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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	3
2. BACKGROUND.....	3
3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	4
4. METHODOLOGY	4
5. PRIMARY AND SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS	4
6. CONCLUSION	9
7. REFERENCES	10
8. APPENDIX 1	11

STUDENTS ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE IMPACT OF VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT (VLE) – MOODLE ON THEIR LEARNING EXPERIENCE

**University of Wales Trinity Saint David
London Campus**

1. INTRODUCTION

This report aims to analyse the impact that the Moodle – as a Virtual Learning Environment has on the learning experience of students at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David – London Campus.

The paper looks at the way in which the learning platform is perceived by the students, how useful it is for them or how satisfied they are with the facilities offered, are just some of the points addressed through this inquiry.

In addition to interpreting the data collected through the submitted questionnaire, this research will review other data from the literature on the emergence and development of these types of learning platforms. It will look over at what impact online study has among students and teachers from the point of view of communication and relationships in the virtual environment or what problems does such a way of learning raise, to the question - Is this the future of education?

2. BACKGROUND

Scott (2015) says that the traditional education concept has become deficient in the present times, which makes students unable to learn the skills and knowledge required in this digital age. There is an urgent need to re-evaluate the traditional educational systems, in which the classical learning instruments, like books, blackboards or pencil and paper are not enough anymore. In today's world there is a need for things like critical thinking or problem-solving abilities, two examples of vital transferable skills needed to thrive nowadays. Integrating online technologies and platforms that enable students to learn at any time and from anywhere, while interacting with peers and teachers, represent the future of education.

Whether we are discussing free open-source platforms, such as Moodle, or some commercial ones - Blackboard, WebCT - all these tools that are meant to facilitate the learning process, regardless of how they are called - e-Learning Systems, Learning Management Systems (LMS) or Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), they are platforms that offer access to various types of study materials. They can add value to the education systems, but at the same time they are able to raise various problems regarding their implementation or usage. (Costa, Alvelos and Teixeira, 2012)

One research conducted in 2012 at the University of Aveiro, Portugal, examines the main functionalities and instruments found on the Moodle platform and how they are being used by students. Besides that, it also examines the results of a survey about how students perceive Moodle and its key tools. The outcomes showed that Moodle has an incredible potential, although it is primarily utilized as a vault of material. (Costa, Alvelos and Teixeira, 2012)

Another study, concerning the use of Moodle in an academic setup, was done in 2015 among students from the University Politehnica of Bucharest. At that time though the platform was not used for any online courses, as the physical attendance was mandatory. The researchers

to see how many students were using Moodle and to what extent this Virtual Learning Environment was able to help in improving the learning efficiency. (Oproiu, 2015)

Nowadays, in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, in which the learning process had to be moved in the online environment, as strict lockdown measures were implemented to prevent the spread of this disease, led to a major change in the use of online teaching platforms, to the detriment of classical methods with physical presence.

Although shifting from in-class to online learning has proven to be difficult, if not impossible, especially in many developing countries, e-learning will probably be the main direction in which education will continue to evolve. (eLearning Trends: 2020/2021 Current Data, Analysis & Insights « Guide 2 Research, 2020)

3. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aim of this survey is to assess the impact the virtual learning environment – Moodle has on the learning experience among students from University of Wales Trinity Saint David, London.

The goal is to identify aspects such as the degree to which the Moodle platform is a useful tool for university students, how frequent they use it or how satisfied they are with this virtual learning environment.

For this purpose, the answers of the participants to the addressed questionnaire were analysed and the results are presented in this report.

4. METHODOLOGY

Participants in this survey were students from the University of Wales Trinity Saint David - London Campus, who are currently using Moodle as a Virtual Learning Environment. The responders were both male and female, and they belonged to 2 age categories, namely 18-25 years, respectively 35-45 years.

