

GHANA COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY (GCTU)

FACULTY OF ENGINEERING

DEPARTMENT OF COMPUTER ENGINEERING



Topic:

**AN ENHANCED E-LEARNING PLATFORM FOR AN INTERACTIVE
EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE**

Project Work Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements For
BSc. in Computer Engineering

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DECLARATION

This project is submitted as part of the requirements for the BSc. in Computer Engineering awarded by Ghana Communication Technology University. I hereby declare, that this project in its entirety is the result of hard work, research and inquiries. I am confident that this project work has not been copied from another person's work. All sources of information in this project, have been acknowledged appropriately.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

E-learning is a learning system based on leveraging the capabilities of technology in teaching and learning practices. It has been on the rise in the past few years. Many e-learning platforms have been developed to solve problems that arose due to the pandemic. According to the Ghana Journal of Higher Education, the modern landscape of higher education is undergoing a shift towards digital platforms, allowing for a wider accommodation of students across a relatively broader geographical area for teaching and learning. Amid the necessities that arose because of the pandemic, e-learning rose to become a basic form of education at all teaching levels, which actually led to an increased accessibility and flexibility and also enabled a broader reach for students across different locations. However, there is the question about the sustainability of this e-learning trend post-pandemic, and whether there will be a return to traditional teaching and learning methods, or that the development of e-learning platforms will be continued by innovators.

The emergence of e-learning in the traditional teaching and learning presents its own sets of opportunities and challenges. Gyamfi and Addo discuss the limitations of the traditional model, especially in addressing the modern demands of education.[?] This approach has struggled to accommodate the evolving needs of the modern digital age, particularly in providing access to education, especially in remote regions, contributing to a gap in effective online learning as compared to traditional learning. They emphasize the importance of acknowledging the limitations of traditional teaching methods and embracing innovative approaches to education, such as e-learning. One such approach would be in the development of a comprehensive, integrated learning platform that caters to the modern demands of education:- personalize the learning experience for each student, catering to their individual strengths and weaknesses; incorporate opportunities for students to develop critical thinking skills through interactive activities, simulations and project based learning; developing of digital literacy skills as well as fostering collaboration and communication among students and tutors.

There are many such e-learning systems in the world we live in today. Such platforms like Udemy, ALX SE, Edureka, Scrimba, Harvard Extension, among others, have played a vital role in facilitating access to educational resources and opportunities (educational democratization), however, these platforms often focus on specific niches or cater to a more individual learner journey.

Kim, Lee & Yoon [?]came up with a model to guide the design and development of an e-learning platform so it would be successful. They suggest five factors that contribute to the success of an e-learning platform. These are;

1. system quality - this is the functionality, reliability and usability of the e-learning platform
2. lecture content - referring to the quality, relevance and accessibility of learning materials on the platform.
3. teaching quality - which is the effectiveness on the lecturer's part in delivering educational content.
4. online interaction - refers to the level of engagement and interaction among students, in-

structors and course materials

5. achievements - which are the tangible outcomes attained by students and instructors in relation to predefined learning objectives and performance standards that have been set.

Despite the comprehensive features offered by platforms like Moodle, which is widely recognized for its flexibility, customization, and robust pedagogical support, it lacks integrated video conferencing capabilities. This limitation is critical for institutions like Ghana Communication Technology University (GCTU), where geographical distance and high costs associated with third-party solutions pose significant challenges. By focusing on these core principles, we aim to create an integrated teaching and learning environment using GCTU as a case study. The internet is the perfect tool for learning, as it offers flexibility and expediency to learners at the same time offering endless opportunities for innovative teaching.

1.2 Problem Statement

The goal of this project is to develop a comprehensive, integrated e-learning platform tailored to the specific needs of universities in Africa, particularly Ghana Communication Technology University (GCTU). While Moodle, a widely-used Learning Management System (LMS), offers numerous benefits, it lacks built-in video conferencing capabilities, which are essential for effective remote learning. This project aims to address the limitations of current solutions, enhance accessibility, and reduce costs for GCTU.

E Learning provides a very promising solution to this challenges by reducing the reliance on physical classrooms, thereby enhancing access to education for students in remote areas and also expand the universities global reach. It will solve the problem of accommodation constraints by offering courses online, eliminating the need for everybody to come to campus at once. Also students in remote areas can access the quality education by using the e-learning platform, regardless of their location. This bridges the geographical gap and allows for fair and equal access to quality education. Finally, the university would be able to extend its wings and offer access to education to students worldwide. Harvard University's extension school, for instance, offers a variety of online courses and even full degree programs to learners worldwide. This move by Harvard, shows that they recognized the limitations of traditional educational models in meeting the demands. This would increase the university's international recognition and would contribute in creating a global learning community, whereby students from different countries worldwide can collaborate and learn together.

1.2.1 Limited Accommodation and Accessibility Challenges at GCTU

This university faces a significant challenge in providing adequate on-campus housing for its student population and the ones available around campus are costly. This results in a large portion of the students body residing far from campus, often at least 10 kilometers away. This geographical distance creates a barrier to traditional in-person learning, giving that lectures start at 8 am, it forces students to make long and potentially expensive and exhausting daily commutes to attend lectures.

1.2.2 The High Cost of Existing Solutions

While third-party video conferencing platforms like Zoom or TeamViewer provide an option for remote learning, the ongoing costs associated with these services could result in a substantial financial challenge for GCTU. For a technical institution like GCTU, which encourages innovation and seeks to capitalize on its own experience, this is particularly concerning. Relying on costly external solutions is not sustainable in the long term.

1.2.3 The Limitations of Moodle

Moodle LMS [?], is widely recognized for its flexibility, customization, and robust features that support various pedagogical approaches. It excels in course management, user management, communication tools, assessment and grading, resource management, among other strengths. Despite these strengths, Moodle lacks a built-in video conferencing feature, which is crucial for facilitating real-time interaction and collaboration between instructors and students.

1.2.4 The Need for a Custom, Cost-Effective E-Learning Platform

To address these challenges, GCTU requires a bespoke e-learning platform that combines the benefits of Moodle with integrated video conferencing capabilities. This platform must prioritize the following features:

- i.Video Conferencing: This feature would aim to facilitate real-time interaction and collaboration between instructors and students, regardless of location, to replicate the traditional classroom experience.
- Cost-Effectiveness: Eliminating ongoing licensing fees for external video conferencing platforms to save valuable resources and ensure long-term financial sustainability.
- Data Privacy and Security: Ensuring full control over student and staff data with enhanced security measures tailored to the institution's requirements.

1.3 Research Aim and Objectives

1.3.1 Research Aim

The main objective is to develop a web application that facilitates a high-quality, remote learning experience for students. This platform will eliminate the need for physical campus attendance by providing a comprehensive suite of educational tools, including:

- Video conferencing: To enable real-time interaction between instructors and students.
- Centralized repository: To offer a secure and organized location for accessing learning materials such as lectures recordings, notes, assignments.

