

University of Wales Trinity Saint David

Digital skills and research methods
(BMSW4003)

Academic research
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Introduction

On this research we will see the impact in the online learning environment and Moodle's on students at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, analysing primary data from a survey made by myself and contrast it with secondary data found online. We will also see different points of view from students and their preferences according to their personal circumstances.

Objective and background

The objective of my research is to analyse and evaluate the online learning environment impact and Moodle's on students learning experience.

The pandemic natural course has made individuals, business and institutions to adapt into a new living way, in this case, keeping the "social distance" and the use of face masks reducing the number of people that can meet indoors.

Schools and teaching institutions has been also affected by the pandemic, although is a priority keeping those places working, measures taken by the government has driven them to force online learning due to the circumstances.

Although online learning already existed, they have incorporated new options and ways to study, making it more accessible, organized and a bit more into self-teaching. There is no doubt that traditional teaching is the most accepted way to study and the forced online learning has probably made a lot of people arise about the pros or contras of this learning way.

At this point, the online blogs lectures, published articles and social media, has made me know that there is different kind of opinions, although everything is always referred to two things: online learning or face-to-face.

Anbarci and Hernando-Veciana (2020) in their article based in a published study in "The Guardian" journal, says that academics normally will have difficulties to keep attention on online recorded lectures due to the interactive lack. From the study we can see how people is used to the traditional way to study.

On the other side, the “digital population” that can be the new generation or the simple adaptation of people to the new technologies, have a different point of view. For example, an article published on Oxford Royale Academy in 2020, shows us the online learning benefits:

- Study anytime in the year
- Study anywhere
- Less distractions
- More flexibility

While the disadvantages are:

- Less interactions between people
- Find self-motivation could be difficult
- Different teaching ways or assignments

Of course, the decisions and opinions will always depend on the personal circumstances.

Survey

This is the survey developed by me for research and study.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1. What is your sex? *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Female b. Male c. Prefer not to say | <p>b. Smartphone</p> |
| <p>2. What is your age range? *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. 18 - 24 b. 25 - 30 c. 31+ | <p>6. Did you had to buy it? *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Yes b. No |
| <p>3. Do you have kids? *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Yes b. No | <p>7. How are the resources provided by the university on Moodle? *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Insufficient b. Enough |
| <p>4. Which mode of study do you prefer? *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Online b. Face-to-face | <p>8. Was it easy find your timetable? *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Yes b. No |
| <p>5. Which device do you use for the university? *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Computer | <p>9. Was it easy find your schedules? *</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Yes b. No |

10. Was it easy find any other relevant information on Moodle? *
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
11. Did you had any problems using Moodle? *
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
12. How are your feelings to Moodle? *
 - a. Dissatisfied
 - b. Little dissatisfied
 - c. Fine
 - d. Satisfied
 - e. Very satisfied
13. Are you aware about the possibilities that Microsoft teams has? *
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
14. Online learning has been forced due to the pandemic, how was adapting? *
 - a. Easy
 - b. Fine
 - c. Difficult
15. To finish, what are your thoughts about online learning experience? *
 - a. Frustrating
 - b. Boring
 - c. Impartial
 - d. Interesting
 - e. Convenient
 - f. Other
16. Please share your thoughts if you selected "other" on question

