

Assignment 2: Digital Skills and Research Methods

***Topic: Impacts of Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)- Moodle on students
learning experience at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David London
Campus***

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1.0 Introduction

The advancement of technology has led to a change in the education sector as well. The global education infrastructure has implemented various changes including the system of Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) due to the wide range of advantages it has. Along with this, the VLE is also an effective way of teaching the students and imparting a wide range of knowledge. Due to its efficiencies, this system of teaching has gained popularity over the years as it caters to all types of students. Regardless of the educational affiliations, even schools can implement this learning system in their teaching method. One of the most viable advantages of this method is that it is very cost-effective and can even reach students everywhere. Apart from that, as this method can reach a wide range of students and the technique is very feasible, it has gained considerable popularity and has made the online learning medium very viable (Alves *et al.*, 2017).

Nevertheless, every technology has a limitation or drawbacks. Therefore, this study will be conducted to understand both the advantages and disadvantages of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) on the learning of the students. This research paper will highlight the various impacts of VLE and how it affects the students. Along with this, the use of curriculum activities and academic knowledge and the perceptions of the students who are studying at the “**University of Wales Trinity Saint David London Campus (UWTSDLC)**” will be considered for this research project.

2.0 Background

In the words of Rientiesi *et al.*, (2016), a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) refers to the system where learning and exchange learning materials to the students takes place online via the web. The systems through which VLE is used to include student tracking, assessments, communication and collaboration tools. Students residing either on campus or somewhere else can get access to the VLE at any time of the day. This means that students can learn even outside the classrooms and as per their convenience. Therefore, this method is useful for both students and teachers, as they do not have to undertake the traditional full time learning in the classroom. The students who are unable to regularly visit the campus can also get access to the learning and learning materials. It is also a feasible learning method for students, who have undertaken distance-learning courses, working professionals who have enrolled in part-time studying and people doing evening classes (Boulton *et al.*, 2018). VLE is of different types, which all have the same function but work slightly in a different manner. It also provides the same learning materials. Educational institutions need to have a licence for incorporating VLE and the various types are-

- Blackboard (off the shelf)
- Moodle (open source)
- Own bespoke systems of the university

Often the teachers develop a VLE content package file for making the teaching process more efficient and accordingly the learning becomes effective. To develop a VLE content package, all the content from the online resources centres as per the curriculum are combined and put together into a single VLE compatible file. Due to the current on-going COVID-19 pandemic, schools and other educational institutions are shut to curb the spread of the virus. Hence, there is more use of the VLE now as all the teaching and learning is currently held online (Phungsuk *et al.*, 2017). The demand for VLE has increased over the years due to the advancement in technology and changing learning needs. In the words of Herrera Mosquera (2017), there are various advantages of incorporating a virtual learning environment in educational institutions. By using VLE, the flexibility of imparting knowledge and education has increased especially concerning time. Students can now align other activities and plans with their studies as it is

available all the time and they have free access. The students can also undertake the learning at their own pace and enjoy a process of learning.

According to Pedro *et al.*, (2015), VLE gives accessibility to learning to disabled people or students who live far away from the school. They get access to high-quality education and the learning process can happen even while they are sick or are on a vacation. One of the most significant benefits of the VLE is its cost-effectiveness. Students can now earn their degrees without spending a huge sum of money for campus or shifting cities. The VLE also had made it easier for the teachers to manage their work such as lesson planning, tracking the performance of the students, managing administrative work, engaging with the students and providing extra support to the students lagging. As opined by Al-Azawei and Al-Masoudy (2020), a virtual learning environment increases the engagement of the students and teacher as they become more flexible with the learning process. It also paves a path to experiment with new methods of teaching and different formats of content. It piques the interest level of the students as more gamification is added to the learning process.

Nevertheless, Hlosta *et al.*, (2018) have stated some limitation of the virtual learning environment. The increase in the flexibility of the learning, students who do not have the motivation or self-discipline might not engage with the learning process. If there are no strict deadlines or permanent control, the students will not concentrate and this can hamper their learning process. The lack of human communication can trigger negative emotions among students. Apart from that, certain learning activities cannot be done through the virtual environment. As stated by Zizza *et al.*, (2018), a virtual learning environment will also lead to a communication gap between the student and the teacher. The teacher might not be available during the time the student is accessing the learning materials. So clarifications cannot be made at that time and the student has to wait for the teacher to come online. Lastly, technology also plays a huge role in enhancing the virtual learning process. If there is any technical glitch or a disruption in the network, the learning process can be hampered.

