moodle

Section Availability Findings

Moppies Team · Research Report (March 2024)

Contents

Overview

Background

When a tracker issue was submitted about **"not knowing which activities would be visible within a hidden section when its shown",** this prompted the product team to **re-visit how hiding course activities and sections** functionality **is actually working**, as well as the concern that this could potentially be a **common issue** amongst users who perform this action.

This created a research opportunity to dive deeper into **understanding the experience of hiding/unhiding course activities and sections**.

Objectives

- Identify the use cases, frequency of use and challenges with hiding course activities and sections.

- Understand the usage and value of the stealth mode feature.

Research questions

Use cases
Why are users hiding activities and sections? What type of content do they typically hide?

Challenges
Are users experiencing difficulties with hiding course activities and sections?

Methods
How are users hiding activities and sections?

Ease of use
Is the experience for hiding course activities and sections intuitive enough for users?

Stealth mode
When and for what is "stealth mode" used for? Is this something that users value?

Method & Approach

We conducted **1:1 moderated interviews** with users who hide course activities and sections regularly as part of their day-to-day tasks, to learn more about their experience with this feature.

- **User type**

  Teachers

  Administrators

  Senior Education Manager

- **Organization type**

  K-12, Higher education

- **Moodle version**

  4.2 , 4.1 and 4.0

Research Findings

Key takeaways

1 Users hide activities and sections to **create a more intuitive**, **less overwhelming** and **visually appealing experience.**

2 Some admins and teachers create and use **hidden sections as a storage space for 'draft' content** that they are still editing and preparing.

3 Only **2 participants expressed difficulty** with **activity availability settings from hidden sections.**

4 Stealth mode is considered to be an **advanced feature** that is mainly used for **stylising courses by embedding media files and content.**

5 The challenge with stealth is not about using the feature itself, but rather **helping teachers understand the concept of having activities and sections that can be 'hidden but available'.**

Finding 1: Use Cases

Finding 1: Use cases

Keep students focused

"I want them focusing on what we're doing right now. I don't want them worried about the final paper that's due in three freaking months." *(Admin)*

Keep users in the course page

"I try to make this student be able to stay as long as possible on the course page itself, then I'm using the hidden but available feature but explicitly for this very specific activity." *(Admin)*

Reducing anxiety

"We have a lot of students that have, problems, like, mentally, not always just handicapped, but also like learning. It's very important that things are easy and look nice for them." *(Teacher)*

Showing content gradually

"I gradually open new activities while we progress the workshop. So users don't have too much and get lost in the beginning." *(Admin)*

Avoid clutter

"It allowed us to create much bigger bolder, more visible items for teachers. So they weren't looking around in this list of content that's easily confused." *(Senior Education Manager)*

JUST MAKE IT NICE

Finding 2 : Hiding Methods

Finding 2: Hiding methods

Availability feature (Contextual menu)

"When a section is hidden, I make the text label visible. So it says this will be made available on the 13th of December." (Senior Education Manager)
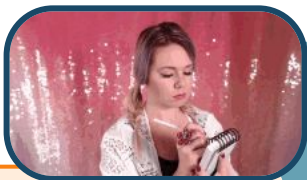
Restrict access feature

"If you just set it, have it visible but set access to a certain time, you can just go on your merry way, forget about it and students can access it when the right time is." (Teacher)

Finding 3: Hidden Content

Finding 3: Hidden content

Internal Instructions/Notes

"For notes for me or for other teachers or if I want to write something that I remember in the course. I hide it because I say this is good for partner or group work. This is as a note for me." ***(Teacher)***

Draft/Unfinished content

"In class materials, I hide these because I'm still making some of these. And there's gonna be video streaming, like links to streaming videos and stuff that I don't want them to see until class starts." ***(Teacher)***