- Assessment tools: Allows instructors to evaluate student comprehension through various methods such as quizzes, exams, projects.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

Functional Requirements:

- Implement diverse assessment tools (e.g., quizzes, essays, peer reviews)
- Develop a content management system (CMS) for lecturers
- Design and develop admin, lecturer, and student interfaces

Non-Functional Requirements:

- Develop a user-friendly interface
- Ensure robust security measures for data protection
- Optimize performance for seamless user experience

1.4 Significance of study

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the shift towards digital learning, as highlighted by research conducted by Jakhar et al. (2020). Even though many schools are trying to transition back to face-to-face or in-person teaching and learning, the need for having a flexible and accessible learning solution still remains a priority. In a similar research conducted by the students of GCTU last year (2023), Adagobo et al.[?], proposed that successfully developing a platform that serves in the context of e-learning would serve the university in improving learning procedures on campus. Implementing a hybrid approach to learning, combining the positives of asynchronous learning and synchronous learning would greatly improve teaching and learning in the school.[?] Students residing far from campus or juggling work and studies can access course materials and complete assignments on time, and since some students grasps concepts quickly, while others benefit from revisiting materials and practicing at their own pace, the features incorporated on this platform would allow them to focus on understanding before moving on. Some students also prefer visual learning through recordings, while others benefit from interactive activities. This hybrid approach would cater to these different learning styles.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

1.5.1 The scope of this research

This research will focus on developing a comprehensive online learning module as a pilot program for the Computer Engineering and Telecommunications Engineering Program within the Faculty of Engineering at Ghana Communication Technology University. The platform will be designed with scalability in mind to accommodate future integration with other faculties in

subsequent iterations.

1.5.2 The limitations of this research

1. The initial development phase will prioritize core functionalities like video conferencing, content delivery, and assessment tools.
2. The pilot program will be implemented with courses offered by the Faculty of Engineering. Scaling the platform university-wide will require additional planning and resource allocation to accommodate the needs of other faculties.
3. External factors such as unreliable internet connectivity and power supply in some regions of Ghana could potentially impact the platform's effectiveness. Future research directions could explore incorporating offline functionalities or developing partnerships with internet service providers to address these challenges.

1.6 Brief Methodology

1.6.1 Design Concept

This project will implement an Agile development approach using the Scrum framework. Scrum places a strong emphasis on user feedback, iterative development, and continuous improvement.

1. Product Backlog: A comprehensive list of functionalities will be created, prioritizing features based on user needs and project goals.
2. Sprints: Development will occur in short, time-boxed sprints (2-week iterations) where a set of features is developed, tested, and deployed.
3. User Feedback: After each sprint, user feedback will be incorporated to refine the platform and prioritize features for future iterations.

This approach allows for flexibility and adaptation as the project progresses, ensuring the final platform effectively meets the needs of students, instructors, and administrators.

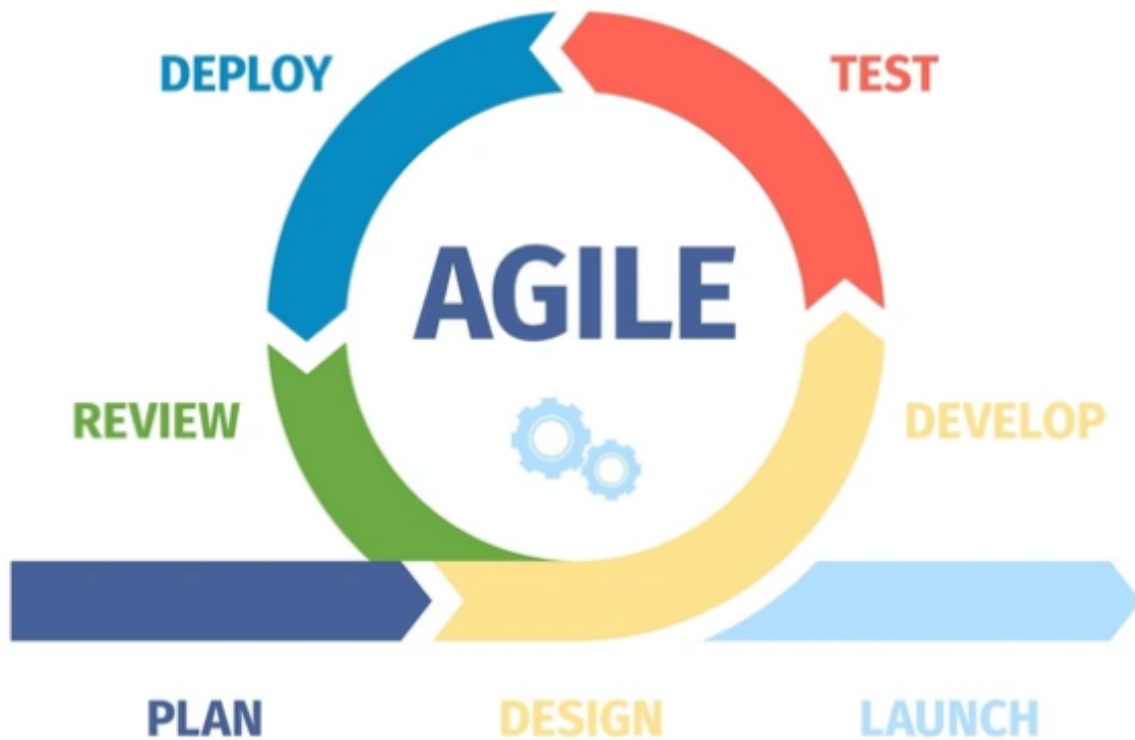


Figure 1: The Agile Software Development Module

1.6.2 Software required

- i. Microsoft Windows 10 Home or 11 Home
- ii. Visual Studio Code for Windows
- iii. Chrome, Firefox Web Browsers

1.6.3 Frameworks and Libraries

- i. MongoDB Atlas for hosting our MongoDB database
- ii. NodeJS to serve as the runtime environment for our server
- iii. ExpressJS as our web Framework
- iv. HTML, CSS and JavaScript for our client side development.
- v. Socket.io for real-time bidirectional communication
- vi. Git and GitHub for version control

1.6.4 Hardware Requirements

- i. Processor (CPU):
Minimum: Intel Core i5-8th Gen or AMD Ryzen 5 3rd Gen (or equivalent)
Recommended: Intel Core i7-10th Gen or AMD Ryzen 7 3rd Gen (or equivalent)
- ii. RAM:
Minimum: 8GB DDR4 RAM
Recommended: 16GB DDR4 RAM - This would allow us to run multiple development tools

smoothly

iii.Storage:

Minimum: 256GB SSD for faster loading times and overall performance

1.7 Organization of Project

The project is organized as follows: Chapter 1 covers the introduction, study background, issue description, major and secondary objectives, significance of the study, scope and limitations, process, and project organization. In Chapter 2, the literature review is discussed in order to offer an analysis of relevant and current research studies. The project's methodology is thoroughly discussed in Chapter 3. This is an extended version of the brief method from chapter 1. Chapter 4 covers outcomes and analysis, or the evaluation and analysis of results. Chapter 5 is meant to be the conclusion.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Overview

This chapter conducts a comprehensive review of the existing literature relevant to the field of study. It lays the foundation for the proposed project by providing a detail analysis of each of the projects parts. This chapter explores the theoretical frameworks and methodological approaches used in earlier studies. It offers an evaluation of of relevant projects pertaining to WebRTC (Web Real Time Communication), SSR (Server Side Rendering), Scalable Database management Systems and the use of ODM (Object Data Modelling) libraries, Containerization, System architecture design to avoid SPOF (Single Point of Failure) as well as Web Sockets. Reviews in this chapter are drawn from online resources and journal publications.

