

Digital skills and research methods

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Introduction 2

Overview of virtual learning environment 2

People using the technology 2

Importance of research on this topic 2

Background 2

Impact of VLE 3

Methods 3

Results 4

Discussion 7

Conclusion 7

References 8

Appendix 9

Introduction

Overview of virtual learning environment

Virtual learning environment is a way of sending learning materials to students using the web. This works by ways using different systems which can include student tracking, collaboration and communication tools. These systems can be used on and off campus therefore students will have full access to the virtual learning systems seven days a week all day and night. This allows lecturers not only to be able to teach students on campus but also give students a chance of learning that are unlikely or less able to make it to the campus (2016).

People using the technology

This technology is used worldwide nowadays. Over the last few years schools have been using this technology in the classroom to help the teachers and pupils. Pupils can get a hold of their work using an online software that acts like a notebook for their year group (2020). Students and lectures use this technology and benefit from it. The communication can be live so this will be more effective and beneficial because as many students can be involved in the online communication. Lectures can get aided help in planning and managing different lessons in all related topics. Students use this technology because it allows them to learn new skills without having to travel while they attend courses. It is noted that students have a more positive learning experience using virtual learning environments (Beek,2012). Virtual learning technology is also used by businesses to teach employees different aspects of the business (2020).

Importance of research on this topic

Research on this topic is important in order to outline categories that need to be changed, improved or amended. Virtual learning environment supports and helps teachers and staff to deliver different daily tasks. This will help maintain a strong working environment by using various interactive tools which can offer support to students with their classwork and homework. Students having the ability to work at their own tempo will benefit. This also gives students the ability to personalise their learning for example going back to lessons taught in the classroom therefore this will be an advantage in terms of revision (Tan,2020). Carrying out research on this topic is very important because virtual learning environments are used worldwide therefore having knowledge of the topic is vital, knowing what can and cannot be used or knowing what sort of system is more suitable for the task. As a teacher or lecturer if little or no research has been done related to the virtual learning environment this will create chaos and confusion, students will be using the wrong systems at the wrong time which will delay tasks and work that are due.

Background

Virtual learning environment provides tools for teaching and learning. This is designed to further a student's learning environment and experience by the use of computers and the internet. The main section of a virtual learning environment involves curriculum mapping, student tracking, support online for both students and teachers. Electronic communication such as email, online chats and web publishing are available to use. Users of virtual learning environments are giving either a student ID or a teacher ID. Any software and resources that are available to the students will be also available to the teachers, but teachers will be giving additional use in order for them to create and edit curriculum content and track each student's individual performances. There are a wide range of commercial virtual learning environment software packages available which includes WebCT, Lotus LearningSpace and COSE (Rouse,2011). Virtual learning environments are highly beneficial to both students

and teachers. Students are able to access each system in their own time therefore it will help them in the long run in order to complete tasks and interact with fellow students and teachers. Teachers are able to have conversations with the students, giving support and advice for tasks and assignments. Teachers can access each student's individual performances so if a student is not performing to the best of their ability then the teacher will be able to do something about it. Some students may have a shy personality, this could be a big disadvantage in the classroom in terms of getting work done as a group in the classroom for this reason the virtual learning environment is a huge advantage to students.

Impact of VLE

Virtual learning has made a big impact with students and lectures in and out of the work environment. More students are able to attend teaching sessions. Students that are taught using VLE will have a higher mean score for retention more than the didactic group however this was not statistically substantial. Key findings have shown that VLE plays a big role with the teaching of students. VLE has made massive improvements in students' satisfaction and engagement (Poole,2019). A lot of universities have adapted to VLE, this makes it easier to allow communications and share information with other participants. In a VLE students and lectures can interact at ease which allows them to share information and data without any interruption. In spite of this experts and institutions have argued that VLE does not add any more value to the students. There has been a huge increase in use of VLE in the UK over the years. Many students have shown that VLE works very well with them and helps them in learning (Homework Nation,2020).

When it comes to VLE commitment is vital, students who find it hard to work without physical presence may suffer in their grades. Students with low computer skills may find it hard using VLE. There is a significant difference between using VLE and real-life face to face learning. A lot of students all over the world has recommended the use of virtual learning environments, this is simply because it saves on cost and time. VLE reduces the use of paperwork and provides easy access to learning equipment (homework nation,2020).

