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**COURSE TITLE: DIGITAL SKILLS AND RESEARCH
METHODS**

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TERM 2

**TOPIC: THE IMPACT OF VIRTUAL LEARNING
ENVIRONMENT (VLE) ON THE LEARNING
EXPERIENCE OF THE STUDENTS AT
UWTSD London Campus**

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Introduction

Breaking away from traditional learning methods has become very imperative as we move into the third decade of the twenty-first century. With the giant strides technology has attained in the last century, it has become necessary for methods of doing things to evolve and ways of teaching and learning have therefore changed drastically. A very conspicuous method of learning that has evolved in the last few years is the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) or Virtual Learning Classroom (VLC). It has been made a visible impact on teaching worldwide because of the Covid-19 pandemic. VLEs are now common in many higher institutions of learning. It is an environment for teaching and learning where teachers and students communicate, discuss, and view presentations, they are also able to work in groups and all in an online context. With virtual learning, the school authorities can carry out the oversight functions on the students such as, taking attendance and also conducting and managing assessments given to students online. Most organisations now allow their workforce to work from home, they also hold online meetings and briefings among staff. VLEs give room for video conferencing which allows many people to be linked up at the same time with the aid of internet facilities.

There are many types of virtual learning tools, one of such is Moodle being used by the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD). Moodle is an integrated tool that is all-encompassing and is accessed with the aid of Microsoft Teams. All information about the school programmes can be accessed here, it is used by both teachers and students. There, you can interact with the school's administration, library, and IT.

Rational

The aim behind this research is to determine the impact of a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) on the learning experiences of students at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) London campus. The method of research was the use of questionnaires which included some closed and open questions alongside ranked questions. A sample of 15 people was used. Finding out the advantages and disadvantages of this mode of learning is very important because it is a nascent model of teaching to a large proportion of the students. Though the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic and the ensuing lockdown expedited the introduction of VLEs into the academic system, the authorities made a good effort to ensure the transition from more traditional learning methods went smoothly.

Research Objective

The objective of this research is to explore the problems being faced by students using VLEs, and also to look at its positive impact. It is expected that I would come up with some recommendations aimed at making the virtual learning environment better.

Literature Review

VLEs allow students and teachers to connect online where both teaching and monitoring can take place. It makes it possible for students and teachers to operate outside the conventional classroom setting and still be able to achieve the same purpose. Virtual learning is now attractive with its inherent room for flexible avenues to teaching and learning at any time and anywhere. The advent

of the internet has helped in facilitating virtual learning and several researchers and schools are towing the way of online research even with the inadequacy of equipment.

In a study about using e-learning platforms (Moodle) in University teaching processes Oproiu looked at how e-learning platforms are being used to teach in the university environment (Oproiu, 2015). It used a questionnaire shared among a group of students from the University Politechnica of Bucharest to find how Moodle can help students to be motivated and improve their learning activities in a virtual environment. The study concluded that the virtual learning environment is one of the modern teaching strategies.

A write-up by Van Raaij and Schepers mentioned that the impact of a virtual learning environment is a function of how well students embrace and apply it in their studies. They looked at the disparity between various students and their level of acceptance and use of the VLE.

They posited that VLEs are the main tool for teaching and communication in many schools and a wide range of sectors these days. The survey they carried out looked at the impact of the use of Moodle on the students' learning to see if it facilitated the development of independent learning as well as motivating students to learn. They found that the use of Moodle led to improved learning and motivation of the students.

All the works mentioned in the literature review viewed the impact of virtual learning environments on both teachers and students which is in the same vein as my research. In all the studies mentioned, the advantages of VLEs were very glaring and far outweighed its negative impacts and it could also be seen from mine that the respondents pointed out the advantages of the virtual learning environment in the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

Background

VLEs have been in application over time but it had never been so widely used until 2020 with the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic and the attendant lockdown that followed it worldwide, which affected every industry and economy all over the world. Most countries shot down their economies for upward of five months and above which negatively impacted the aviation industry, the oil industry, the educational sector, the tourism industry, and a host of other industries. It is as a result of these impacts that we are now undertaking our studies through virtual learning.

Our academic session started in June 2020 and we are currently in the second term of the three-term session. Our virtual learning initially was very difficult to access and the majority of the students found it hard to adapt and follow the lectures because they had a deficiency in the use of computers.

For the purpose of this research, the population will be the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, the sample frame will be the London campus of the university, while the sample is among my course mates.

Research Methodology

This refers to the process that a researcher conducts his research making sure to get results that are valid and reliable. How the results are arrived at will be stated and the data collected through the use of questionnaires and the data analysis used will be shown.

Qualitative and Quantitative Data:

Qualitative data mainly always reflects in words and description of thoughts and concepts.