2.2 Current Issues of Concern

The university system in Ghana is having a hard time keeping up with the increasing number of students enrolled. The restricted housing options on and around campus leads to bottlenecks, and students in remote locations frequently do not have access to high-quality educational programs. Universities also find it difficult to have a solid worldwide reputation and reach outside of Ghana. These problems undermine both the overall influence of Ghanaian institutions and educational equity. Furthermore, the increasing demand for flexible and accessible learning options adds another layer of complexity. Students are looking for educational options that work with their hectic schedules and geographic constraints. This increasing demand for flexibility may not be met by traditional classroom environments.

2.3 Definition of Related Areas

This section reviews detailed definitions that are closely related to the project topic and scope, aiming to make things clearer and further understanding of the project.

2.3.1 WebRTC (Web Real Time Communication)

WebRTC, which stands for Web Real-Time Communication, empowers peer-to-peer associations without the require for third-party servers. Information sharing over WebRTC is straightforward, supported by WebRTC APIs, and accessible at many stages thanks to its simplicity. At first, servers are required for clients to set up associations. After the initial setup, clients can talk directly to each other, without the server involved. When a client sends data to the signaling server, the server transfers this data to the other client. After accepting this information, the client stores it locally. In this way, this client sends its claim information to the server, which transfers it to the other client. This trade guarantees both clients are mindful of each other, encouraging an association foundation. Signaling servers, utilized for this information trade, are standard servers with the sole reason of encouraging client information trade.[?] The method of exchanging information from one client to another in WebRTC is called signaling. In WebRTC session establishment, the initial step is offer generation. A client initiating communication creates an offer, typically a JavaScript object encapsulating Session Description Protocol (SDP) data. The Session Description Protocol (SDP) embedded within the offer specifies media capabilities, such as video and audio codecs supported. The client sends this offer to the signaling server, which forwards it to the other client. Upon receiving the offer, the other client stores it

locally and constructs an answer containing its own SDP information. This answer, also transmitted via the signaling server, details the recipient's media capabilities. While both parties now possess a mutual understanding of each other's media offerings, an additional exchange of data, termed ICE (Interactivity Connection Establishment) candidates, is necessary to establish the peer-to-peer connection. Clients give URLs of these servers to the WebRTC API to get ICE candidates. As the client makes an offer, ICE candidates are recovered from the servers. These candidates are at that point sent to the other client by means of the signaling server. The same handle happens when creating answers. Once both clients have each other's SDP information and ICE candidates, they can build up a coordinate peer-to-peer association. Information transmission through WebRTC APIs from that point happens straightforward between the clients, empowering efficient and secure real-time communication.

2.3.2 Web Sockets

Web Sockets allow for two way communication, between a client like a web browser and a server through a persistent, full-duplex connection. Unlike HTTP requests where the client typically initiates communication and the connection closes after each response, Web Sockets remain open, allowing both the client and server to exchange messages at any time. This back and forth communication is ideal for applications requiring low latency real time updates, such as chat platforms, online games or collaborative editing tools. By using a handshake process HTTP upgrade request and Web Socket Handshake to establish connections, Web Sockets can efficiently receive data in both directions without the need for repeated setup. This efficiency makes Web Sockets more effective for real time communication compared to methods like polling or long polling. In summary Web Sockets offer a solution, for creating web applications that demand immediate responsiveness and minimal delays.

2.3.3 Server Side Rendering

Server-side rendering (SSR) is a procedure that renders a web page on the server instead of within the browser. When a website is rendered on the server, a completely rendered page is sent to the client and the client's JavaScript bundle locks in and empowers the Single Page Application system to function. Server side rendering (SSR) is a method employed in web development where the server dynamically creates the HTML content of a web-page and sends it to the clients browser. This differs from client side rendering, where the browser uses JavaScript to generate the HTML content after receiving HTML from the server. In SSR, when a user asks for a web page, the server handles the request, collects the data from a database or external APIs, and then generates the HTML content incorporating this data. The entire HTML page is then transmitted to the client's browser for display without any processing. This approach can lead to quicker initial page loading times. Improved search engine optimization (SEO) since search engines can easily scan and index the HTML content. SSR is frequently utilized in web applications developed with server side technologies like Node.js, Django, Ruby on Rails and PHP. It proves advantageous for websites with content or dynamically generated content where SEO and performance play vital roles. Nonetheless implementing SSR may add complexity to development and up keep efforts as it necessitates handling of server side and client side logic to ensure consistency and optimal performance, across platforms and devices.

2.3.4 Success of e-learning platforms

The rise of online learning platforms can be explained by several key factors. First, their on-demand access model grants learners anytime, anywhere learning, enabling them to progress at their own pace. Second, eLearning platforms offer a varied content library, catering to various learning preferences through multimedia elements like quizzes, interactive videos, and simulations. These elements promote increased learner engagement and improve knowledge retention. Finally, the inherent scalability and adaptability of eLearning platforms allow them to effectively serve a wide range of learners with diverse learning needs. Research conducted by S.Kim et al(2015)[?] suggests that five core principles significantly contribute to the success of an eLearning platform:

1. **System Quality:** This encompasses the platform's technical functionality, reliability, and user-friendliness. Here, factors like intuitive interface design, responsiveness, and seamless content delivery are crucial.
2. **Content Quality:** This refers to the quality, relevance, and accessibility of learning materials hosted on the platform. Content should be well-organized, current, and aligned with established learning objectives.
3. **Instructional Design:** This focuses on the effectiveness of the instructional methods employed in delivering the learning content. This includes factors like clear learning objectives, well-structured content delivery, and the use of appropriate pedagogical approaches.
4. **Online Interaction:** This emphasizes the level of engagement and interaction within the platform. This includes fostering communication and collaboration among learners, instructors, and the learning materials themselves through discussion forums, group activities, and interactive assessments.
5. **Learning Outcomes Assessment:** This refers to the process of measuring and evaluating the knowledge and skills acquired by learners against predefined learning objectives and performance standards. Effective assessment strategies should be integrated within the platform to track learner progress and provide feedback for continuous improvement.

By focusing on these core principles, eLearning platforms can create an integrated and learner-centric teaching and learning environment.

2.3.5 Scalable No-SQL Database Management Systems

MongoDB stands out as a liked No-SQL database recognized for its ability to scale effectively. Its distributed architecture is the key, to this scalability allowing it to manage data volumes and heavy traffic loads efficiently. MongoDB utilizes sharding to distribute data among servers facilitating scaling. This implies that as data and traffic increase you can expand the number of servers in the MongoDB cluster to accommodate the growing demand. The adaptability of MongoDB schema also plays a role in its scalability. Unlike databases MongoDB does not mandate a predefined schema making it simple to introduce new fields or modify existing ones without any downtime. This adaptability proves beneficial in environments where requirements are subject to frequent changes. Apart from scaling MongoDB also supports scaling by en-

abling you to enhance individual server resources (such as CPU and RAM) within the cluster to manage higher workloads. The combination of vertical scaling capabilities makes MongoDB a scalable database solution suitable for various applications ranging from small startups, to large enterprises.

2.3.6 Containerization with Docker

Docker, an example of containerization transforms the landscape of software development and deployment by packaging applications and their requirements, into self contained units known as containers. These containers operate reliably across settings spanning from development, to production guaranteeing behavior of applications regardless of their deployment location. Containerization offers application segregation, flexibility and optimized resource usage simplifying the development and deployment workflow while enhancing resource efficiency compared to machines.