3.0 Aims and Objectives

This research aims *“to find out the advantages and disadvantages of Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) - Moodle on the students’ learning experiences who have currently enrolled and studying at the University Of Wales Trinity Saint David London Campus.”*

The objectives for the research are as follows-

- To perceive the Virtual Learning Environment concept
- To identify the advantages of VLE and its impact on the learning experience of the students
- To find out the limitations of VLE and its impact on the learning experience of the students
- To recommend strategies to enhance the impact of VLE positively and improve the online education process

4.0 Method

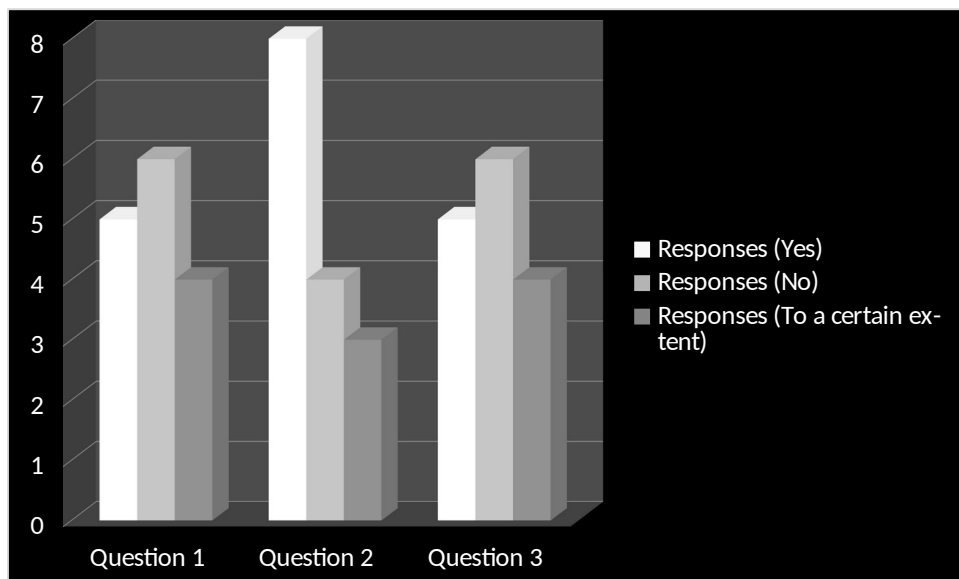
The data for the research was collected using a methodological system and by following the below-identified steps-

- First, the researcher identified the research philosophy, research approach and the design for the research. After the perception of the aim and objectives of the research, it was decided to conduct the research using the ***exploratory design, deduction approach*** and ***positivism philosophy***.
- As the aim of the research is to find out the impact of VLE on students in the University Of Wales Trinity Saint David London Campus, the researcher deemed it appropriate to use the ***primary data collection method*** to gather and interpret the data. As the Moodle was given the preference and the learning experiences of the students are to be analysed, the ***quantitative research*** was selected.
- The university is located in London and therefore the geographical area for the research was London. The sample population chosen for the research were students studying at the university. Advertisements about the research were posted in the social media page of the university and it was stated that students who used the Moodle practically could participate in the research. Hence, the chosen sampling method for the research was the ***purposive sampling*** method. 15 students participated in the research.
- The researcher for collecting the primary quantitative data developed a close-ended questionnaire consisting of 10 questions. There were various options for each question and the questionnaire was forwarded to the participants through emails and via the university online platform to ensure physical distancing in the wake of the COVID-19 situation.