Method

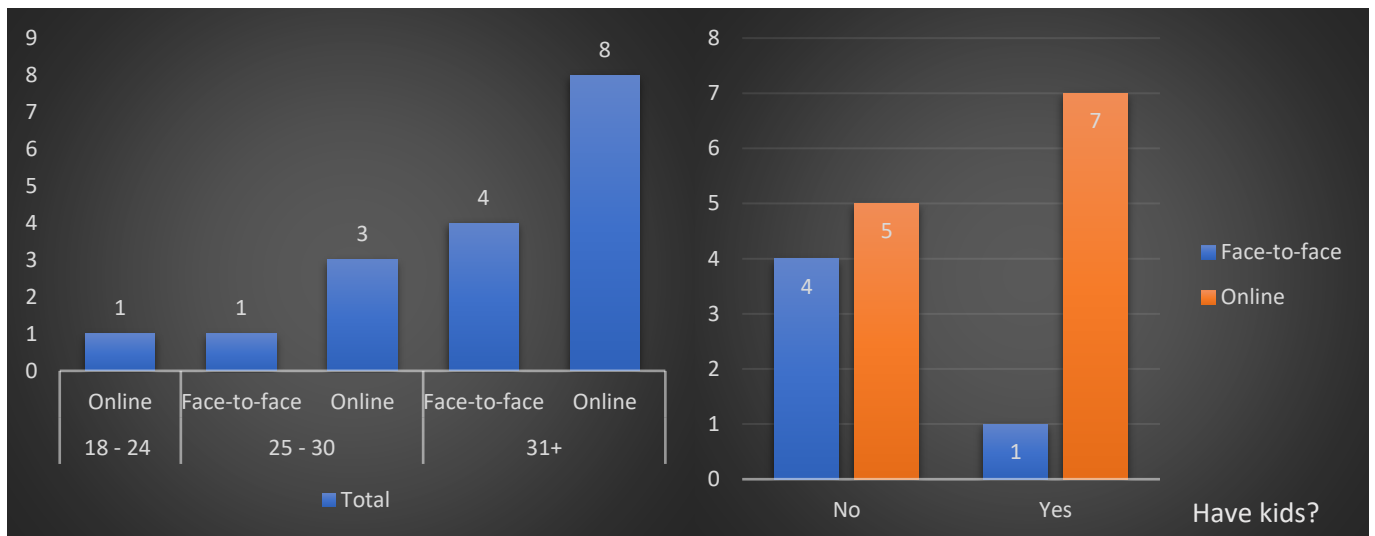
Using the provided university resources and the learned during this term, I made a survey using Microsoft Forms, to see the impact that the online learning environment has in students and if this is linked to their decisions or personal circumstances.

The survey is made with closed questions, some of them are just for classification, others to know their choices and if those choices help the impact on the virtual learning environment.

Results

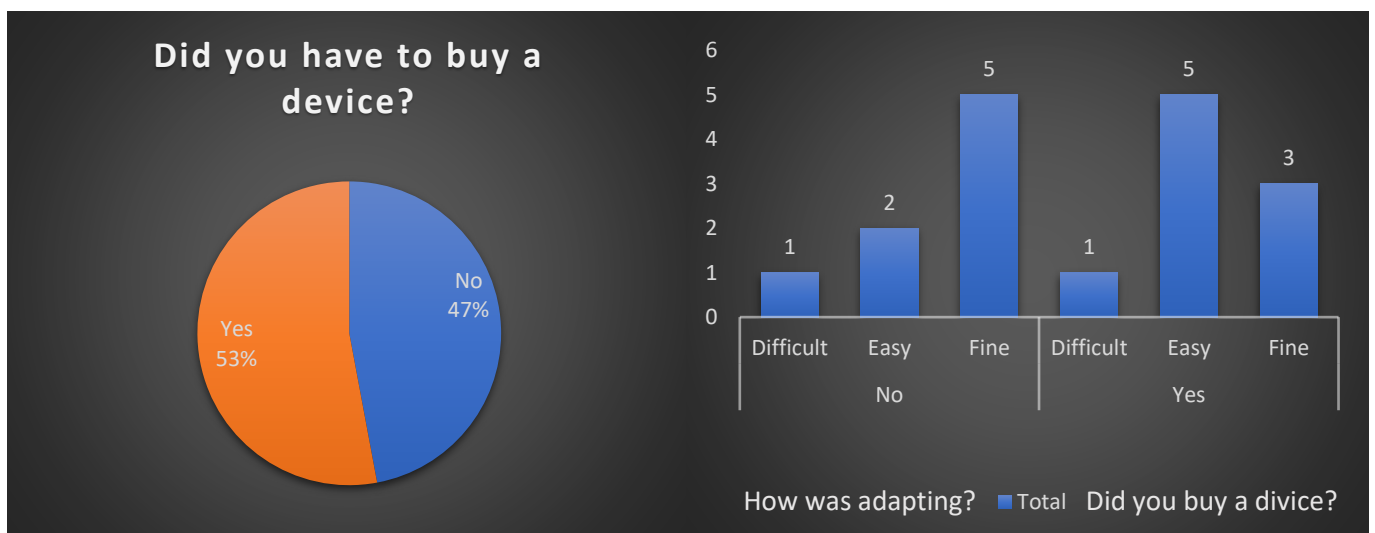
I received 17 answers in total, although I would have liked more answers but due to confidentiality, I could not access to other students details and I had to focus just on my class.