2.3.7 System Architecture Design avoiding Single Point of Failure

A critical aspect of system architecture design is the elimination or mitigation of Single Points of Failure (SPOFs). An SPOF is a single component whose failure can cause the entire system to become inoperable. It's really important to make sure that a our system doesn't rely on one part that could cause the whole thing to fail. When a single point of failure occurs it means that if one component breaks the entire system will stop working. To prevent this, methods like having backups and being able to handle faults are used to keep the system running even if something goes wrong with one or more parts. This is particularly crucial, in systems where any downtime could lead to losses or affect how users interact with it. Ultimately avoiding points of failure helps boost the reliability, availability and resilience of a system.

2.4 REVIEW OF RELATED AREAS

This section provides an overview of other studies done by other authors that are relevant to this work. It briefly outlines the working of the systems examined in these related works, along with the methodologies used by the respective authors. Furthermore, it evaluates the strengths and weaknesses in these related works.

2.4.1 1 Reviewed Work One

Review of Moodle LMS

This review of Moodle explores the existing research and academic discourse surrounding its development, implementation, and impact in educational settings. This review typically examines various aspects such as its effectiveness as a learning management system (LMS), pedagogical benefits, challenges, and user perceptions.

1. Effectiveness as an LMS

Moodle is widely recognized for its flexibility and customization options, allowing educators to tailor the learning environment to specific needs (Al-Ajlan & Zedan, 2008). Some studies highlight its effectiveness in enhancing student engagement and interaction through forums, quizzes, and collaborative tools (Brandl, 2005). Other studies often show Moodle performing favorably against other LMS platforms in terms of user satisfaction and feature richness (Machado & Tao, 2007).

2. Pedagogical Benefits

Dougiamas suggests Moodle enables active learning, collaboration, and self-paced study. The platform's tools, such as workshops and wikis, facilitate peer assessment and collaborative learning, fostering a deeper understanding of course material and the integration of multimedia resources and interactive activities in Moodle courses has been shown to improve knowledge retention and comprehension.

3. User perceptions and Experiences

Students generally report a positive experience with Moodle, appreciating its accessibility and the ability to review materials at their own pace. Also being able to submit assignments, partake in quizzes and live discussions. However, continuous professional development and support are crucial for maximizing the platform's potential and ensuring effective usage. (Ullman & Rabinowitz

2021).

4.Challenges and Limitations

Currently, Moodle primarily supplements traditional face-to-face classroom pedagogical methods. However, the imperative to transition fully to remote learning is increasingly critical. It's essential to define the learning context within the institution based on the capabilities and functionalities that the platform offers. This shift necessitates leveraging Moodle beyond its current supportive role to establish a comprehensive framework for remote education, addressing both technical and pedagogical challenges to enhance the institution's educational delivery and adaptability to modern learning environments.

2.4.2 Reviewed work two

The Process of Designing the Functionalities of an Online Learning Platform- A Case Study By; (Robert Oliwa, 2021)

In this study, the author is looking into the process of designing the functionalities of an online learning platform as proposed by three distinct user groups: students, academics, and administrative staff. Furthermore, the study aims to acquire insight into how these participants' opinions influence the platform construction process. Using a case study design, the author investigates whether users of the online learning platform can help define its functionalities, specifically remote class creation and sharing, test administration, and enhanced student activity reporting. Within the context of Ghana Communications Technology University, by involving students, instructors, and administrative staff in platform development, the proposed e-learning platform for GCTU can address diverse needs and preferences, ensuring accessibility, flexibility, and cost-effectiveness.[?]

Methodology

The study used a mixed-methods approach to assess the design and functionality of an online learning platform through the eyes of students, professors, and administrative staff.

Qualitative Data Collection

Individual interviews were held with randomly selected individuals from each user group (students, teachers, and administrative personnel). These interviews

provided detailed insights into participants' preferences, experiences, and needs for the online learning platform. Questions that were open-ended allowed participants to freely express their ideas and suggestions, leading to an even more specific understanding of their perspectives.

Quantitative Data Collection

A detailed online survey was distributed to a handful of students and teachers to get quantitative data on their thoughts and experiences with the online learning platform's functions or what said functions should be. The survey used structured questions and Likert scales to quantitatively assess participants' attitudes and preferences. This enabled a systematic examination of replies and the discovery of trends and patterns across various user groups. This study has established grounds for the development of a successful e-learning platform by employing a mixed-methods approach.

Strengths of study

- 1.By combining qualitative feedback from individual interviews with quantitative data from surveys, the study gathered a wide spectrum of viewpoints from students, teachers, and administrative personnel.
- 2.The integration of qualitative and quantitative data enabled a comprehensive synthesis of findings, resulting in useful suggestions for improving the design and effectiveness of an online educational platform.

Limitations of the study 1.The study sample size which was used might have been limited which would mean that the conclusions drawn from the study cannot be applicable in a more generalized setting or outside the context of the research.

2.4.3 Reviewed Work 3

Design And Implementation Of A Desktop Based System To Enhance Teaching Using Screen Sharing Technology Through Wlan Using GCTU As A Case Study(Adabogo Emmanuel, Gertrude Fafali, 2022)

This study aims to address several key challenges and to improve the overall learning experience for both lecturers and students. Their approach aimed to allow for seamless sharing of educational materials, presentations to eliminate the need for costly subscription-based virtual classrooms. Using real-time video and audio sharing mechanisms with WebRTC, they aimed to optimize

the platform to allow for interactive discussions and collaborations between lecturers.[?]

Methodology

The methodology that the authors employed encompasses several key components aimed at designing and implementing a screen-sharing software for e-learning purposes.

1. **Technology Selection:** The study begins by carefully identifying appropriate technologies for designing and implementing the screen-sharing system. This phase considers factors like efficiency, tolerance for errors, scalability, and cost efficiency.
2. **WebRTC Implementation:** They utilize WebRTC to facilitate real-time communication and data transfer between lecturers and students. This technology provides a framework for audio and video peer to peer streaming over the web without the need for a third party, making it ideal for this application.
3. **Back-end Development:** The utilized JavaScript runtime, NodeJS for the back-end development, which is responsible for the server-side operations.
4. **User interface design:** They used HTML and CSS from the front-end or user interface, which is the part of the application that users interact with.
5. **Scalability Assessment:** The system's scalability is assessed, taking into account elements such as the number of concurrent users it can support and its ability to handle increasing workload demands.

Strengths

1. By utilizing WebRTC technology and implementing real-time screen sharing capabilities, the study offers an innovative solution to address the challenges faced in traditional e-learning environments.
2. The research's focus on building a desktop-based system with open-source technologies such as JavaScript, HTML, and CSS shows its focus on cost-

effectiveness. The study offers universities a more financially sustainable alternative to pricey subscription-based virtual classroom applications.

3. Along with basic screen-sharing capabilities, the system supports chat, file-sharing, and audio streaming. These extra features improve the e-learning experience by encouraging interaction and collaboration between lecturers and students in virtual classroom environments.
4. The system's design prioritizes scalability, with up to 26 individuals using a single 4G WIFI interface. This scalability means that the system can effectively serve different class sizes while also adapting to the changing needs of educational institutions throughout time.

Limitations

1. The study focuses primarily on the development and testing of a screen-sharing system that employs WebRTC technology. It may not include all aspects of e-learning, including assessment methodologies, curriculum design, and learner engagement strategies.
2. While the system has effective screen-sharing features, it may have technical restrictions such as bandwidth, latency, and device compatibility. Users with slower internet connections or older technology may have performance issues, which limit the system's accessibility and usability.
3. The findings of the study may be specific to the context in which it was conducted, such as the particular technological infrastructure and user preferences within the university campus; drawing the results to other educational settings or cultural contexts might require additional change.

