

Individual Report

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Introduction

The report is going to investigate the effects, attitudes, and importance of the usage of a virtual learning environment. In the pandemic situations which occurred due to the spread of COVID-19, educational institutions worldwide are switching the model of teaching from face-to-face and using ICT techniques to provide education and training for their learners. This transition includes most of the educational institutions worldwide including colleges and universities. The report is based on using a primary data collection and survey regarding the effects of the virtual learning environment on the learners, society, tutors. By considering the effects of online education and also the attitudes towards this form of education, the data can be useful for future choice of form of education and what is effective and what is not for the involved in the learning process parties.

Background

In the current pandemic situation, the learning environment has changed. The transition to a virtual learning environment leads to more attention to be paid at the term. Barajas (2003) states that the virtual learning environment is an environment organised and created exactly for learning purposes. The environment is related to learning and is connected, it is time frames and is organised by establishments for teaching and learning, all these processes are done by using ICT equipment and software. Each successful learning environment has three leading features:

- Includes pedagogical functions like learning and teaching;
- Suitable technologies- they are relating the pedagogical models to the selected tools;
- Features of social organisation as time, place, community.

The Virtual learning environment contains these characteristics and includes many more, one of them is the use of telecommunication technologies. Barajas (2003) states that the Virtual learning environment can be considered as a combination of face-to-face and distance learning provided in a virtual space. It is similar to face-to-face learning and teaching but is not done in a physical place where all the participants are in one place, but this place is a virtual platform

where they interact and on the platform are available all the teaching and learning resources.

The use of VLEs has an important role in forming the future of learning and teaching in the future, combines and affects the relationship between staff development and pedagogical development and captures them in a virtual network setting (Cottrell, 2003).

The focus in the contemporary world is on lifelong learning for people worldwide. One of the ways that can be facilitated is by using a virtual learning environment which can be a time-saving and convenient way to study even for people having a busy lifestyle or who do not have the opportunity to travel and attend face-to-face learning. There are analyses and experiences required to be assessed the practices of using ICT tools as an environment created for teaching and learning. The implementation of virtual technologies in education is becoming more popular and as education is changing there is a necessity of the creation of concepts for the adequate application of technologies that can contribute to the implementation of the right technologies.

The usage of technologies in higher education is acknowledged by the Conference of European rectors to acquire the need of institutions for the higher education responsible to determine new pedagogical traditions by using technologies. That can be useful for universities as they will be able to share materials and resources for teaching, the students can easily be included in different courses with providers worldwide (Cottrell, 2003).

With the development and growth of virtual learning, it can be classified in two generations:

- First Generation: using of technology to generate conventional courses;
- Second Generation: they are high-quality courses equivalent to the conventional classes. These courses are more expensive than the other generation and take less labour to be distributed (Nedha, 2011).

Using ICT technologies allows the workers to work away from the office, and more candidates for work or courses could be tested in less time with the use of technologies.

The people who have limited access to education can have the opportunity to access education, gain knowledge just internet is required. The virtual learning environment has advantages and disadvantages. Availability and access to resources without the need for travel is a great benefit, on the other hand, many practical courses can be more effective if they are face-to face and require interaction (Nedha, 2011).

The setting of a virtual learning environment sometimes can be difficult but at the same time, the participant can interact with each other virtually by using chats and video conferencing. For the companies might be cheaper to assign the staff. The use of digital technologies has many advantages which used properly can be of great benefit for an institution (McLeod, 2019).

Objectives and aims of the research

The main purpose of the research is to examine the influence of the Virtual learning environment in contemporary educational institutions among students, tutors, people involved in education, and their attitude and approach towards education in the virtual learning environment and face-to-face training and education. In the process of the research there are three main steps:

1. Considering suitable groups which had the experience of studying in a virtual learning environment and holding the survey within this group to collect data.
2. Researching the topic and background publications related to the field might contribute to creating a clearer picture of the results and give a clear picture of the situation.
3. Analysis of the results by using technical instruments and digital functions to summarise the results and presenting them by visual tools.

Methods

For investigation of the methods had been used various procedures and methods. The questionnaire used in the research had been created by using Google forms, as this is one of the main tools used in the virtual learning environment for carrying assessments and researches on different topics and criteria. By carrying the research with this

digital tool, it makes the questionnaire easy to be filled, it is not time-consuming for the participants because more people will be willing to take part if it is not going to take a long of their time.

