



Virtual Learning Environment



Name: Eugenia Andreia Teixeira De Sa

Student Number: 2120337

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Lecturer's name: Balendran Kandasamy

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In this report I will be outlining what is virtual learning as well as speaking about the impacts that comes with this method of learning. To support my report, I will use the data that I have researched and collected.

Virtual learning is an online teaching mechanism that comprises of different learning tools that are designed to enhance an individual's learning experience. Typically, you'll find this strategy used in schools and workplaces such as: universities and companies that requires advertising. The way that this procedure is conducted is by sectioning the assignments. This means that work can be assessed thoroughly as its broken down into segments. Because this form of learning is based online the way in which the learning is conducted are through the following: video/audio lectures, books, webinars as well as classes conducted online via zoom for school work.

At the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (London Campus) this method of learning is introduced to the students and we use this very often when completing assignments as well as activities in class. An example of how we use virtual learning in the school environment is by Moodle; this gives us students the opportunity to view the subject as well as gives us an opportunity to speak with the teachers outside of the classroom.

There are many benefits that can arise from this as well as negatives. With everything that is done online, even though it's created for less hassle it can be a downfall also. Firstly, I will be discussing the benefits.

- **Easier to track-** as this is online the software is able to let either an employer or lecturer knows who has submitted their work from who haven't. I consider this as an advantage opposing to manual collection because this is a system that is designed to track movements of completion of work so this means that students as well as employees can't differ from the question when asked about the why they haven't completed the work. Another advantage is that as it's done online there no reason or arguments about lost work because if it's not online that means it's either not completed or submitted.
- **Effortless submission-** before the use of this system normally school work would be done in the classroom this means that the work would be done by hand so when the work is finished the students normally print it off and give the teachers there and then and that's when the teacher will mark if off that the work is submitted but now everything has changed: every student has their unique code and entry number. This means that when they complete their assignments, they just have the access the student portal uploads the document and press submit. This is considered an advantage because it's a very simple but also there is an electronic copy of the work.

- **Time saving-** this is beneficial for both employers as well as lectures. For example, every company have a turn off policy that they need to adhere to. Most times employees quit and there isn't time to train then or get them up to speed- this is where the virtual learning takes place as that potentially new employee can go on the company's website as access their e-learning to gain knowledge. Similarly, from a student's point of view: if the assignment is complicated, they can always speak with the lecturer through the portal as well as look at guides on how to complete the work. This is considered a positive because if you think about this system and had it not been in place, those individuals would have to chase the teachers and as for help and even then, they might be more confused but because this is online, they can go back as many times as they want and make references to what they need to do.
- **Communication-** everyone learns in different ways. For example, visual, audio and kinetically. With this system in place, it's a huge advantage for everyone as their type of learning is supported