2.4.4 Reviewed Work 4

Design and Implementation of Online-Learning platform with a large class size: Case study at University of Energy and Natural Resources-Ghana By; (Peter Appiahene, Christopher Ninfaakang, 2017)

This research explores the experimental use of a web-based platform to sup-

plement and improve the teaching and learning of the Computer Literacy and Information Technology course at Ghana's University of Energy and Natural Resources (UENR103). The study was conducted over two academic years with a combined class of over 300 students each year. The document discusses the methodology used in developing the online-learning platform, the results of implementing the platform, student engagement through activities like group discussions and self-assessment tests, and the overall response from students and instructors to the technology-supported learning environment. The study aims to showcase the application of online learning for large classes and how it was implemented at the University of Energy and Natural Resources, providing insights into the benefits and challenges of using technology in education.[?]

Methodology

The first phase of the study focused on developing a web-based platform tailored to supplement the teaching and learning of the Computer Literacy and Information Technology course at the University of Energy and Natural Resources (UENR). This involved collaboration between instructional designers, web developers, and subject matter experts to create a platform that aligns with course objectives and student needs. The developed online-learning platform was implemented over two academic years, accommodating a combined class of over 300 students each year. This phase involved integrating the platform into the course curriculum, providing access to students, and facilitating instructor training on platform usage and management. Throughout the study, student engagement was promoted through a variety of activities supported by the online learning platform. These activities included group discussions, self-evaluation assessments, interactive quizzes, multimedia information delivery, and collaborative projects. The goal was to encourage active learning, involvement, and knowledge retention among students.

Strengths

1. Providing the option for students to read materials or watch videos caters to diverse learning styles and preferences, accommodating different ways in which students may absorb information effectively.
2. The ability for students to submit assignments online and download materials from the platform streamlines the process of academic tasks, making it more convenient and efficient for both students and faculty.

3. The implementation and testing phase of the project highlight the main features of the e-learning system, such as authentication mechanisms, database utilization, user account management, and error handling, indicating a comprehensive and well-thought-out development process.

Limitations

The authors faced challenges in gathering information and data from users for an objective assessment of the proposed e-learning products was challenging. Expected users were unwilling to provide input or gave vague information, leading to uncertain results.

2.5 SUMMARY OF RELATED WORKS

The reviewed literature highlights various aspects of e-learning platforms, each with its strengths and limitations. The first review of Moodle LMS underscores its flexibility and customization, effective student engagement, and positive user perceptions, despite challenges in fully transitioning to remote learning. The second work, a case study on designing functionalities for an online learning platform, emphasizes the value of user input in platform development, with a mixed-methods approach revealing insights into user preferences and the importance of accessibility and flexibility. The third review discusses a desktop-based screen-sharing system using WebRTC, highlighting its cost-effectiveness, real-time interaction capabilities, and scalability, although it may face technical limitations and context-specific challenges. Lastly, the fourth review examines an online learning platform for large classes at the University of Energy and Natural Resources, showcasing its benefits in enhancing student engagement through diverse activities, while noting the difficulty in gathering comprehensive user feedback for objective assessment. Together, these works provide a comprehensive understanding of the design, implementation, and impact of various e-learning systems, emphasizing the importance of user-centered design, technological adaptability, and continuous improvement to address the evolving needs of educational environments.

2.6 IDENTIFIED GAPS FROM THE RELATED WORKS

From the weaknesses identified in the four reviewed works, the following gaps were identified:

1. **Limited Remote Learning Capabilities:** Although Moodle and other platforms provide robust support for blended learning, there is an insufficient focus on fully remote learning environments. The transition to comprehensive online learning is hindered by inadequate leveraging of existing tools and features to support remote education effectively.
2. **User Involvement in Design:** While the case study on designing online learning platform functionalities emphasizes user input, many platforms still lack significant engagement from students, instructors, and administrative staff in the design process. This limits the platform's ability to fully meet the diverse needs of its users.
3. **Technical Limitations in Real-Time Interaction:** The desktop-based screen-sharing system using WebRTC offers innovative solutions for e-learning, but it does not comprehensively address issues related to bandwidth, latency, and device compatibility. These technical limitations affect the overall accessibility and performance of the system.
4. **Scalability and Performance:** The online learning platform for large classes at the University of Energy and Natural Resources demonstrates the challenges of scaling e-learning systems. There is a need for solutions that can handle larger class sizes without compromising performance, ensuring seamless access for all students.
5. **Comprehensive Feature Integration:** Many existing e-learning platforms do not fully integrate essential features such as audio transmission, real-time video conferencing, and collaborative tools. This results in a fragmented learning experience that can impede effective communication and interaction among users.

2.7 CURRENT SETUP OF E-LEARNING PLATFORMS

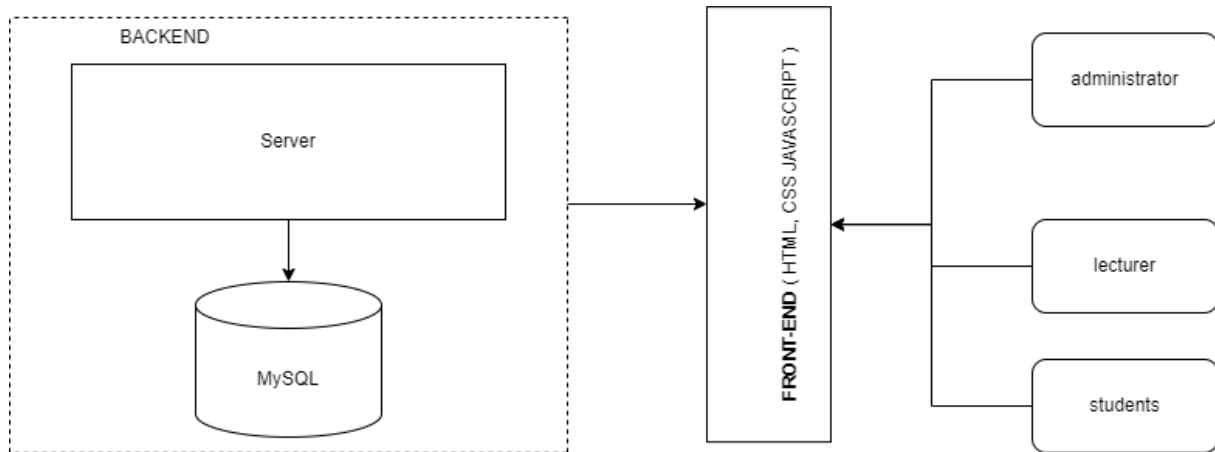


Figure 2: The current setup of e-learning systems (P. Appiahene et al, 2017)[?]

The current setup of e-learning systems, as depicted in the provided diagram, functions primarily as a drop box for resources, allowing users to access content. Here's a detailed explanation:

Backend

Server: The server is the central component of the backend infrastructure. It handles all the requests from the front-end and processes them. It is responsible for managing the flow of data between the front-end and the database.

MySQL Database: The MySQL database stores all the data related to the e-learning system. This includes user information (administrators, lecturers, students), course materials, assignments, and other educational resources. The server interacts with the database to retrieve, store, and manage data.

Front-End

Technologies Used: The front-end of the system is built using HTML, CSS, and JavaScript. These technologies are used to create the user interface that the administrators, lecturers, and students interact with.