Quantitative data is always put forward in numbers and to get specific facts of a topic at hand. (Base and research, 2021)

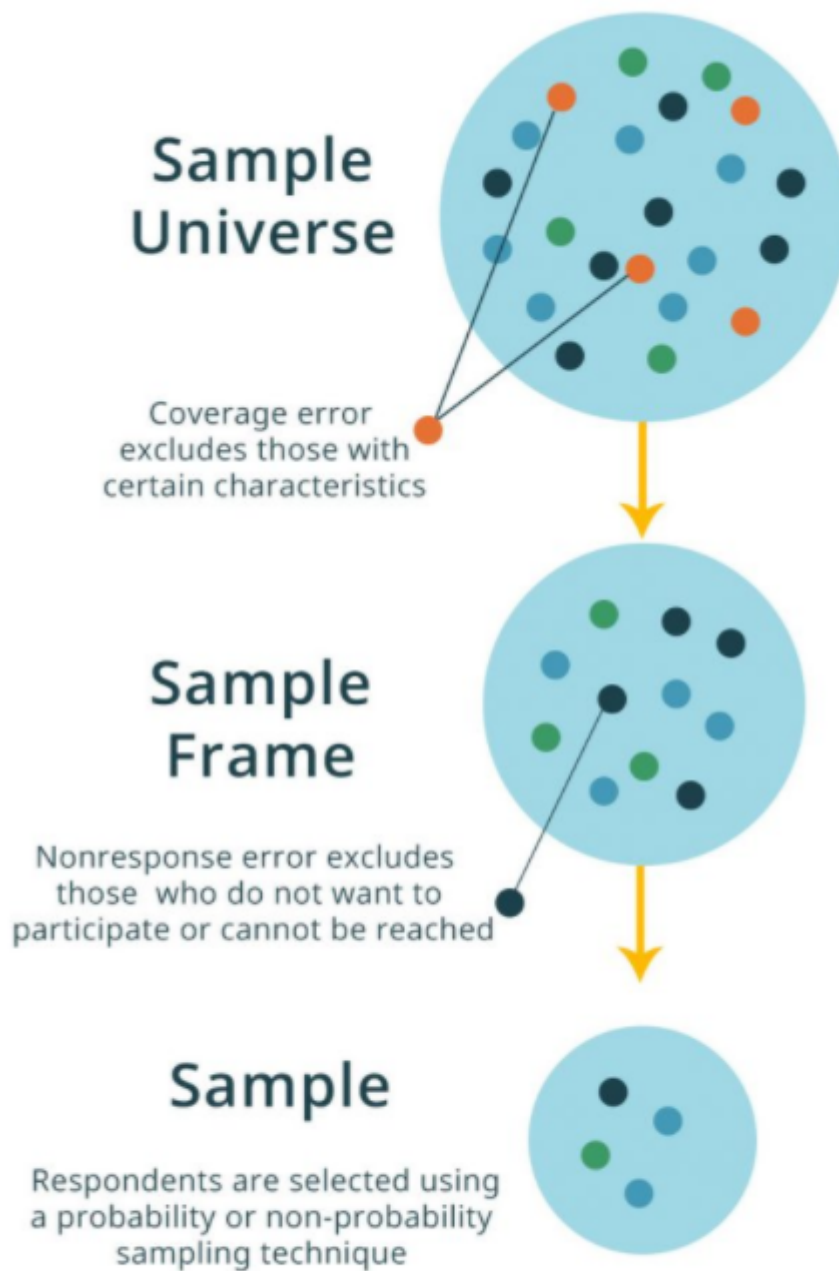
Primary data: When the researcher comes up with particular data for the first time it is referred to as primary data.

1. In other words, it is data the researcher gets directly by observing the sample.
2. It is seen to be independent.
3. It is suitable if it was collected clearly and concisely.
4. It is more trusted than secondary data.
5. Primary data can be used with all certainty because one is sure of its source.
6. It is very expensive and takes a lot of money, time, and energy.

Secondary data: This is data that is already in existence which the researcher wants to use. Such data is collected by another person and has been published or used before.

Attributes of Secondary data:

1. One has to use them with caution.
2. It is cheaper to get.
3. As the name implies, it depends on primary data.
4. Its certainty is not as reliable as primary data is.
5. Secondary data could be at variance with the aim of the research.



Sampling Error

Population, Sampling Frame, Sample Size

(MacKinnon, 2020)

Population, Sampling Frame and Sample

Population: The population refers to the larger group that the research is focused on. In this particular research, the population is the entire student population of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD).