Methods

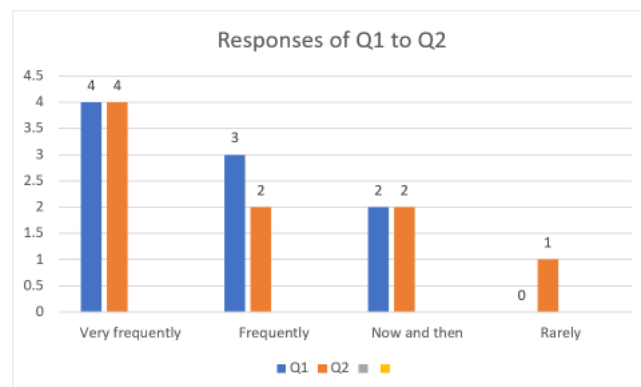
As part of my research secondary information was used and applied in order to find journals and articles related to VLE which are quantitative and qualitative data. This way was very suitable for this topic as it helps understand the ins and out of VLE. During this research a huge amount of information is found based on the advantages of VLE, disadvantages, Challenges, benefits and improvements. In my findings different types of journals and articles were used in order to collect quantitative and qualitative data. Various articles and journals were available to be used from online sources. University Moodle was accessed in order to find certain information related to the research topic. After secondary research, Primary research was used in order to collect qualitative and qualitative data related to our university Moodle. As a result of this an online software tool was used to create a survey that includes 10-15 questions related to the university Moodle. When this was made it is then

distributed among fellow students and lectures in order to get their feedback. The survey was sent by email and data was collected and stored in tables in order to complete the analysis stage. This survey included 13 multiple choice questions and 2 open-end questions.

Results

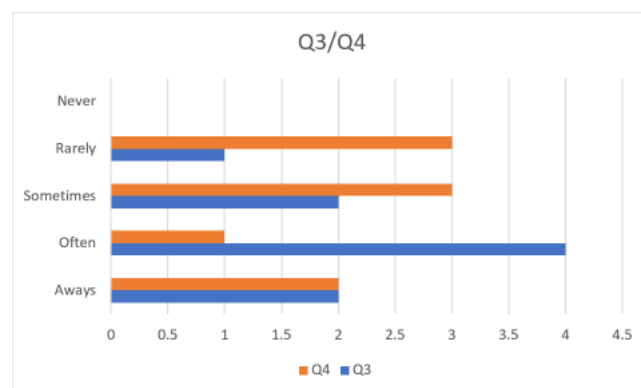
Data collection tables and data analysis process are included under appendix

Question	Very Frequently	Frequently	Now and then	Rarely
Q1	4	3	2	0
Q2	4	2	2	1



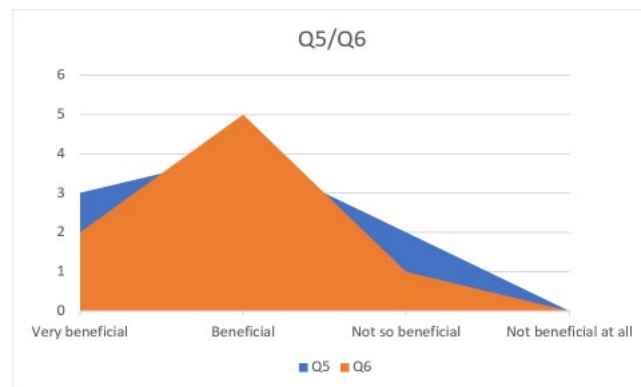
This table and chart show that the majority of the users of Moodle use it at a more frequent level. Only a few use Moodle now and then and rarely.

Questions	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Q3	2	4	2	1	0
Q4	2	1	3	3	0



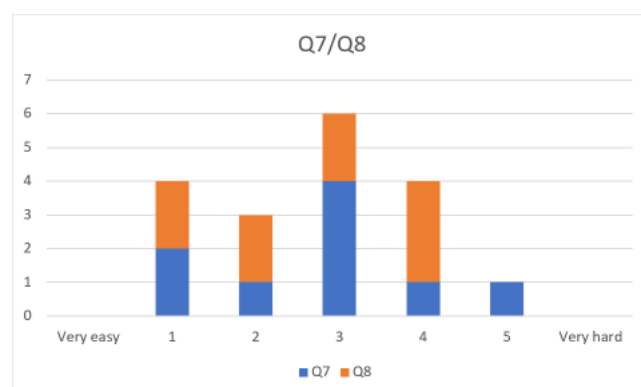
This table and chart show the use of Moodle in terms of interaction between students and lecturers. As shown above the results are a mixture, users tend to use Moodle to interact.

Questions	Very beneficial	Beneficial	Not so beneficial	Not beneficial at all
Q5	3	4	2	0
Q6	2	5	1	0



This table and chart are showing how beneficial the use of Moodle is. The Majority of the users find it beneficial. There is not one user that did not find the use of Moodle not beneficial at all.

Questions	Very easy	1	2	3	4	5	Very hard
Q7		2	1	4	1	1	
Q8		2	2	2	3	0	



This chart and table show how easy or hard it is to access and save study materials on Moodle. As the results show this is also a mix result as some users find it easy and some find it hard.

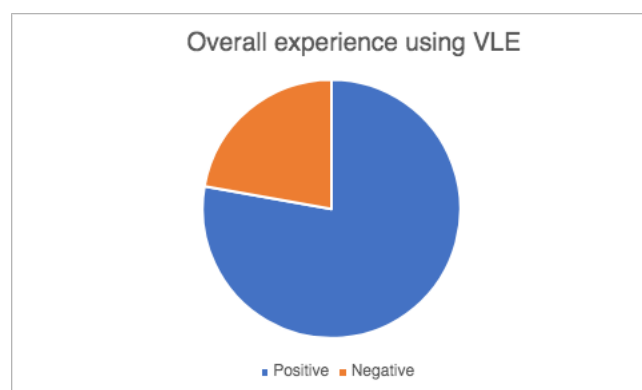
Questions	Yes	No
Q9	4	5



This chart and table show if students prefer the use of a virtual learning platform until the end of studies. The results are nearly even as 5 said no and 4 said yes.