The chosen geographical area for carrying the survey in Great Britain. In the survey took part students that have different background and also most of them had graduated from different countries and different educational systems, which makes the survey takes different viewpoints. The survey had been taken in a global pandemic situation that is affecting all educational institutions worldwide. The preferences for educational methods have been assessed and the likeliness towards a preferred method of studying and teaching. In the survey took part 8 people and they answered the questions about the likeliness of the preferred methods of study and their effectiveness. The participants had experienced online and face-to-face learning environments which make it easier for them to distinguish (Graig, 2011).

The research involved eight participants.

Results from the survey

What is your gender?	What is your age range?	How would you prefer to study?	Do you have access to a computer, mobile or any other device to help you study virtually?	Do you feel motivated to study virtually at home?	I find virtual learning at home engaging.	Do you remember what topics you have been taught during virtual learning?	Has virtual learning affected your life at home or at work?
Female	20-39	Virtually	Yes	Strongly agree	Mostly agree	Yes	I do not see a difference
Female	40-59	Virtually	Yes	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Yes	No
Female	10-19	Virtually	Yes	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Yes	I do not see a difference
Male	20-39	Virtually	Yes	Strongly agree	Strongly agree	Mostly	No
Female	20-39	At school	Yes	Sometimes	Sometimes	Mostly	Yes
Male	20-39	At school	Yes	Sometimes	Sometimes	Mostly	Yes
Female	40-59	Virtually	Yes	Sometimes	Mostly agree	Yes	I do not see a difference
Male	40-59	At school	Yes	Sometimes	Mostly disagree	Some	Yes

There are many variations in the results of the survey among the opinions of the participants.

Discussion of the results

Regarding motivation during online learning, the results of the survey show that 50% of the participants in the survey had answered that they feel motivated when studying online and 50% had said that they feel motivated when they participate in face-to-face education.

Do you feel motivated to study virtually at home?

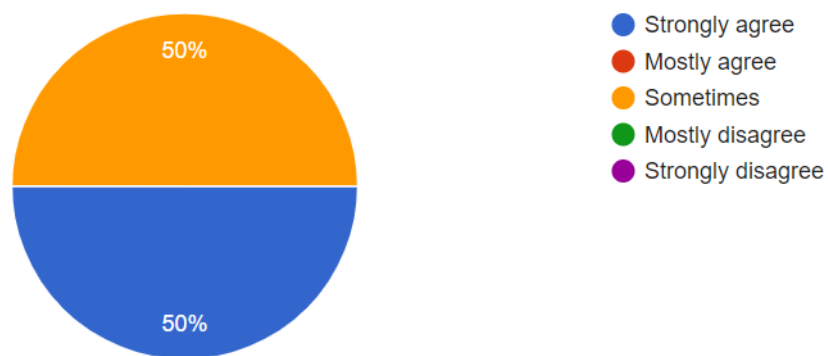


Fig.1

To the question, if they find virtual learning at home engaging 37% of the participants said that they strongly agree with that, 25% mostly agree. Surprisingly, no one has answered that they disagree. That means that the participant enjoys the online learning environment.

I find virtual learning at home engaging.

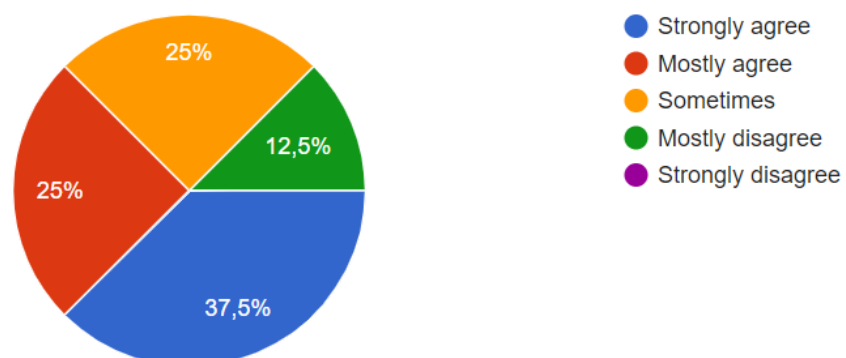


Fig. 2

When asked if they remembered the topics they have been taught in the virtual learning environment 50% of the questioned had answered that they remember what they have been taught, which means online learning is effective when the learners remember the material.

Do you remember what topics you have been taught during virtual learning?