User Roles

Administrator: Administrators manage the overall system. They have access to add, update, and delete resources, manage user accounts, and perform other administrative tasks. They ensure that the system runs smoothly and efficiently.

Lecturer: Lecturers can upload and manage course materials, assignments, and other educational content. They interact with the system to provide resources to

students and possibly to receive assignments or tests from them.

Students: Students primarily use the system to access the educational content uploaded by lecturers. They can download materials, view lectures, submit assignments, and possibly take quizzes or exams if such features are integrated.

Functionality

The current e-learning system setup is essentially a repository for educational resources. It provides a centralized location where various users (administrators, lecturers, and students) can interact with the system according to their roles.

Resource Upload and Management: Lecturers and administrators can upload and manage resources such as lecture notes, assignments, and multimedia content.

Resource Access: Students can access and download these resources, facilitating their learning process.

2.8 PROPOSED DESIGN OF E-LEARNING PLATFORM

Our proposed e-learning solution is designed to provide a highly interactive and efficient learning environment through the integration of advanced technologies. At the core of our platform, we will leverage WebRTC to enable real-time video conferencing, ensuring that live lectures and interactions are smooth and responsive. For the back-end infrastructure, we will utilize the Express web framework within the Node.js runtime, which will offer a scalable and performant server-side solution. To manage and store data efficiently, we will employ MongoDB, a NoSQL document-based database management system known for its scalability and flexibility. This hybrid architecture is strategically chosen to deliver a seamless performance and an optimal user experience across a wide range of devices and varying network conditions, ensuring that our e-learning platform is both robust and adaptable.

When selecting technologies for designing and implementing this system, it is crucial to consider factors such as efficiency, fault tolerance, flexibility, and reusability. Additionally, evaluating time and cost effectiveness, user-friendliness, appealing interfaces, future maintenance needs, and overall performance is essential.

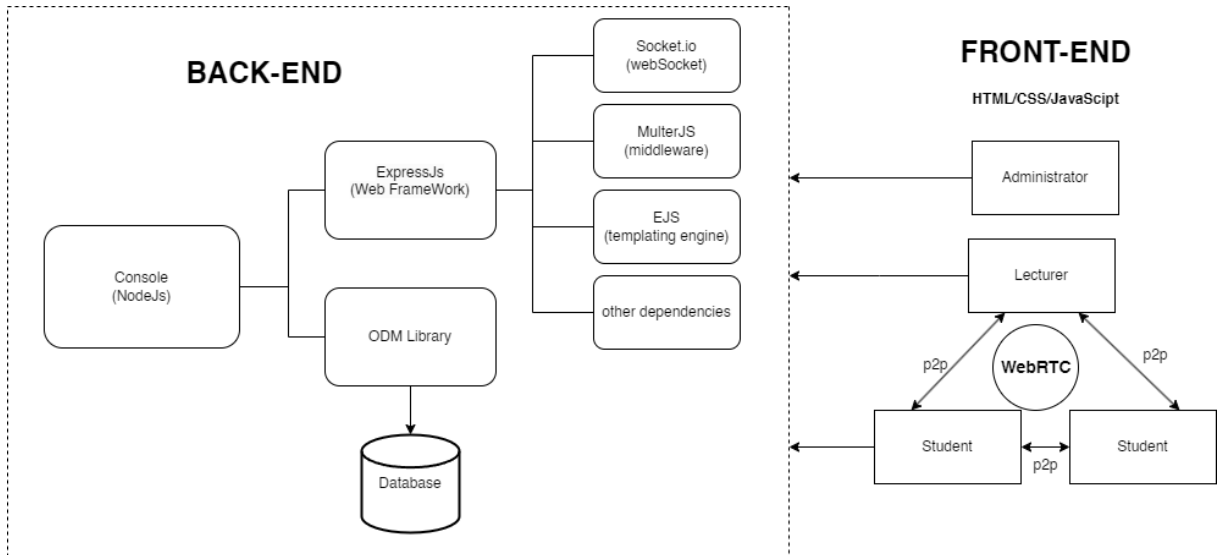


Figure 3: Our Porposed design of the E-learning platform

2.9 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the literature review emphasises the important factors and developments required for creating a successful e-learning platform. The suggested solution claims to provide a robust, adaptable, and user-centric educational experience by using WebRTC for real-time video conferencing, using the Express framework on Node.js for the backend, and utilising MongoDB for scalable data management. Emphasising elements like efficiency, fault tolerance, and cost efficiency guarantees that the platform meets current technological expectations while being adaptive to future improvements. This complete strategy not only meets the immediate needs of smooth performance and user engagement, but also positions the platform for long-term success and growth in the ever-changing field of digital education.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview

This project is intended to use the Agile Software Development Methodology with Scrum as the chosen framework. Agile emphasizes flexibility, iterative development, as well as collaboration, making it ideal for projects that need to adapt to changing requirements and foster continuous improvement. The Scrum framework, a subset of Agile, is employed to structure the project's development process into a series of iterative cycles called Sprints. Each Sprint includes stages of planning, development, testing and review. This iterative process allows the team to deliver increments of the product frequently, gather feedback, and adjust the course of development as needed. The Agile approach with Scrum is particularly beneficial for projects where requirements may evolve over time or where iterative feedback is crucial. Agile methodologies like scrum are recommended for projects that require flexibility, adaptability and continuous delivery of functional increments. [?]

3.2 Product Backlog Creation

The Product Backlog is a crucial artifact in Scrum, representing a dynamic list of work that needs to be done on the project. It includes everything from new features and enhancements to bug fixes and technical debt. The management of the backlog, involves prioritizing items based on their value to the project and their alignment with the overall project goals. This prioritization is essential for ensuring that the team is always working on the most important tasks first. As the project evolves, so does the backlog, with items being added, removed, or re-prioritized based on feedback and changing requirements. [?]

The product backlog for the e-learning platform project is structured around a set of prioritized features and functionalities designed to advance the research objectives of enhancing user engagement and improving learning outcomes. Central to this backlog is the development of a responsive user interface capable of adapting to a wide range of devices, thereby ensuring accessibility and usability across different platforms. The project also emphasizes the implementation of a content management system, which is crucial for facilitating the seamless creation and management of courses. Additionally, the integration of interactive components, such as a video conferencing feature, is prioritized to actively engage students in the learning process. Beyond these core functionalities, the backlog includes the development of a secure user authentication system, which is essential for protecting user data and maintaining the integrity

of the platform. The incorporation of real-time analytics is another key feature, enabling the tracking of student progress and providing valuable insights that can be used to tailor educational experiences. Furthermore, the support for multimedia content is recognized as a critical element in enhancing the overall learning experience, allowing for a richer and more varied educational environment. In the figure below, we see how our product backlog is structured. This initial list of items are at the “Epic Level” which means they are too big and vague for us to be able to structure them based on technical infrastructure and other dependencies.