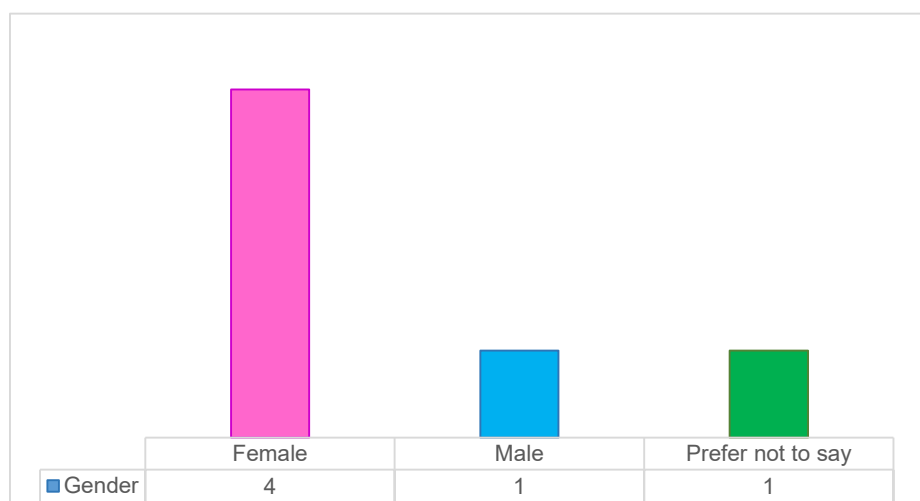
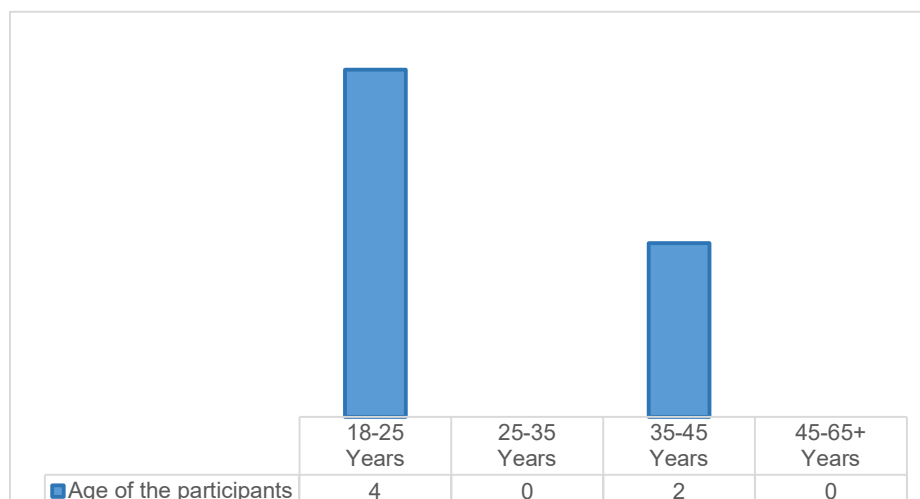
For this research, an electronic survey was conducted in December 2020, among some of the students currently attending the University. The research tool used to collect the data was a structured written questionnaire (see Appendix 1), sent by e-mail to the participants. The questionnaire consisted of 13 closed questions, which were either Multiple Choice questions or Rating scale questions.

6 students accepted the invitation to answer the submitted questionnaire, and the extracted data was analysed and interpreted, using graphs.

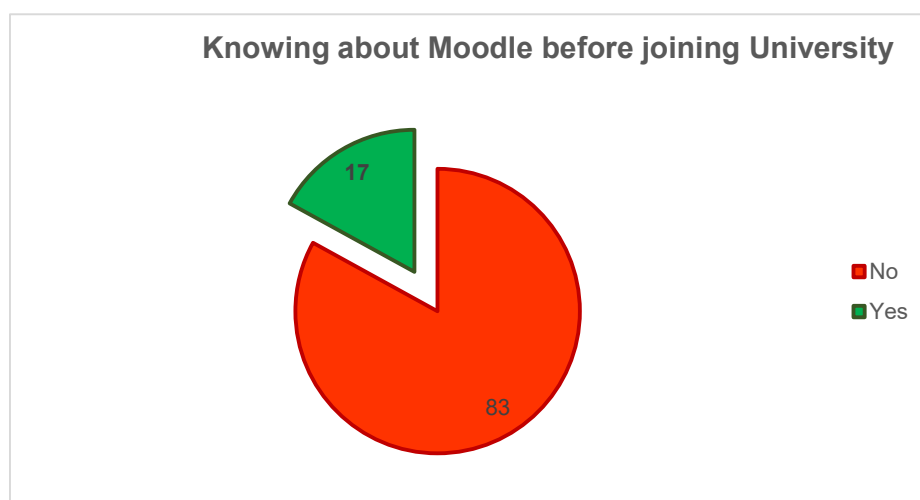
5. PRIMARY AND SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS

6 students from the University of Wales Trinity Saint David - London Campus, participated in this online survey. 4 of them were aged between **18-25 years old**, while 2 of them were in the age group between **35 and 45 years old**.