What is your sex?	What is your age range?	Do you have kids?	Which mode of study do you prefer?	Which device do you use for the university?	Did you had to buy it?	How are the resources provided by the university on Moodle?	Was it easy find your timetable?
Female	31+	No	Online	Computer	No	Enough	Yes
Male	25 - 30	Yes	Online	Computer	No	Enough	Yes
Female	31+	Yes	Online	Computer	Yes	Enough	Yes
Male	18 - 24	No	Online	Smartphone	No	Enough	Yes
Female	31+	Yes	Face-to-face	Computer	Yes	Enough	Yes
Female	31+	No	Face-to-face	Computer	No	Enough	Yes
Male	31+	No	Face-to-face	Computer	Yes	Enough	No
Male	25 - 30	No	Face-to-face	Computer	No	Insufficient	No
Female	31+	Yes	Online	Computer	Yes	Insufficient	No
Male	31+	No	Online	Computer	No	Enough	Yes
Male	31+	Yes	Online	Computer	Yes	Enough	Yes
Female	31+	Yes	Online	Smartphone	No	Enough	Yes
Female	25 - 30	No	Online	Computer	Yes	Enough	Yes
Male	25 - 30	Yes	Online	Computer	No	Enough	Yes
Male	31+	No	Online	Computer	Yes	Enough	Yes
Male	31+	No	Face-to-face	Computer	Yes	Enough	Yes
Male	31+	Yes	Online	Computer	Yes	Enough	Yes
Was it easy find your schedules?	Was it easy find any other relevant information on Moodle?	Did you had any problems using Moodle?	How are your feelings to Moodle?	Are you aware about the possibilities that Microsoft teams has?	Online learning has been forced due to the pandemic, how was adapting?	To finish, what are your thoughts about online learning experience?	
Yes	Yes	No	Fine	Yes	Fine	Impartial	
Yes	Yes	No	Fine	Yes	Fine	Convenient	
Yes	Yes	Yes	Very satisfied	Yes	Easy	Convenient	
Yes	Yes	Yes	Satisfied	Yes	Fine	Boring	
Yes	Yes	No	Satisfied	Yes	Easy	Interesting	
No	No	Yes	Fine	No	Fine	Impartial	
No	No	No	Little dissatisfied	Yes	Easy	Interesting	
Yes	No	Yes	Little dissatisfied	No	Difficult	Boring	
No	No	No	Satisfied	No	Difficult	Convenient	
Yes	Yes	No	Satisfied	Yes	Easy	Convenient	
Yes	Yes	No	Fine	Yes	Fine	Convenient	
Yes	Yes	No	Satisfied	Yes	Fine	Interesting	
Yes	Yes	No	Very satisfied	Yes	Fine	Interesting	
Yes	Yes	No	Satisfied	Yes	Easy	Boring	
Yes	Yes	No	Satisfied	Yes	Fine	Convenient	
Yes	Yes	Yes	Fine	Yes	Easy	Impartial	
Yes	Yes	No	Satisfied	Yes	Easy	Interesting	