Finding 4: Hidden Sections

Finding 4: Hidden sections

"I find it very unintuitive how the visibility of the activities behave when I try to make them visible while the section itself is being hidden. You would expect if I unhide the section also, the activities are being unhidden, which is not always the case because it depends on the old value I have seen in the code." *(Admin)*
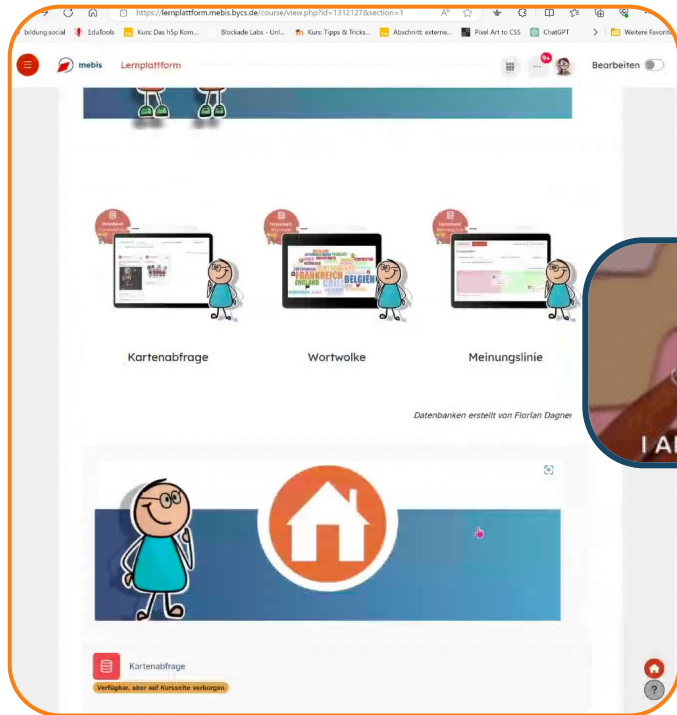
"I always thought if you have activities in a section and you hide the section, then they're gone for the students. And that's why I never did it." *(Teacher)*

Finding 5: Stealth Mode

Finding 5: Stealth mode

"I find great value in something being hidden but still, you know, available to be accessible by students." *(Admin)*

"It makes the course editing easier. You don't have to move things around, you don't have to delete things." *(Admin)*

"I know a lot of teachers would like it to have a section where we put all the material things in and then we can, can link it just for the students whatever we need." *(Teacher)*
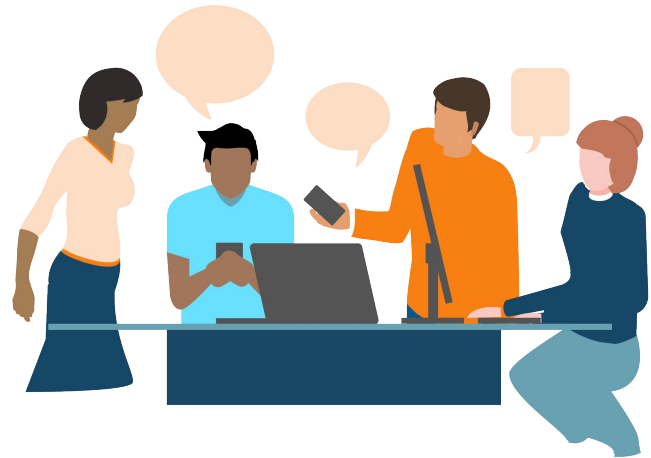
Finding 5: Stealth mode *(Continued)*

*"The language around that I think is trying to be clear about exactly what's going on there and students don't see it." **(Admin)***

"Awesomely reliable once you've got used to it, scary for initial teachers and there's real confusion about what you mean."
(Senior Education Manager)

*"It was more of a growing pains issue. I don't see it as much of a problem now because people know that they can do that." **(Teacher)***

Opportunities

Opportunities

How Might We ...?

🤔 Provide a way for admins and teachers to manage and store their unfinished course content.

🤔 Help teachers to collaborate and share course information with one another?

🤔 Help teachers manage their stealth content?

🤔 Prevent newer teachers and admins from getting confused between hide/show and stealth mode features?

🤔 Help admins and teachers create visually appealing course pages?

UX Ideas

💡 Create Draft/Publish modes that don't require users to hide their content while they're working on it.

💡 Provide a feature that allows teachers to exchange course details like activity instructions, reminders and course notes.

💡 Provide a way to easily find course content based on its different settings and characteristics.

💡 Clarify the distinction between visibility settings and availability settings to better assist users in recognizing the difference between the two.

💡 Give teachers the ability to display activities in a more visual way (cards, embedded files, etc.).

Questions?

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