

Certificate of Higher Education in Skills for the Workplace

‘Impact of Virtual Learning
Environment on students’

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BMSW4003

Digital Skills and Research
Methods

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Date: 06/01/2020

Table of Contents

Rationale	3
Objectives	3
Methodology	3
Project sampling.....	3
Primary research	4
Primary data analysis.....	7
Secondary data analysis.....	8
Conclusion	9
References.....	10

Rationale

The main reason for this research report is to find out how the virtual learning environment (VLE) affects the learning experience of students at the University of Wales Trinity. In order to support any logical reasons, we will be doing a thorough research on VLE by using primary and secondary data.

Objectives

The main object for this project is to analysis the data collected through primary and secondary data on how VLE impacts students learning experience. This report will be primarily focused on the collection of data and this data will be collected from primary sources as wall as from secondary sources. The primary data will be collected from University of Wales Trinity Saint David London campus so that relevant and accurate data can be used. To support the secondary data analysis different journals and articles will be used.

Methodology

In every project, it is important that a right procedure is carried out to obtain data. The methodology is the research methods that are used for different techniques of data collection, calculation and analysis in the research, along with the explanation for using specific methods. Methodology states the way the research will be carried out and it is the area where researchers can explain the method, they are using to obtain the required data. A right methodology can help to obtain accurate data and can help the researcher to analysis and arrive at a right conclusion.

There are two main types of research methodologies quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative research methodology is when we deal with the data that is in quantities, values or numbers. It is collected through questionnaires, surveys or polls. It is seen as a more reliable data as the use of statistics and analyzation of the data adds credibility to it.

The other one is qualitative data; it deals with quality of data. As they are more descriptive than numerical therefore, they are not measurable most of the times. It is usually collected via in-dept interviews or observations. It is often analyzed using adjectives or other descriptive words, it could be used to analyze data on appearance, colour, texture and other qualities.

In my research I will be using quantitative research method. As I think that is a most appropriate way to research my topic and it is more feasible.

Project sampling

In order to obtain an accurate and reliable data we have to use a reasonable amount of students to take the questionnaire. For my primary research I will be using sample of 50 students from various courses in the university. I will also be carrying the research using random sampling. Random sampling is when we select a group of subject to represent the whole population as we are unable to carry out the research on the whole population. The

sample will be selected randomly so each individual is chosen entirely by a chance. Random sampling helps the researcher acquire reliable unbiased results.

Primary research

As one of the ways to collect primary data is to use questionnaires hence, I will be conducting my research using questionnaires. I will be distributing my questionnaire to the student of the university who are studying various courses. The data that is provided by the students will then be analysed as primary research data.

Question 1- Which age group defines you best?

- A) 18-21
- B) 22-25
- C) 26-29
- D) 30+

Question 2- How satisfied are you with the education provided in this university?

- A) Extremely Satisfied
- B) Satisfied
- C) Neutral
- D) Unsatisfied
- E) Extremely unsatisfied

Question 3- How aware are you with Virtual Learning Environment (Moodle)?

- A) Very aware
- B) Moderately aware
- C) Slightly aware
- D) Not aware at all

Question 4 – How often do you access Moodle?

- A) Daily

- B) More than twice a week
- C) Less than once a week
- D) Occasionally

Question 5 – How strongly do you agree that VLE (Moodle) helps you with your learning?

- A) Very Strongly agree
- B) Strongly agree
- C) Neutral
- D) Strongly disagree
- E) Very Strongly disagree

Question 6- Do you agree that having access to moodle from anywhere is beneficial to your learning?

- A) Very Strongly agree
- B) Strongly agree
- C) Neutral
- D) Strongly disagree
- E) Very Strongly disagree

Question 7- How often are you encouraged by your lecturers to use Moodle to access learning materials?

- A) Always
- B) Often
- C) Sometimes
- D) Rarely
- E) Never

Question 8- Are you likely to change your university, if you found a university which has a better VLE system?

- A) Very likely
- B) Likely
- C) Neutral
- D) Unlikely
- E) Very unlikely

Question 9- Do you agree that use of Moodle has improved the quality of learning?

- A) Very Strongly agree
- B) Strongly agree
- C) Neutral
- D) Strongly disagree
- E) Very Strongly disagree

Question 10 – Do you agree universities can improve VLE furthermore to help students achieve more?