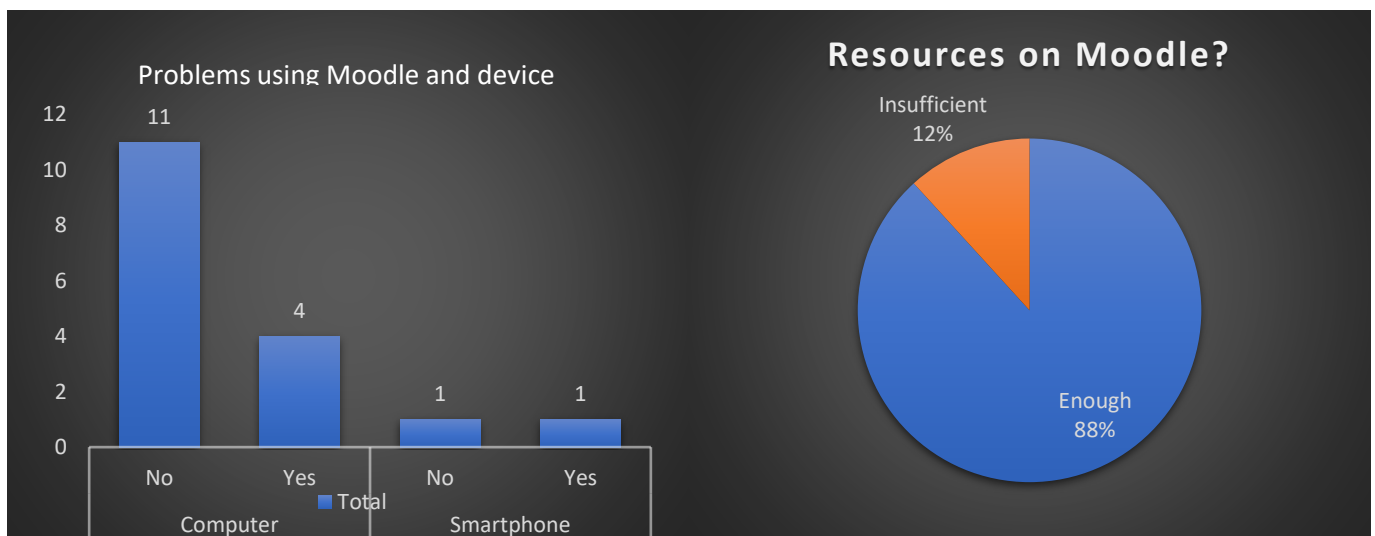


Analysing the graphics, study suggests that regardless the age, people prefer online learning instead of the traditional mode. Also, candidates without kids are between online and face-to-face, almost 50-50 %; on the other side, students with kids definitely prefer online mode.

Although, online learning is being forced, candidates still prefer online learning regardless age or family condition. Online classes should not have a big impact on them as it is already the majority choice.

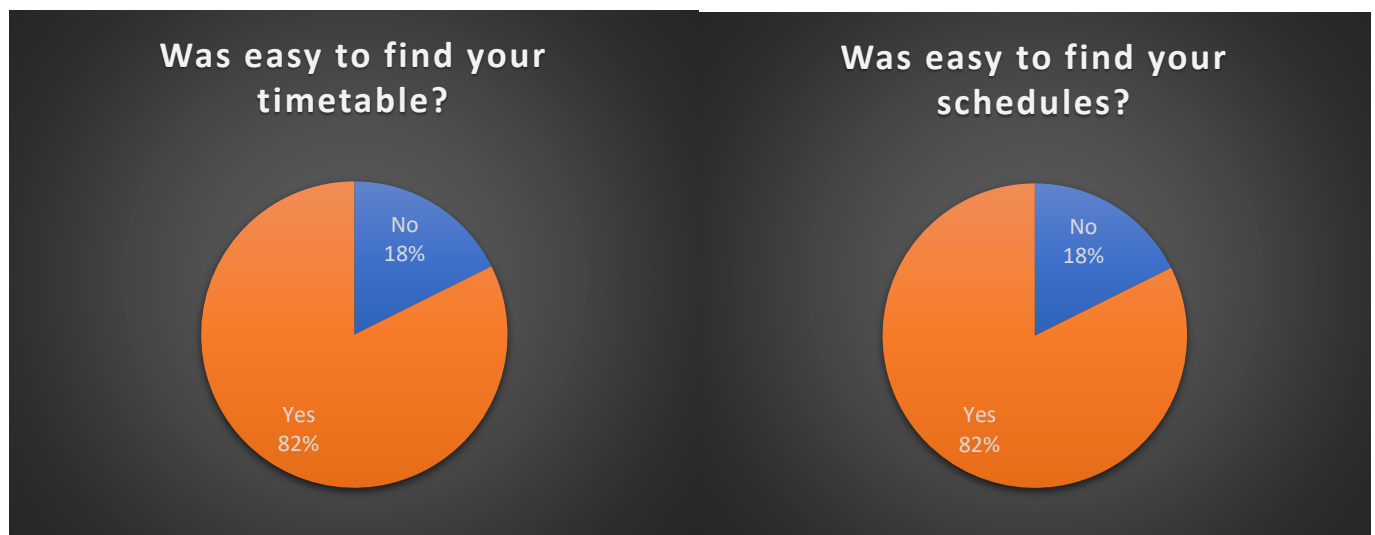


Almost half of the total candidates did buy a computer or laptop just for the university, and the right graphic is showing that this did not had an impact on them. Only 1 person that bought a device had problems adapting to the course.