Overall experience in reaction to VLE

Question	Positive	Negative
Overall experience of VLE	7	2



This chart and table show the feedback of users based on their overall experience using the Virtual Learning Environment. The majority of the users have given very positive feedback in regard to VLE, only a very few numbers of users have given negative feedback.

Discussion

Based on the findings and results it is clear to see that the majority of the users agree with the use of virtual learning environments. Overall, I have received positive feedback in relation to virtual learning environments. The Majority of the users find it easy to use in terms of finding assignment materials and also interacting with students and lecturers.

I have found the use of virtual learning environments really useful as a whole. I am able to join lectures from home without having to travel to class. Finding assignments to study materials is easy for me to access and use from virtual learning environments. I find that Moving from a classroom environment to a virtual learning environment is better for me personally but it can also be frustrating at times , this is because sometimes we are meant to interact with each other as students and some students tend to go missing at times therefore this one disadvantage of Virtual learning environments.

I have learned a lot of lessons doing this research report. Tools have been used that i did not have prior knowledge of such as microsoft excel and google forms, the use of these tools was key in order to complete the assignment. Originally i thought that it would be difficult to make tables and charts then having to include it in the assignment from a different document or file but as i practised more it was quite easy for me to pick it up and fully understand the process.

Conclusion

In this report primary and secondary research was used in order to explore different characteristics of virtual learning environments used by the university. Research materials were collected, stored and analyzed by using different software tools such as google forms and Microsoft excel. Feedback was collected from users and for this reason it provided recommendations to improve the services of virtual learning environments.

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Appendix

The screenshot shows a Google Forms interface for a survey titled "DSR task 2 survey". The browser's address bar displays the form's URL. The form has two tabs: "Questions" and "Responses" (with a count of 10). The first question is "how frequent is the use of university Moodle ?" with four radio button options: "very frequently", "frequently", "now and then", and "rarely". The second question is "tell me about the usage of our university Moodle" with the same four radio button options. A vertical toolbar on the right side of the form contains icons for adding, deleting, duplicating, and other actions. A "Send" button is located at the top right of the form area.

DSR task 2 survey

Questions Responses 10

how frequent is the use of university Moodle ?

- ☐ very frequently
- ☐ frequently
- ☐ now and then
- ☐ rarely

...

tell me about the usage of our university Moodle

- ☐ very frequently
- ☐ frequently
- ☐ now and then
- ☐ rarely

Question 1/2

This screenshot shows the same Google Forms interface as above, but with different questions. The first question is "How often do you use the university Moodle to attend online class and interact with lecturers?" with five radio button options: "Always", "Often", "Sometimes", "Rarely", and "Never". The second question is "How often do you use the university Moodle to interact with fellow students / fellow lectures ?" with the same five radio button options. The interface elements, including the "DSR task 2 survey" title, tabs, and toolbar, are consistent with the previous screenshot.

DSR task 2 survey

Questions Responses 10

How often do you use the university Moodle to attend online class and interact with lecturers?

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Never

...

How often do you use the university Moodle to interact with fellow students / fellow lectures ?

- ☐ Always
- ☐ Often
- ☐ Sometimes
- ☐ Rarely

Question 3/4

DSR task 2 survey

Questions Responses 10

How beneficial to you is the use of university Moodle ?

☐ Very beneficial

☐ Beneficial

☐ Not so beneficial

☐ Not beneficial at all

...

how beneficial is the use of Moodle in terms of finding and using assignment materials ?

☐ Very beneficial

☐ Beneficial

☐ Not so beneficial

☐ Not beneficial at all

Question 5/6

DSR task 2 survey

Questions Responses 10

How easy is it to find assignment materials by using Moodle ?

1 2 3 4 5

Very easy ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very hard

How easy do you find saving work materials on to your devices by using Moodle ?

1 2 3 4 5

Very easy ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ Very hard

...

Would you prefer continue using virtual leaning platform until the end of your studies ?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Question 7/8

Yaho X | Watc X | Yaho X | Yaho X | DSR X | Yaho X | Exce X | Bool X | Mail X | Yaho X | App X | DSR X | +

docs.google.com/forms/d/1WwxCd6Nr4UdqWDS9smJjVcBkfQ7mVo1EDD4Biqn1mw/edit

Sharing Screenshot
A link to your screenshot was copied to your clipboard.

DSR task 2 survey

Questions Responses 10

Would you prefer continue using virtual leaning platform until the end of your studies ?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Briefly describe your overall experience in relation using VLE.

Long answer text

Question

☐ Option 1

Question 9/10