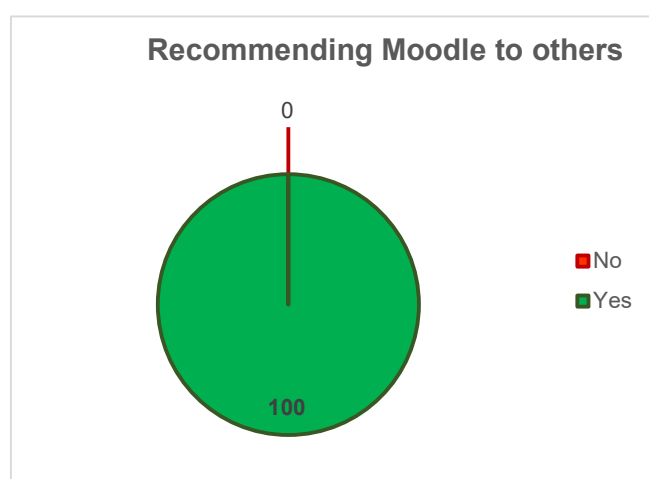
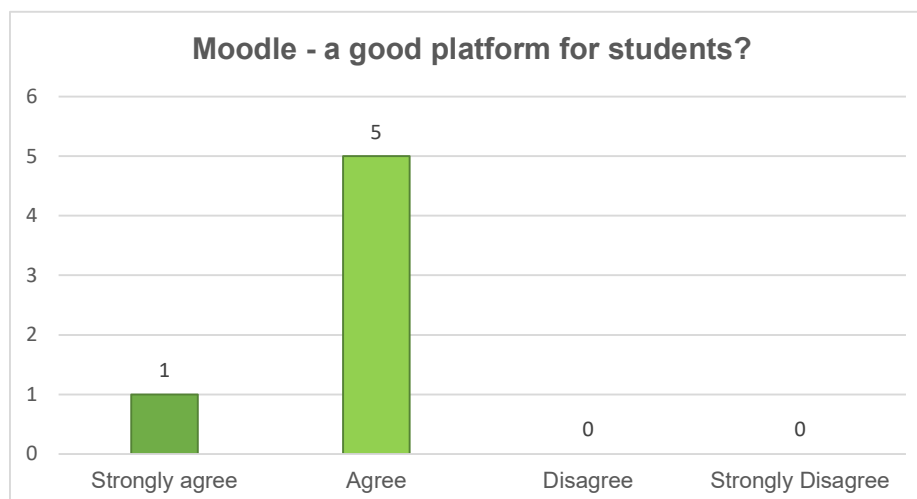
Regarding the **gender** of the responders, 4 of were **females**, 1 was **male**, and 1 **preferred not to say**.



When asked if they heard about Moodle before joining the University, only **1 out the 6** responders replied **affirmatively**, while the other 5 have not heard of it prior to that.

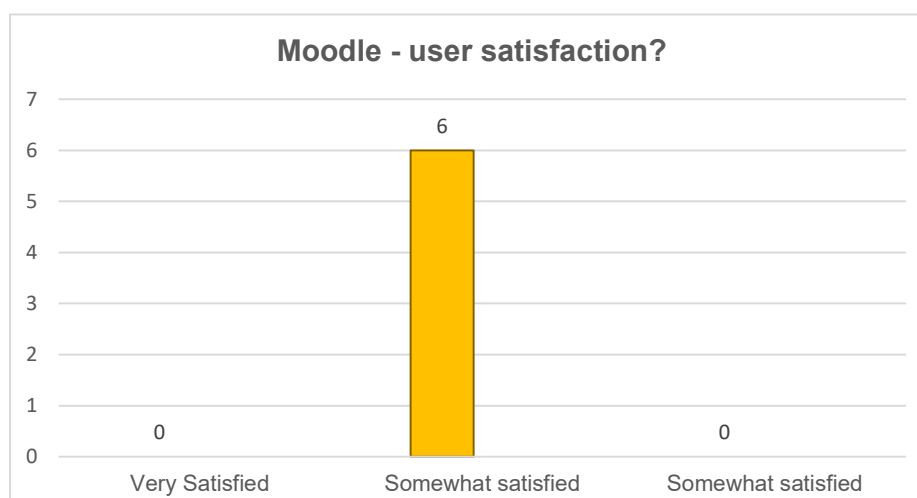


To the question – “Is Moodle a good learning platform for students?”, 5 participants replied that they agree with this and 1 participant strongly agrees.