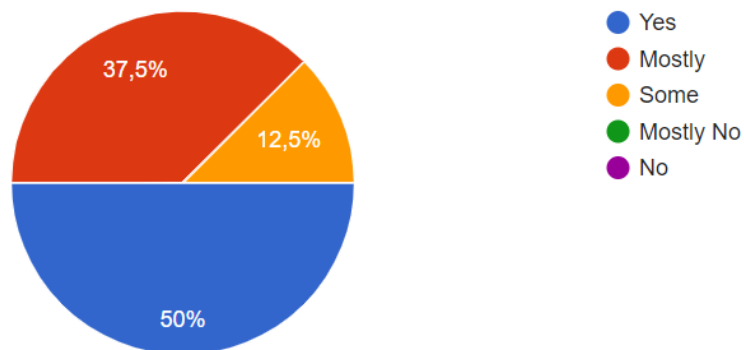


Fig. 3

Considering the learning-life balance of the participants and regarding the question, if virtual learning has affected their life at home or work 3 of 8 people said that their life has been affected, 3 of 8 do not find any difference and 2 of 8 think their life has not been affected. As the learning provided in a virtual learning environment is carried at home or from anywhere that means the learning cannot have a massive

impact and lead to many changes in the life of the people.

Has virtual learning affected your life at home or at work?

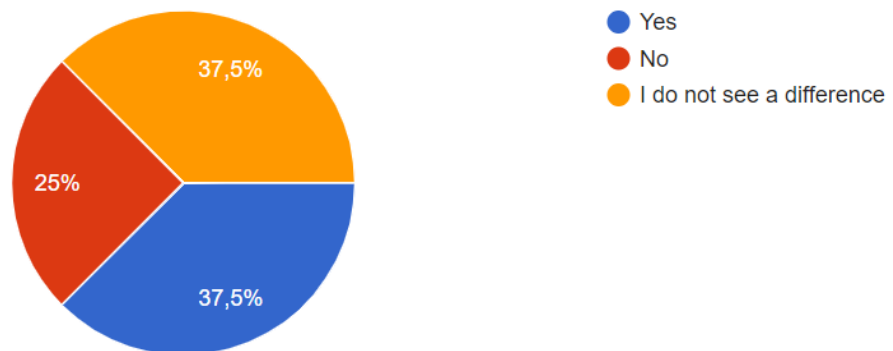


Fig. 4

When asked for the preferred method of study, most of the participants in the survey have answered that they prefer to study online, 5 out of 8 people had answered that they prefer to study virtually than attending face-to-face classes. That can be a useful finding as in the fast-changing and dynamic world we are living in prefer to study online and find it more convenient.

How would you prefer to study?

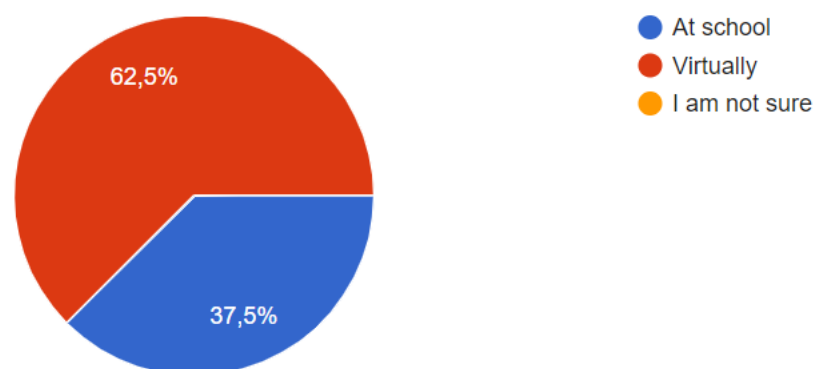


Fig. 5

The survey aimed to investigate the attitudes of the learners in the virtual learning environment. And how this contemporary method of teaching and learning has affected the life of the people in society.

Also to find out what is the preferred method of study among the students and the effectiveness of the teaching and learning in an online learning environment.

Conclusion

In the global pandemic situation, unforeseen circumstances, the fast-changing pace of learning, the implementation of virtual learning environment has major importance and contribution. The education being in continuous education, higher education would have struggled a lot without the provision of online learning. The Virtual learning environment gives opportunities to people to study even if they do not have physically the availability to travel for study. By this method, the learners and teachers can easily accommodate suitable work-study and life-study balance. As a result of the survey held among students that had experienced virtual and face-to-face learning, most of them have concluded that they prefer studying online and find it more convenient than face-to-face learning.

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