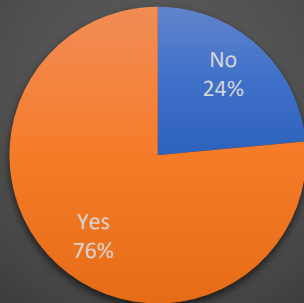
On this section we can see that Moodle is well designed to work either in computer format or smartphone. Although they had more problems using it on computer it should be the lack of personal training, I should add an open question next time to find it out.

Almost the same situation with the next graphic, 12% candidates says the resources are insufficient. I been trying to familiarise myself with Moodle and moved all around, all the relevant information relating the course, financial support and extra information is there. They should have missed something to give a insufficient rating.

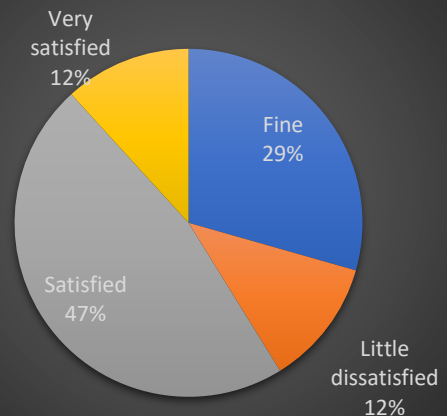


Students match the results in these two graphics, 82% found easy to look for their time table and schedules, this was also trained at the induction, so the 18% should have missed it.

Was it easy to find any relevant information?



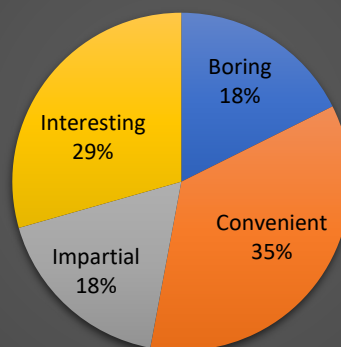
Feelings about Moodle?



Same thoughts as the previous graphics this left hand side.

Overall Moodle reception looks good for the students but they have mixed feelings on this, with only 12% little dissatisfied. An open question should help here to find out the reason.

Final thoughts on the course



Students have mixed feelings regarding the course with an 18% thinking is boring. It should be because they already have some knowledge of the viewed in class. But again an open question should be the best choice here to find it out.

The majority says is convenient and I share this though.

Conclusion

My conclusion from my survey results is that at least in my class, they are having a good experience overall regarding the virtual learning environment and Moodle, only some of them having issues, I believe it should be with external circumstances and nothing to do with the course itself or the VLE.

Although online learning is being forced, they still choose online learning. The impact is be balanced for good as it is their personal choose as well.

As contrast, Shen; Cho; Tsai and Marra, in their study (2013) says that sex, number of courses, and their student position could predict self-efficacy. This skill can explain learning satisfaction and is also important to successful online learning.

Most of my classmates/candidates are working as manager or any other similar roles therefore they should have developed self-efficacy, and that could be the reason to make them feel comfortable with the course.

Personal opinion

Back in time, I had a difficult childhood coming from a separated family. Was difficult to get support during my studies and they did not help with it. I was lost during my teenager time and I failed completing college which is necessary to apply for most jobs in Spain. The difficulty to get a job without studies was real, you even need it to get in the army. After so many attempts, I finally decided that I must at least complete the minimum studies.

I enrolled in a national online course, where we must know all topics from college and after some time, make an exam and finally get the certificate of minimum studies.

I had only 3 months to study all kind of topics, from history to maths. Was a really hard time.

Since that experience I am always aiming to get online studies. I learned to understand, study, summarise and get relevant information. Even that it was a really hard time for me because I did not had time for anything, was a really positive experience because most important than anything I understood myself and find the best way of study for me. I been always thinking that I

was not made to study like my classmates during college, but my reality was that way of teaching was boring for me because of the slowness.

Online learning is for me the best way after teenager years, you can find all the information online, help from different sources or online learners as well, is convenient depending on your personal circumstances and could make your life more flexible, studying even when you cannot sleep at night.

References

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