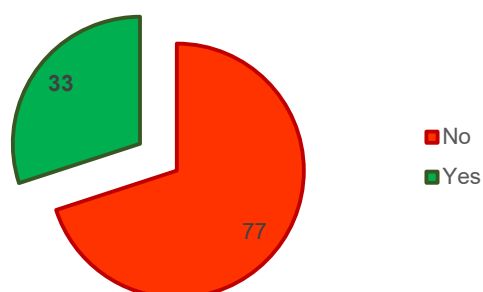


All the responders said that if given the opportunity, they would likely *recommend Moodle* to others.

When asked *how satisfied* they are with using Moodle, all 6 students responded that they are somewhat satisfied.



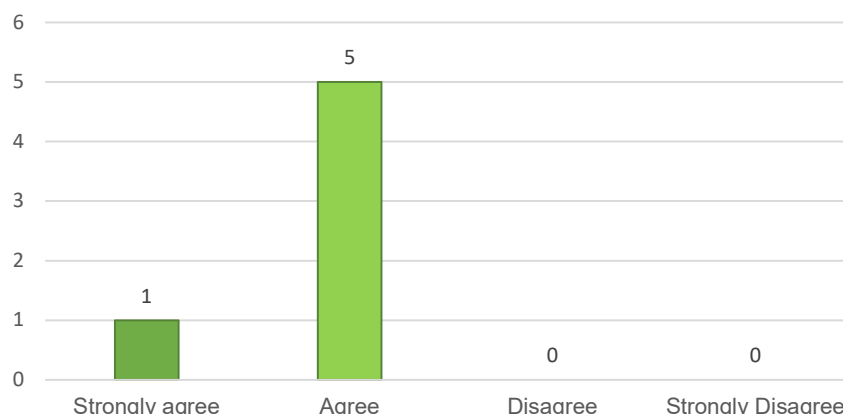
Accessing Moodle after graduating from University



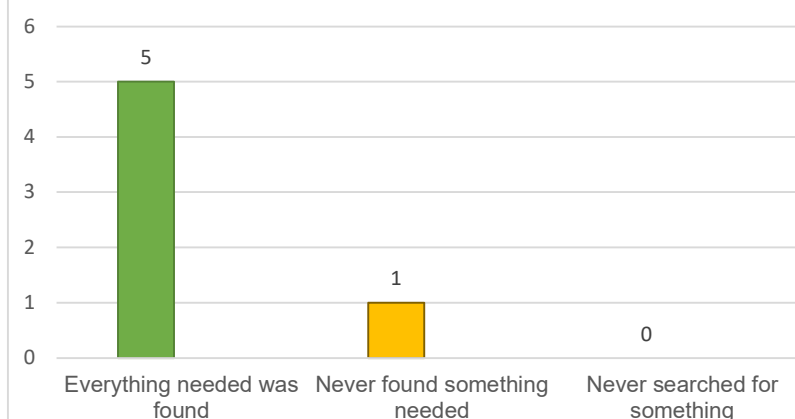
2 out of the 6 responders said they would like to be able to access Moodle even after graduating, while the other **4** replied negatively.

5 students consider Moodle to be a *helpful tool*, and **1** out of the **6th** participants strongly agrees to this phrase.

Moodle - a helpful tool?