5.0 Results

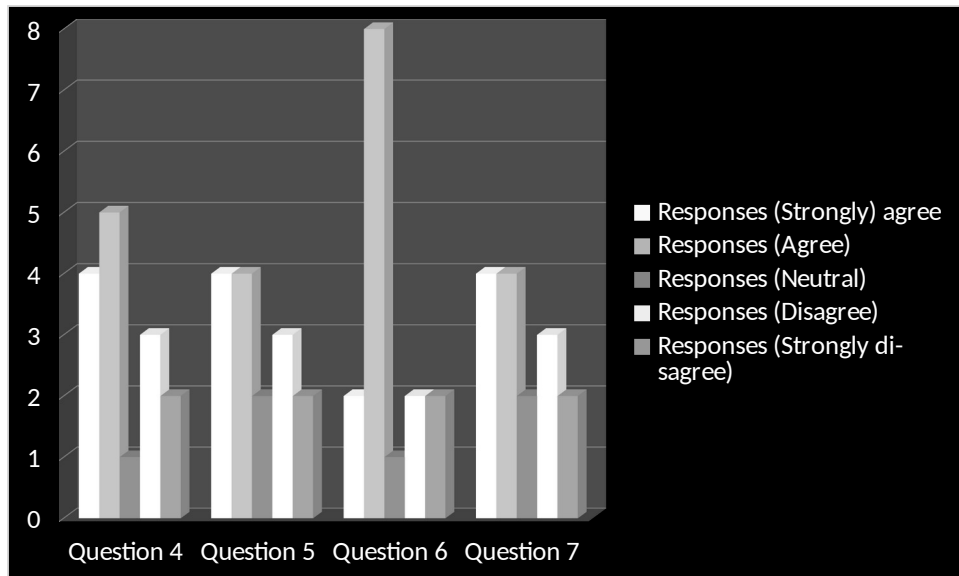
Q1 to Q3

Questions	Responses (Yes)	Responses (No)	Responses (To a certain extent)
Question 1	5	6	4
Question 2	8	4	3
Question 3	5	6	4



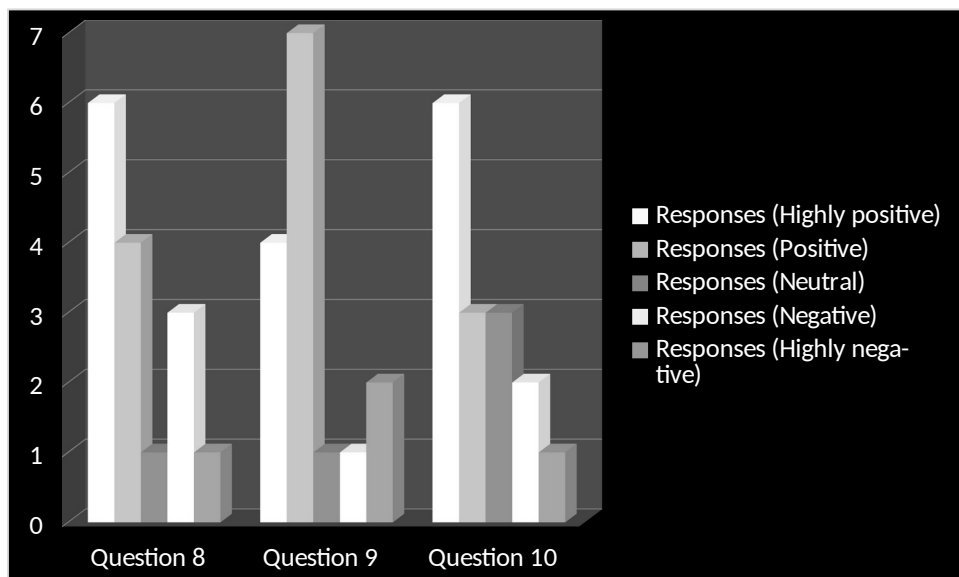
Q4 to Q7

Questions	Responses (Strongly) agree	Responses (Agree)	Responses (Neutral)	Responses (Disagree)	Responses (Strongly disagree)
Question 4	4	5	1	3	2
Question 5	4	4	2	3	2
Question 6	2	8	1	2	2
Question 7	4	4	2	3	2



Q8 to Q10

Question	Responses (Highly positive)	Responses (Positive)	Responses (Neutral)	Responses (Negative)	Responses (Highly negative)
Question 8	6	4	1	3	1
Question 9	4	7	1	1	2
Question 10	6	3	3	2	1



6.0 Discussion

The responses show that students have a mixed review of the impact of VLE and Moodle on their learning experiences. Many students are not familiar with the VLE process and did not use it extensively so they are not aware of its effect. The first question mostly received negative answers as 40% of the students responded that the VLE was not an efficient process of imparting knowledge and learning. Nevertheless, 53.3% of the students have responded that VLE is an important part of the learning process and therefore needs to be implemented. 40% of students stated that advanced technical skills and knowledge is not required for using the VLE effectively. Therefore, as per the statement of Laeeq and Memon (2018), it can be observed that the benefits of VLE have not been perceived by the students properly which led to conflicting views. However, it is becoming important for the education system and as advanced technical skills are not required, thus everyone can gain access to it.