PRODUCT BACKLOG

User Registration and Authentication
Course Management
WebRTC Video Conferencing Integration
Chat and Messaging
Assignment submission and Grading
Notification System
System Scalability and Performance
Security and Privacy
Mobile Access

Figure 4: Product Backlog (Solomon & Avadzi, 2024)

In the development of our Learning Management System (LMS), several key features and functionalities are prioritized to enhance user experience and system efficiency, which have made it into the product backlog. For User Registration and Authentication, users need the capability to register for accounts and log in securely to access their dashboards, while administrators require tools to manage user roles and permissions to control access across the LMS. In Course Management, administrators must be able to create, edit, and delete courses, assign lecturers, and manage course schedules, while instructors need to manage their assigned courses and students should be able to register and enroll in courses to engage in the learning process. The integration of WebRTC Video Conferencing is crucial, enabling instructors to schedule and conduct live sessions, students to participate in these sessions, and all users to share screens and record sessions for later access. The Chat and Messaging system facilitates real-time communication, allowing students to collaborate and instructors to send announcements. For Assignment Submission and Grading, students need to submit their work online and instructors must review and grade these submissions. The Notification System ensures users stay informed about video sessions, deadlines, and announcements, with administrators configuring settings to manage notification overload. System Scalability and Performance are vital, requiring the ability to handle high volumes of concurrent video sessions and optimize streaming quality based on network conditions. Security and Privacy measures include implementing encryption for video streams and enforcing data privacy policies. Lastly, Mobile Access must be optimized to ensure that users can participate in courses and video conferencing from various devices, with developers ensuring the LMS is responsive and consistent across different screen sizes.

3.3 Sprint Planning

Sprint Planning is the event that kicks off each Sprint, where we select items from the top of the Product Backlog to work on during the upcoming Sprint. The goal is to determine what can be delivered in the Sprint and how we will accomplish that work. The outcome of Sprint Planning is a Sprint Goal, a clear objective that the team commits to achieving, and a Sprint Backlog, which includes the tasks required to meet that goal. This structured planning process helps to ensure that the team is focused and aligned on what needs to be accomplished within the Sprint timeframe.[?][?][?]

In our upcoming sprint, we will focus on several crucial items from the product

backlog to drive our LMS project's progress. Our primary objective is to enhance user registration and authentication processes, ensuring secure login and comprehensive management of user roles and permissions by administrators. We will also prioritize the development of robust course management features, enabling administrators to create and manage courses, assign lecturers, and establish schedules, while facilitating student registration and enrollment. Integrating WebRTC video conferencing is essential, allowing instructors to schedule and conduct live sessions, with features for screen sharing and session recording. Additionally, we will implement chat and messaging capabilities to support real-time communication and announcements. The sprint will address assignment submission and grading workflows, streamline notifications for users, and configure settings to prevent notification overload. We will also focus on ensuring system scalability and optimizing performance to handle concurrent video sessions and varying network conditions. Security measures will include encryption for video streams and adherence to data privacy policies. Finally, we will enhance mobile access to ensure a consistent and responsive user experience across devices.

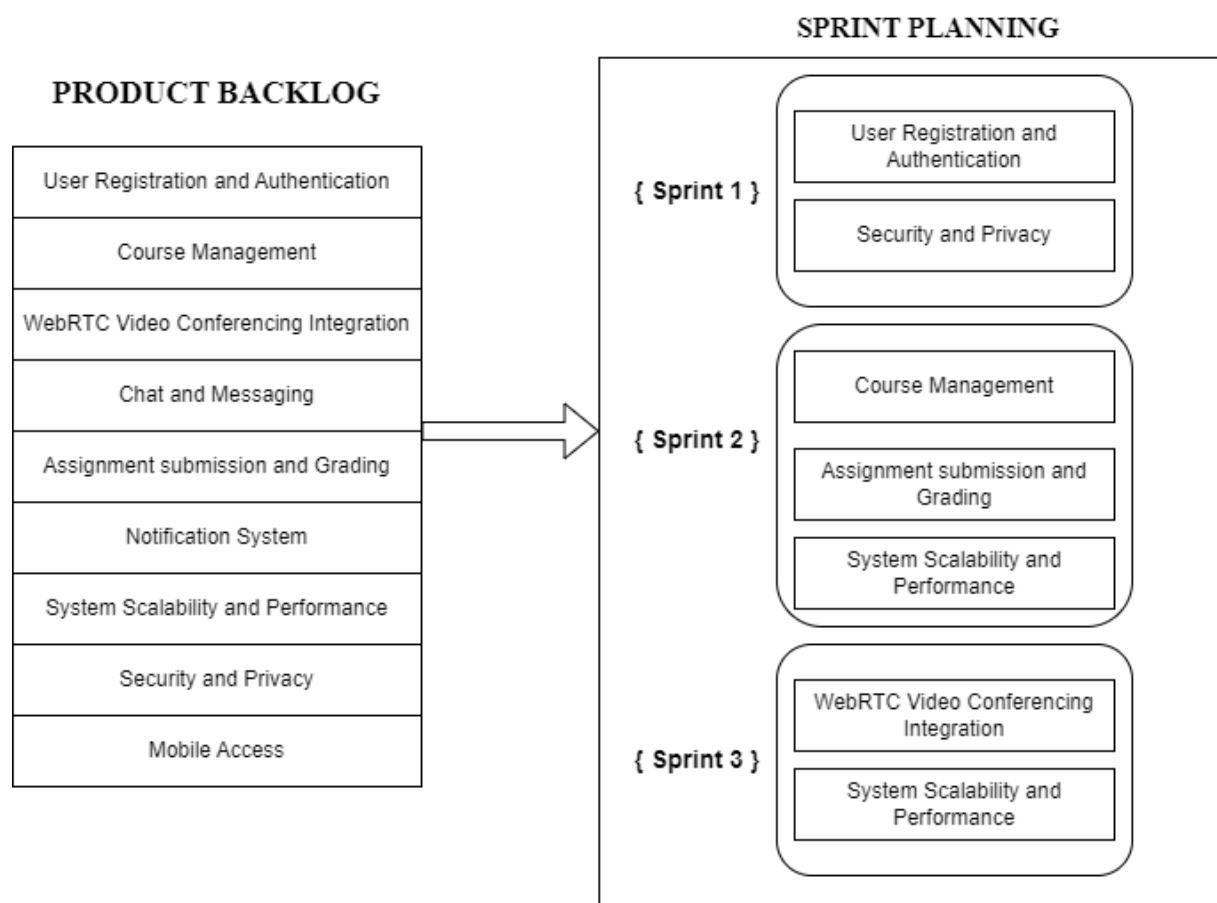


Figure 5: Sprint Planning (Solomon & Avadzi, 2024)

3.4 Sprint Execution

During Sprint Execution, the development team works on the tasks identified in the Sprint Backlog to achieve the Sprint Goal. This phase is characterized by intense collaboration among team members, who frequently communicate to ensure progress is on track and to quickly address any issues that arise.[?]

In this sprint execution phase, our focus will be on systematically addressing the prioritized tasks from the product backlog to ensure efficient delivery of key features. We will start by implementing and testing enhancements to the user registration and authentication processes, focusing on secure login and comprehensive management of user roles by administrators. Next, we will develop and refine course management functionalities, including the creation, editing, and scheduling of courses, and enabling student enrollment. Concurrently, we will integrate WebRTC video conferencing, enabling instructors to schedule live sessions, share screens, and record sessions, while ensuring the feature supports smooth real-time interaction for students. The chat and messaging system will be developed to facilitate effective communication and announcements. We will also work on the assignment submission and grading features to streamline the process for both students and instructors. The notification system will be configured to provide timely updates while avoiding overload, and performance optimizations will be implemented to handle high volumes of concurrent sessions and varying network conditions. Security measures will be integrated, focusing on encryption and data privacy compliance. Finally, we will ensure the LMS is responsive and functional on mobile devices, providing a consistent user experience. Regular stand-ups and reviews will ensure progress tracking and address any issues promptly, aligning with our sprint goals and timelines.