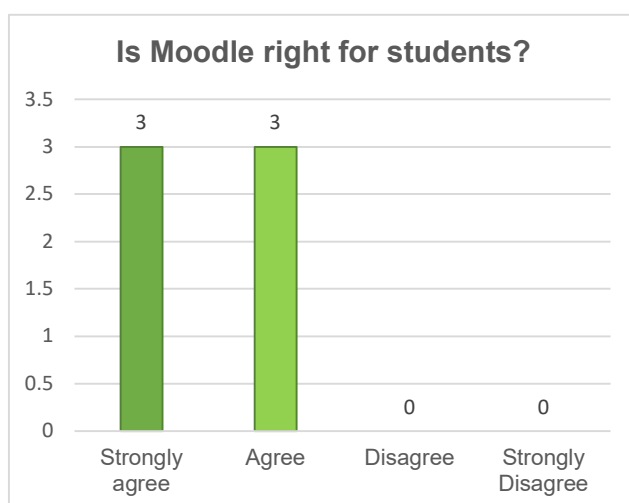
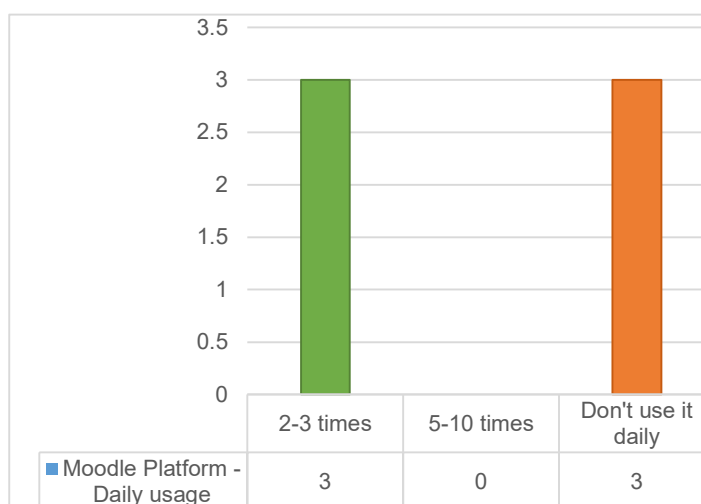
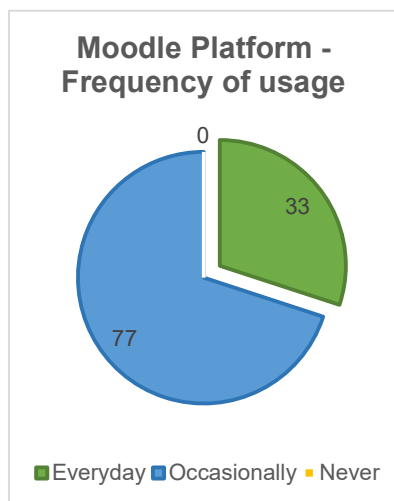


Moodle - finding information on the platform



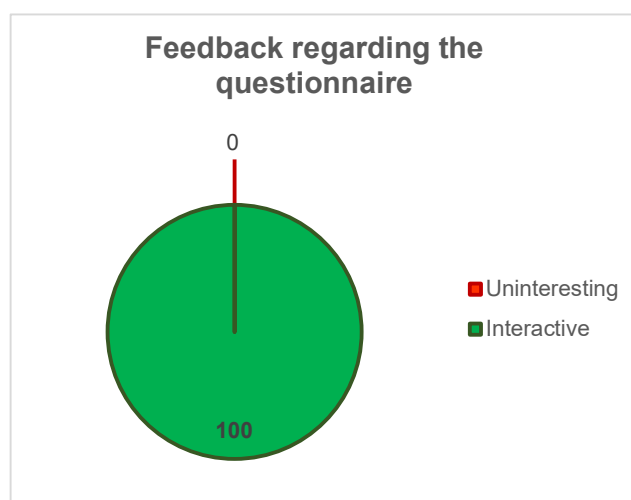
Asked if they have ever searched something on the platform and whether they were able or not to find what they were looking for, **5** responders said that they were able to find everything they needed, while **1** person said that when searching for something, he/she was not able to find the needed information.

4 out of 6 participants said they use the Moodle platform occasionally, and 2 of them use it daily. Regarding the *daily usage*, 3 students use it 2-3 times a day, while the remaining 3 said they do not use it every day.



From the total of 6 respondents, 3 of them strongly agree, while 3 of them agree to the fact that Moodle is a *useful tool* for students.

All 6 of the participants to this survey said that they consider the *questionnaire was interactive*.



Moodle represents an online learning platform, with over 213 million users, used by schools, universities and even businesses from all around the world, like Shell, London School of Economics, State University of New York, Microsoft and the Open University. (About Moodle - MoodleDocs, n.d.)