60% of the students have agreed that VLE has enhanced their learning process. Hence, with the supporting statement of Mai and Muruges (2018), it can be said that due to the increased flexibility and convenience, students were more attracted towards this learning process and have concentrated in the learning process. 53.4% of students believed that Moodle has helped them in their learning process. This means that the ability to learn at their own pace and schedule was found to be useful for the students and has led to a positive impact on the learning process and experience. However, around 66.6% of students have stated that Moodle can be disruptive in the learning process at times due to various reasons. In the words of Beluce and Oliveira (2015), there are certain reasons for disruptions such as technical glitches, personal problems and a lack of communication between the students and the teacher.

66.7% of the students were positive about the fact that Moodle has enhanced the learning process and experience. Along with this, 73.4 students thought that Moodle has opened up new ways of learning and enhanced the teaching process too. Apart from that, the students were also able to gain access to the learning materials easily. 60% of the students found it useful to communicate and solve the doubts using the VLE and Moodle. Therefore, as per the statement of Salvador (2017), Moodle has been an effective method of learning for the students. Nevertheless, here are a few recommendations that can be undertaken to improve the use of the VLE and Moodle-

- The teachers can specify the learning materials and guidelines along with providing a demo session on how to use the Moodle and access the virtual learning platforms (Derboven *et al.*, 2017)
- The courses should not be too long as Moodle cannot support bigger projects
- The user interface of Moodle must be improved to eliminate issues of lagging and technical glitches (Dhakal and Sharma 2016)

7.0 Conclusion

This research study has highlighted the use and impact of VLE and Moodle on the learning experience of the students. Although the respondents have highlighted both positive and negative impact of VLE, by implementing the recommendations, the process of using VLE can be enhanced and the loopholes can be resolved. It is the responsibility of the university to enhance the process of using the VLE as the students of “***University of Wales Trinity Saint David London Campus (UWTSDLC)***” has found the use of VLE supportive and useful in enhancing their learning experiences.

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9.0 Appendices

9.1 Appendix 1

Q1. Do you think a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) has helped in imparting knowledge and learning efficiently?

- Yes
- No
- To a certain extent

Q2. According to you, is it necessary to incorporate VLE in the teaching process?

- Yes
- No
- To a certain extent

Q3. Do you think advanced technology and technical skills are required for using the VLE process effectively?

- Yes
- No
- To a certain extent

Q4. How far do you agree that VLE has enhanced your learning process?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree

Q5. How far do you agree that the Moodle has supported you in your learning?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree

Q6. Do you agree that Moodle can be disruptive in the learning process sometimes?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree

Q7. Moodle has increased the flexibility and accessibility of learning- agree or disagree?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Strongly disagree
- Disagree

Q8. How positive are you about using the VLE- Moodle for enhancing your learning?

- Highly positive
- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative
- Highly negative

Q9. What is your perception regarding the teaching process and gaining access to the learning materials?

- Highly positive
- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative
- Highly negative

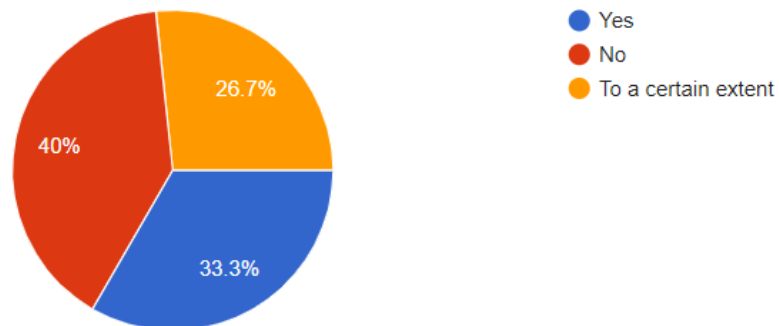
Q10. What is your perception regarding the communication and solving doubts using VLE-Moodle?

