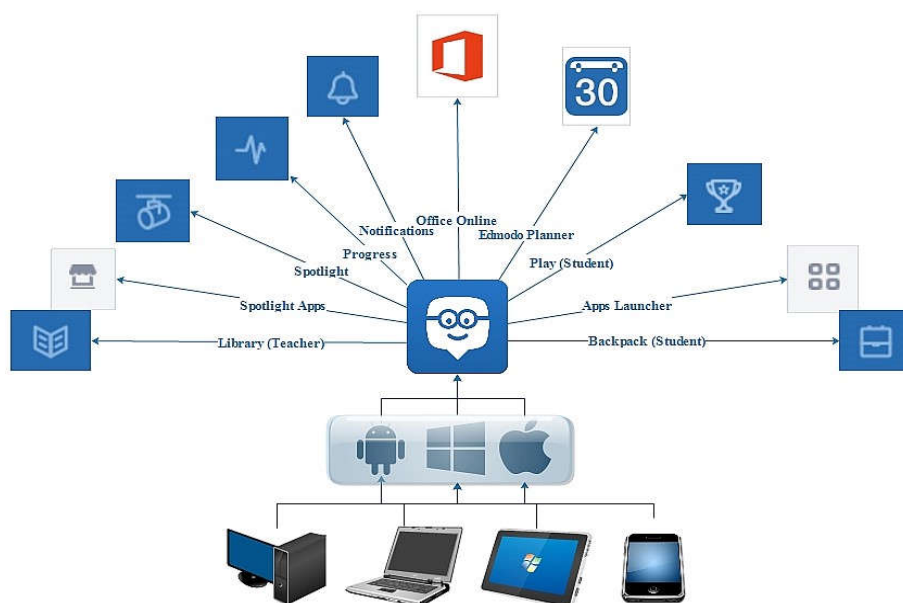
Students can not only share the created files with others within the group, but also work together on editing the content. To save files the students use so-called Backpack (the teachers use so-called Library), i.e. a virtual flash drive on which they can save an unlimited amount of files. However, there is the so-called upload limit, i.e. the amount of data *uploaded to* or *downloaded from* the storage is limited. For instance, files uploaded from *Backpack* to the virtual classroom's *wall* cannot be larger than 100MB. However, files uploaded from Google Drive can be larger than that.

Edmodo not only enables schools to create their own communities, but also provides a space for managed instruction in an online environment. The following are the most useful tools:

- *Note* – uploading notes and study materials to the virtual classroom's wall,
- *Assignment* – a task management tool,
- *Quiz* – a tool for creating quizzes and tests,
- *Poll* – a tool for creating polls,
- *Edmodo Planner* – a shared calendar,
- *Office Online* – a tool for Word, PowerPoint and Excel applications,
- *Progress* – a tool for monitoring the student's progress (Grade/Badge)
- *Spotlight Apps* – a shared storage of available applications.

Edmodo has a number of features that encourage group discussion, provide feedback, manage tasks, assign badges and/or monitor the student's progress. Moreover, it also allows for cooperation of teams from different schools and enables teachers to create professional relationships (creating the *Personal Learning Network*). It also appears to be the optimal solution to the problem of distinguishing between the personal and professional identity of the teacher.

The main features can be seen in Fig 2.



**Fig. 2: Edmodo – educational space**

*Spotlight Apps* enables every teacher, based on their personal preference and/or professional qualification, to not only adjust the range of tools, but also to add the so-called third party tools.

Some of them, however, must be paid for. The range of tools is expanded on the basis of the user published content. By assigning an application to the particular workgroup's library, the teacher specifies the tools the group can use in their work.

The Edmodo environment features a number of gamification elements which should motivate both the student and the teacher. Edmodo supports the following:

- Badge assignment (allows for the creation of new badges),
- Point collecting,
- Monitoring the user's level (from the point of view of both the student and the teacher).

Furthermore, Edmodo enables its users to participate in conferences and webinars organized within or supported by the platform. The users are notified of the event (e.g. EdmodoCon – Edmodo's Annual Educator Conference, Edfinity, etc.) by an invitation posted on the wall.

Edmodo supports not only the creation of individual accounts for individual courses, but also the creation of communities that include both teachers and students not only from the given school, but from the entire district, thus encouraging cooperation and the creation of a learning-friendly and goal-oriented environment.

## **Environment Privacy**

Edmodo is a closed, private education platform with a number of privacy features such as (<https://www.edmodo.com/privacy>):

- The student needs to provide minimum personally identifiable information to create an account,
- Edmodo does not collect geo-location tracking information,
- Edmodo does not rent or sell student information to third parties for marketing or advertising purposes,
- Parents can create accounts to view their child's activity,
- Students cannot privately communicate with each other (only public communication within the group is allowed).

The student activity is supervised by the teacher, who has a special role in the group. The teacher creates a virtual group (classroom), invites students to participate in it (via email or by sending them a password) and monitors their activity. The teacher also controls the group (grants access to the environment, divides students into groups, deals with forgotten passwords – generates new ones, etc.). Parental consent is required before Edmodo can be used by students under the age of eighteen.

## **Conclusion**

The school environment allows for the creation and development of virtual communities. Edmodo is an available social and communication platform which provides opportunities for the creation of communities within managed instruction and communities that include both teachers and students not only from the given school, but from the entire district. Moreover, it also connects both students and teachers with people and resources needed to reach their full educational potential. Thanks to the number of integrated features, safety and the fact that it is user-friendly and free of charge, Edmodo is drawing the attention of the Czech teachers.

## References

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