Moodle's name derives from the acronym for 'Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment. What makes this tool special is the fact that it is an open-source instrument, that can be customised according to ones needs, the information can be easily integrated, and it can be accessed on mobile devices, which makes it a flexible learning instrument, thus allowing the users to adapt fast and to enjoy mobility. (What is Moodle | World's best open source LMS | Lingel Learning, n.d.)

In their conducted study, Costa, Alvelos and Teixeira (2012) did a survey among 278 students from the University in Aveiro, through a paper-based questionnaire, through which they assessed different functionalities of this learning environment. Examining how many times per month did the students access Moodle and to what purpose, the responses showed that most of the students use this to either download their learning materials, or to deliver assignments and communicate with their professors.

The research also looked at what learning tools are available on this platform and how the users rank them by importance. Here the participants indicated that they consider instruments such as 'News' or 'Assignments' to be some of the most important ones. (Costa, Alvelos and Teixeira, 2012)

According to Oproiu (2015), Moodle is a versatile educational tool and can be used for multiple purposes, such as enabling easy communication between participants, through things like forum, chat, or message system. It also allows students to collaborate and work in groups or enables the possibility of online testing.

A survey was conducted to research the impact Moodle has on learning, in which a questionnaire was answered by 52 students from the Politehnica University of Bucharest.

Although half of the respondents said they do not use the platform at all, most of them said they would appreciate using it more in the future. Also, many of them see this tool as beneficial for the learning process, considering it could increase its efficiency. This study also highlighted the fact that Moodle was mostly used for downloading the learning materials at that time.

The respondents identified as important benefits offered by the Moodle Virtual Learning Environment things like being able to do group work, having access to a virtual library, or communicating with the professor directly. They described it as 'an easy learning method, at hand'. (Oproiu, 2015)

6. CONCLUSION

This report overviewed the impact that the Virtual Learning Environment – Moodle has on the students from *University of Wales Trinity Saint David*. It was found that although not many of them knew about this platform prior to their enrollment to the University, most of them have been able to familiarize themselves with it, they consider it helpful and would recommend it to others. Some participants would even like to continue having access to it even after graduating.

Although half of the respondents said they do not use it daily, they think it is a good learning instrument and they were able to find, in most of the cases, what they were looking for.

Other studies concerning Moodle were conducted in the past in other universities which used this e-learning platform. They found out as well that most of the students who participated have a positive opinion regarding their experience with it. At the time of the research, in both cases it was mostly used for downloading the learning materials. Nevertheless, the students said they would like to have the opportunity to use more of its features in the future.

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8. APPENDIX 1

STUDENTS ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE IMPACT OF VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT (VLE) – MOODLE ON THEIR LEARNING EXPERIENCE

University of Wales Trinity Saint David
London Campus

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Your age?
 - (a) 18-25 years
 - (b) 25-35 years
 - (c) 35-45 years
 - (d) 45-65+ years
2. Your gender?
 - (a) Male
 - (b) Female
 - (c) Prefer not to say
3. How often do you use Moodle?
 - (a) Everyday
 - (b) Occasionally
 - (c) Never use it
4. Do you think Moodle helps you?
 - (a) Strongly disagree
 - (b) Disagree
 - (c) Agree
 - (d) Strongly agree
5. Do you find Moodle a good platform for students?
 - (a) Strongly disagree
 - (b) Disagree
 - (c) Agree
 - (d) Strongly agree
6. Have you ever searched something you could not find on Moodle?
 - (a) Found everything I needed
 - (b) Never found something I needed
 - (c) I have not search anything on Moodle
7. Do you think Moodle is right for students?
 - (a) Strongly disagree
 - (b) Disagree
 - (c) Agree
 - (d) Strongly agree
8. How often do you use Moodle a day?
 - (a) 2-3 times
 - (b) 5-10 times
 - (c) I do not use it everyday
9. Did you know about Moodle before joining university?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No
10. Would you like to access Moodle even after you finish University?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No
11. How satisfied are you after using Moodle?
 - (a) Very satisfied
 - (b) Somewhat satisfied
 - (c) Not really satisfied
12. Are you going to recommend Moodle?
 - (a) Yes
 - (b) No
13. How did you find this questionnaire?
 - (a) Interactive
 - (b) Uninteresting