3.4.1 Requirements

The requirements of the project has been put into two parts. We have the hardware requirements and Software requirements. Hardware requirements refer to the specific physical components and specifications needed for a computer system or device to run a particular software application, perform a specific function, or meet a certain level of performance. These requirements ensure that the hardware is capable of supporting the software and tasks intended to be executed on it. However it is advisable to have hardware that exceeds these requirements for the optimal performance of services and applications[?]. On the other hand, the software requirements refer to the technical specifications that explain the circumstances and capabilities that a software system must have in order to perform properly [?].

Hardware Requirements

1. Processor: 13th Gen Intel Core i7 13620 H
2. RAM: 16GB DDR4 Random Access Memory (RAM)
3. Storage: 256GB Solid State Drive (SSD)
4. WebCam
5. Microphone
6. Router

Software Requirements

The various software applications used in the design and implementation of the project includes:

1. Operating System

The operating system provides the needed environment for software development and execution. For our project, we used Windows 11 Home. This is because it is compatible with a wide selection of development tools and applications, it offers enhanced performance and stability, the UI provides an intuitive and efficient workspace, which can improve productivity during development and testing phases. And because the scope of our project does not require enterprise-level features, Windows 11 Home offers a cost-effective solution without compromising on the essential functionalities needed for development.

2. Web Browser

A web browser is a software application used to access information on the World Wide Web [?]. For our project, Google Chrome was selected for its performance, developer tools, compatibility, and strong security features [?], all of which contribute to a more efficient and effective development process.

3. Text Editor

The text editor of choice is the Microsoft Visual Studio Code (VS Code). VS Code supports a wide range of programming languages and frameworks, making it suitable for diverse development tasks. It also has a rich ecosystem of extensions and plugins that enhance functionality, including support for debugging, code linting, version control, among others. It has an integrated terminal, it is cross-platform and has a user-friendly interface.

4. MongoDB

MongoDB was chosen as our Database Management System (DBMS) for the project because of its flexibility and scalability. It is a NoSQL database that stores data in JSON-like format, allowing for dynamic schema design as well as the handling of unstructured or semi-structured data [?]. It is also well integrated in our programming language of choice, JavaScript.

5. MongoDB Compass

MongoDB compass is a powerful Graphical user interface (GUI) for querying, aggregating and analysing your mongodb data in a visual environment. It allows users to connect to MongoDB deployment hosted on a remote server or on the users' local machine. MongoDB compass provides real-time data and performance statistic visualisations, which allows us to better in understanding database behaviour and how to ways for query optimisation [?].

6. JavaScript & Node.js

Node.js is an important component of this project's technology stack, serving as a runtime environment for executing JavaScript code on the server. Node.js is based on Chrome's V8 JavaScript engine, which provides a non-blocking, event-driven architecture that is ideal for asynchronous processes and scalable network applications. It also provides a solid foundation for developing server-side apps and APIs, by leveraging the npm ecosystem to integrate a diverse set of libraries and modules that simplify development processes [?] [?] [?].

7. WebRTC & PeerJS

PeerJS is used to simplify the project's implementation of peer-to-peer communication. PeerJS provides an easy-to-use API that encapsulates the difficulties of setting up WebRTC peer connections, allowing clients to exchange real-time audio, video, and data. It manages the signalling process, peer finding, and connection management, allowing developers to concentrate on application logic rather than underlying infrastructure. PeerJS's capabilities are critical for developing real-time communication features like video chat and file sharing without having to deal with the intricacies of WebRTC protocols [?] [?].

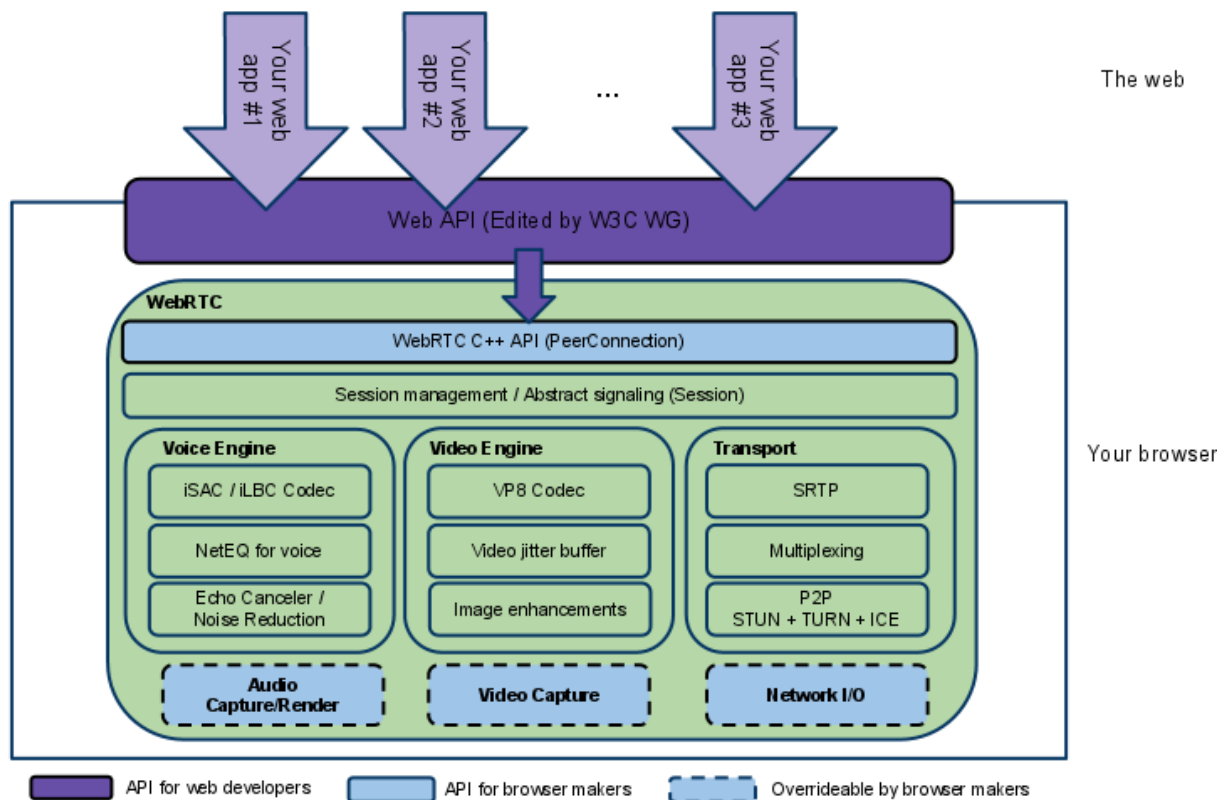


Figure 6: WebRTC architecture (W3C WG, 2022)

8. Embedded JavaScript (EJS)

EJS (Embedded JavaScript) is used to render HTML templates on the server side of and we will use this as our templating engine for rendering dynamic pages. EJS allows us to embed JavaScript code directly into HTML pages, making it easier to generate dynamic content based on server-side data. This templating engine supports template inheritance and partials, which make it easier to create reusable and maintainable HTML components. EJS works smoothly with Node.js applications, giving us an efficient way to render views and manage dynamic content[?].

9. Cascading Style Sheets

CSS (Cascading Style Sheets) is used to specify the visual appearance and layout of the project's web pages. CSS separates content from design, allowing developers to apply consistent styling across various pages and components. CSS allows developers to customise the look and feel of their applications, including colour schemes, typography, spacing, and responsive design[?].