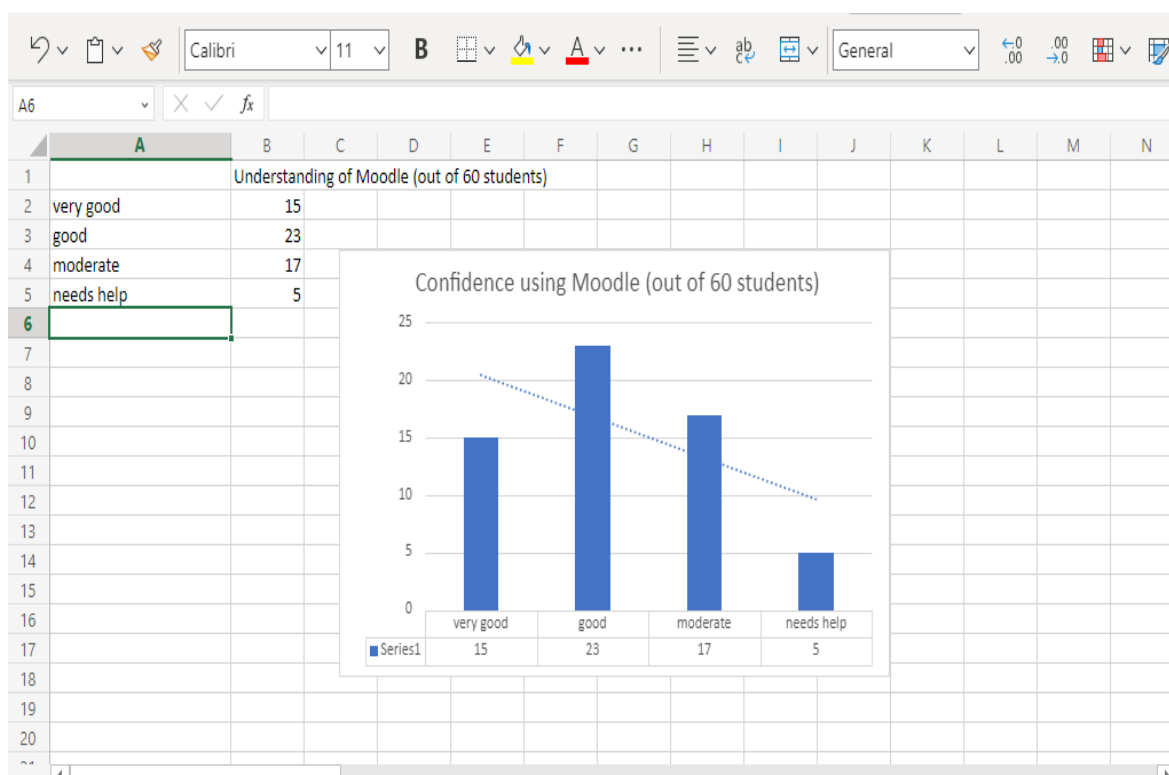
Opposing to speaking about advantages of virtual learning there are also many disadvantages that we must not forget. Personally, I believe that although the advantages are great the disadvantages are greater because they carry bigger risks and consequences. The following disadvantages that I think carries serious consequences that will negatively affect students in particular ability to learn online are the following:

- **Attention span-** this is the ability of how long a person can stay focused. The reason that I believe that is a negative factor for virtual learning is if you think about life as a student, it's usually very busy/active this can be from personal day-to-day routines as well as course work. So realistically speaking research has estimated that students particularly 16+ of age is only able to focus for 32-48 minutes so figuratively speaking as a student who have online classes that can last for 1-2 hours of listening to the teachers, we are then tasked of completing the work but as we listened for so long it's normal for the brain to become tired so when it's time to do the work most of what that was said that is crucial, we will forget unless it's written down as notes. Just with those statistics we are to rule out that this form of learning will have a negative influence on students, also the fact that when it comes to the completion of course work- as they are on the computer, they have the use of the internet so there are temptations all around them that will cause them to differ from what is important.
- **Lack of certainty about the task-** as the class is conducted online the only way for you to participate is to listen, sometimes actively and other times not. This reason that this is a negative influence for virtual learning is that it bearing in mind how long an individual can focus for if the lecturer conducts a class for over 1 hour many students will be left confused about what they have to do after. It is very common and happening in every institution because personally when classes are kept online the teachers are focused on getting the message across yes, they take breaks to question students but imagine looking at a screen on over 30 students: it's more challenging as a teacher to see their facial expressions in terms of if they understand what you are talking about opposing to a classroom setting- this is also a breeding

ground for misinterpretations and misunderstanding of the communication been sent out for the students to receive.

- Uncomfortable to use technology-** in today's day and age the quality of technology is advancing and if we are not sharp minded then we will fall behind. At the University of Wales Trinity Saint David there are a mixture of different variety of age groups as well as nationalities, meaning that students from all over the world whether age 18-35 have never owned a laptop before or even have the use of internet consistently also, keep in mind that with diversity comes barriers this means that English is not always the first/common language that these students speak. As a teacher setting the work to be completed online these group of students will definitely struggle to get the work done because even if they have a sense of understanding of the task ahead, they are not confident in using the computer and the services that are available online however, if they were in a classroom setting then they will feel more comfortable because they will be able to go at their own pace.