- Highly positive
- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative
- Highly negative

9.2 Appendix 2

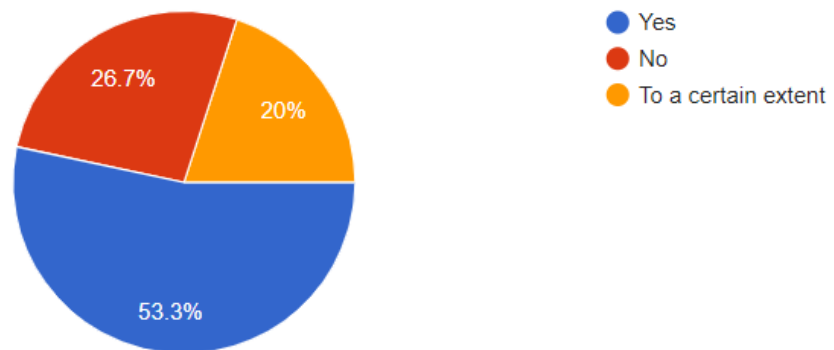
Do you think a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) has helped in imparting knowledge and learning efficiently?

15 responses



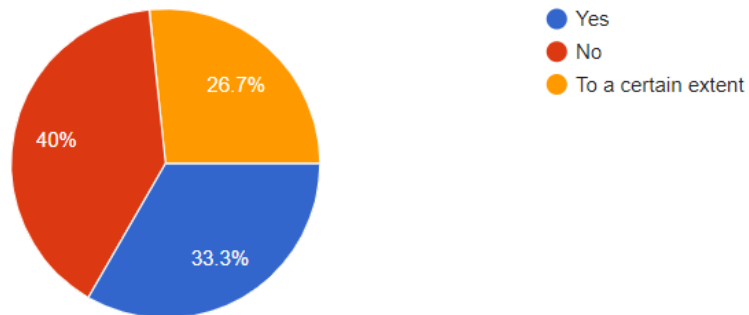
According to you, is it necessary to incorporate VLE in the teaching process?

15 responses



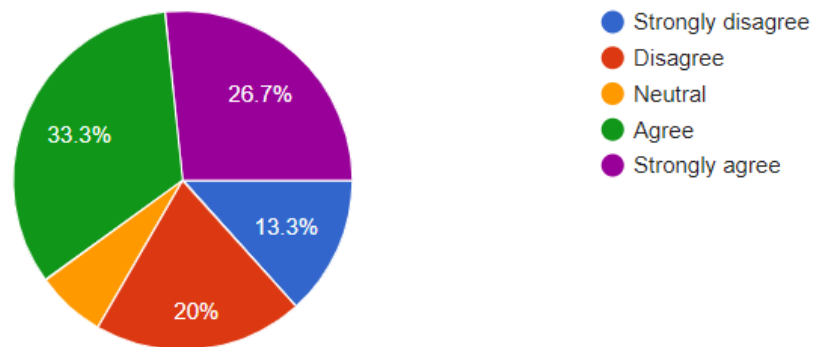
Do you think advanced technology and technical skills are required for using the VLE process effectively?

15 responses



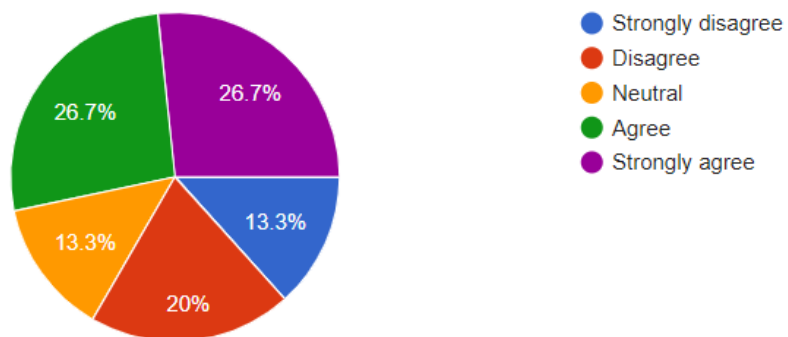
How far do you agree that VLE has enhanced your learning process?