- A) Very Strongly agree
- B) Strongly agree
- C) Neutral
- D) Strongly disagree
- E) Very Strongly disagree

Question	A	B	C	D	E
1	27	13	7	3	-
2	7	33	8	2	-
3	34	12	4	-	-
4	20	23	7	-	-
5	11	34	4	1	-
6	40	10	-	-	-
7	13	17	18	2	-
8	9	13	20	7	1
9	8	32	10	-	-
10	37	8	5	-	-

Figure 1

Primary data analysis

The figure 1 above shows the result obtain from the questionnaire that was given out to the students. From question one we can see the most of the students who took part in the questionnaire are between the ages 18-21 and only small amount of them are 30+. From the chosen sample 66% of the students studying at this university are satisfied with the education that is provided that shows that this university has good standard of education system.

From question number 3 we can see that all the people from the chosen sample are aware of the VLE, which tells us that University of Wales Trinity Saint David has made their students aware of the VLE program. Also from question 4 we can see that students are using VLE (Moodle) to access their learning activities.

The main part of this project was to find out if VLE is helping students with their learning and we can see from question number 5 that 68% of the students strongly agree that Moodle supports them in their learnings. Also 80% of them think that it is very beneficial that they

are able to access Moodle from anywhere. Both of these questions are providing universities with a good indication for them to focus on their VLE programme.

As Moodle is used by both students and lecturers it is essential that lecturers push students into using learning materials via VLE (Moodle) as 36% of the students say that they are not often encouraged by their lecturers to use Moodle. Majority of students are neutral about moving to a different university which has a better VLE system, this indicates that students are not making university choices based on how good VLE system of an university is, as question number 8 shows us that.

Quality of learning is an essential decision making part of choosing an university. VLE can be a good indicator of quality of learning of an university, and we can see that majority of the students agree that Moodle helps to improve their learnings as seen from question 9. Also from question 10 we can see that 90% of students agree that universities can still improve VLE in order for students to achieve their highest.

Secondary data analysis

According to a survey about Virtual Learning Environment out of 2,669 students and 551 lecturers 87% of students and 65% of staff use VLE every day. In this article they have found that 74% of students and 68% of staff think that VLE is important because of announcements and notifications. Also 87% of the students state that they want lecture materials in their VLE. On other hand staff wants VLE to have easier methods to manage content and also improved functionality for assessment moderation and feedback. Both sides have agreed that they will like to see some improvements on navigation and search functions and they also hope that the VLE is going to work better on mobile devices in future. [3]

Another article has discovered that VLE seems to significantly improve students' satisfaction and engagement. They have found out that formation of smaller groups who engage with each other via a VLE can make the individual feel less embarrassed and even encourage them to share ideas. In this article they have also found out that VLE simplifies the studying process as it allows teachers to set up online discussions and monitor their students participation. Another important aspect is flexibility as VLE allows learning from outside the class-room which they think can improve students' performance. [2]

The third article I found describes the disadvantages of Virtual Learning Environment. One of the cons of VLE that they think is important is the lack of self-discipline. They think that this type of learning is more difficult for those who are prone to procrastination because it is essential that students have the necessary motivation to sit and do the course. Another down side of VLE is impersonal because they think that students can feel a little lonely as there is no actual human communication involved. Solo learning is another issue that they believe is important because if you need a clarification on a topic, it is not instantly available as it would be if a teacher were present whom students can ask. Students can still ask for a clarification in VLE, but the answer may be delayed. The final disadvantage of VLE they believe is technology issues, as technology problems are always frustrating and if they are in the middle of attending a virtual class, they can be extremely disruptive. [1]

Conclusion

Primary and secondary research both have helped us see how VLE is becoming a major part of universities learning materials. The data collected from both primary and secondary method shows us that majority of the students benefit from the VLE systems. Students who have been a part of my research have given good indication of how VLE works in University of Wales Trinity Saint David. According to the questionnaire most of the students are happy with how Moodle supports them in their learnings. We can also see from primary data that students find accessing Moodle from anywhere a positive approach, as it helps students learn or do their university activities even if they are not present at university campus. This is also found in secondary research that one of the advantages of VLE is flexibility. Both primary and secondary data supports the statement that universities can further improve VLE so it is more efficient and beneficial for students and also lecturers.

The biggest difference I found between primary and secondary data is that the data obtained through secondary research used a larger sample size, where as in primary I only used 50 students which makes the secondary data more reliable as it was conducted on a larger scale. Also secondary data had lecturers as well as students as part of the research where as primary research only included students which again makes the secondary data more credible.

In future, if I carried this research again there are few aspects of my methodology that I will change in order to get more consistent and reliable data. One thing that makes my research less reliable is the sample size that I used as It only represents a very small amount of the population. Also my research can improve more if I include lecturers as well, as this will help to include a major group of VLE users, which I neglected.

References

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