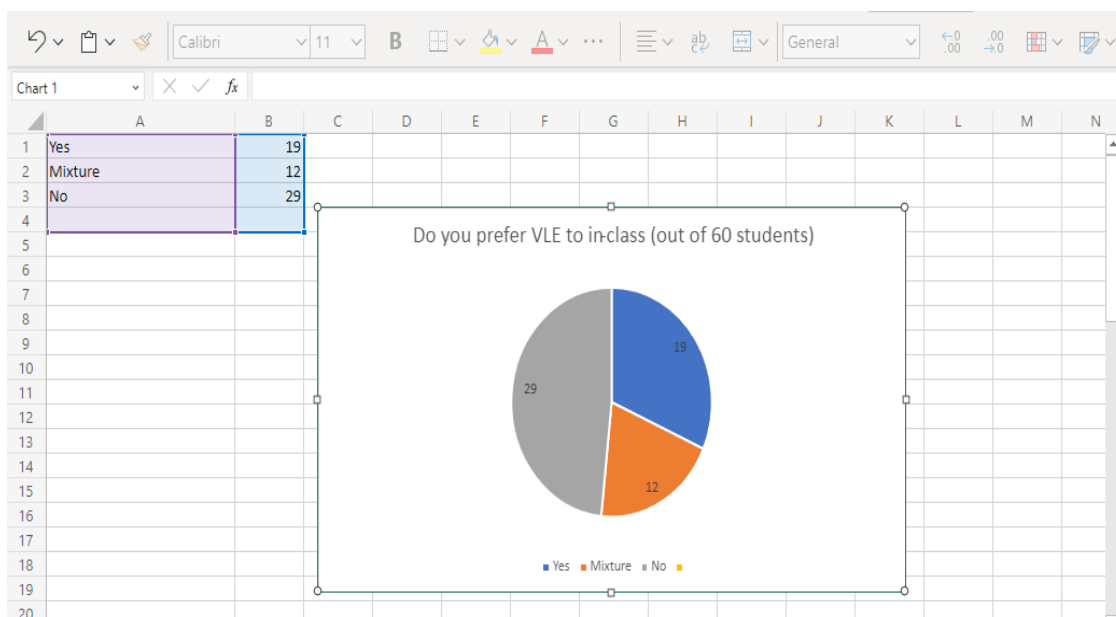
Now that I have outlined the positives and negatives that can arise from Virtual Learning Environment as part of this report, I have conducted a survey and questionnaire amongst students on the campus to check their understanding and use of Moodle. To support my findings, I placed the data in the form of a graph and pie chart so we able to see the significant differences.



The image above illustrates the level of confidence that the students on campus have when using Moodle. Whilst most students are doing reasonably well, you can see by the data on

the graph that some students are falling behind. Again, this stems back to the fact that most students are not comfortable using the computer, this could be the fact that they don't have the basic IT skills as they are from a foreign country and they were not as privileged to have a computer for themselves.

I choose to use the word confident because some students are able to navigate their way around the computer but when it comes to finding certain information that they need to complete the work they get confused. As you can see out of 60 students 5 of the still say that they need help. Now imagine as a teacher conducting your lessons online these 5 students are as up to speed as you think they are and this doesn't mean that they are not smart it's just that they can't keep up to speed with virtual learning, if they were in a classroom then probably, they will have a better sense of understanding,



The above picture shows the ratio of students who prefer Virtual Learning in contrast to in classroom learning. I choose to do this comparison as a pie chart rather than a graph because I think if we look at the data holistically then we have a clearer understanding as each section of the pie chart represent a specific category.

When completing the survey, I was able to speak with some of the students and I asked them why they selected the answer that they did and very often the students who selected

yes that that they preferred Virtual Learning because they gain more knowledge, because they absorb more information online: the students who couldn't decide said that they are able to work at their own pace which means that they don't feel pressured as much to either contribute or complete assignments. However, the students that said no said it's more to do with the level of control they have over their work because they are trusted to go off and submit the work on their own most while they procrastinate. Another reason that they said they don't like the idea is that they have to bring home their school work and they have other responsibilities outside the classroom so they are not able to focus as much as they would if all work is completed in school.

To conclude, Virtual Learning is a good introduction towards the institution and learn process but I believe that if we stick to the form of learning or do too much of it then a lot of students will get lost in what to do because as stated earlier, this university is very diverse and not only foreign students will need help: the pupils who have English as their first language will struggle also because by doing the work online there are many distractions which will result in procrastination and misunderstood assignments.

After conducting the research I'm confident that even though virtual learning might be convenient at sometimes indoor classroom learning is the best because not only can teachers see our facial expressions to see if we understand but, more time is spent and very often is someone don't understand the work in class they will share their opinions. That is also a benefit of indoor class learning because even though students are at university, they still feel the need that they don't want to be wrong, so by someone saying that they don't understand it gives confidence for others to speak up- also the communication been sent by the teacher is better accepted as there's less barriers for communication.

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