15 responses



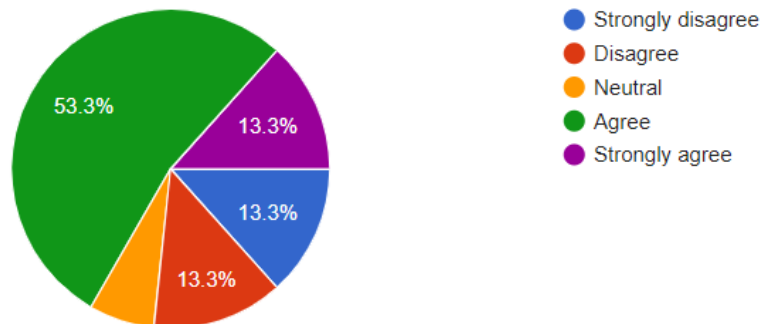
How far do you agree that the Moodle has supported you in your learning?

15 responses



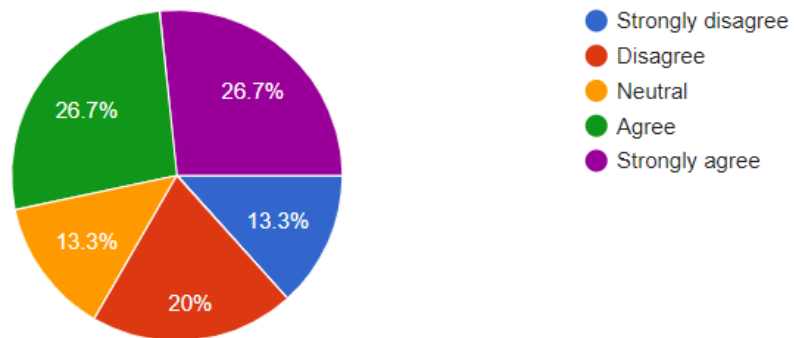
Do you agree that Moodle can be disruptive in the learning process sometimes?

15 responses



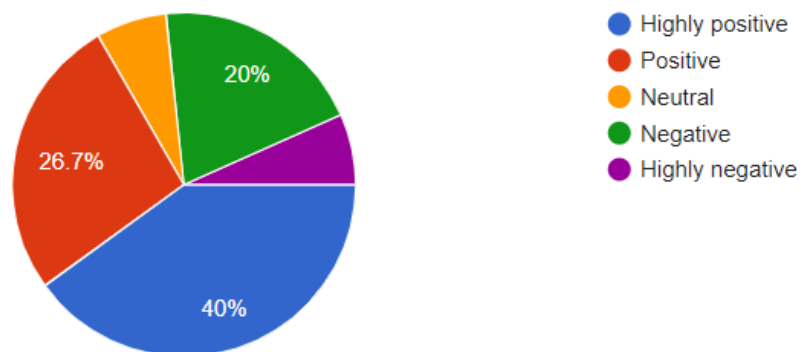
Moodle has increased the flexibility and accessibility of learning- agree or disagree?

15 responses



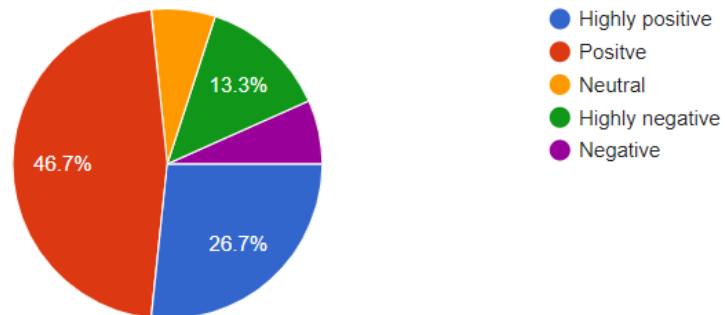
How positive are you about using the VLE- Moodle for enhancing your learning?

15 responses



What is your perception regarding the teaching process and gaining access to the learning materials?

15 responses



What is your perception regarding the communication and solving doubts using VLE-Moodle?

15 responses