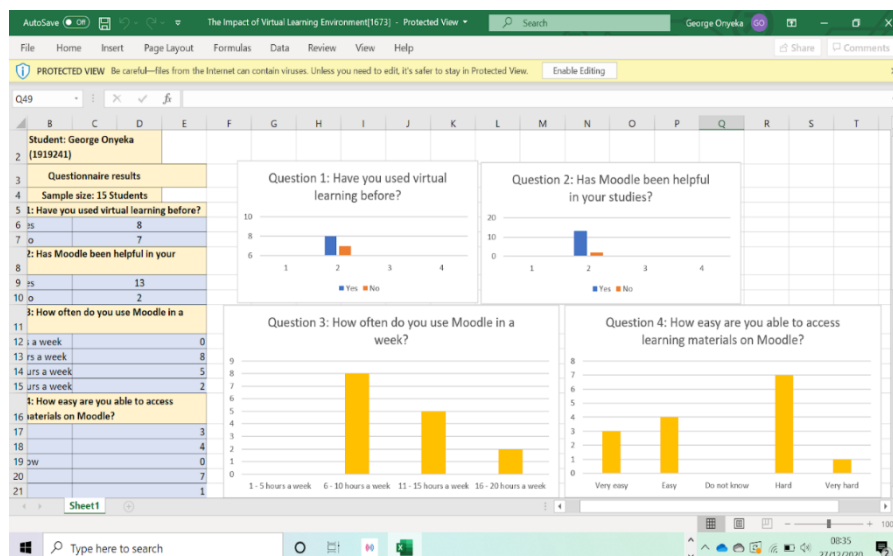
Sampling frame: This refers to the close population from within which the sample is taken. In this research work, the sampling frame is the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, (UWTSD) London campus.

Sample: This refers to the restricted number of people who are actually used for the research. In this research, the sample is the members of group 1 of the Health and social care course students of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) London campus.

Ethics in data collection:

The people involved in this survey are aware of this research and gave their consent. I processed the data collected, lawfully and transparently purposely for this research making sure no harm is done to the participants and protecting their anonymity and confidentiality. I did not in any way tamper or inflate the result of the data collection. I sought and got permission from the people involved in the survey and assured them that the data collected by me is only for research purposes and for no other purposes. The work is my original work and not stolen work. It is done with the full authority of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (UWTSD) and it involves my course mates.

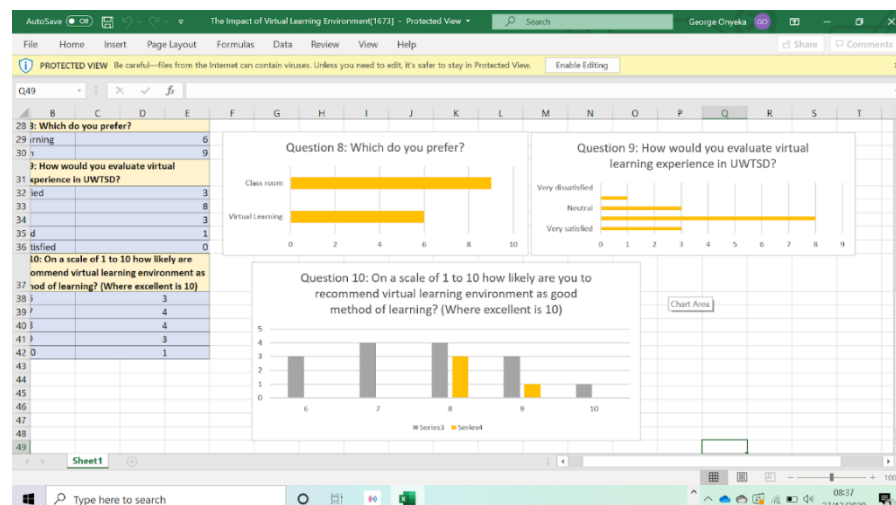
Appendix 1



Research Findings

1. From the result of the survey, it was observed that about 53.3% (8 out of 15) were already familiar with virtual learning, while 46.6% (7 out of 15) had never used virtual learning. Since more than half of the students were familiar with virtual learning all the school authority could do is to make the knowledge of virtual learning one of the conditions for admission in future.
2. 86% of participants stated that Moodle had been helpful for their learning. With such a large percentage finding Moodle very helpful, it is therefore evident that Moodle is a very effective tool for the studies of students.
3. 53.3% spent about 6 to 10 hours on Moodle each week, while a further 33.3% spent 11 to 15 hours and 13.3% spent 16 to 20 hours on Moodle each week. From the above it is clear that all the students devoted time on Moodle though with varying times devoted. It shows that they are all comfortable with Moodle.
4. About 46% of participants thought that accessing learning materials on Moodle was easy (3 very easy and 4 easy). However, 46.6% stated that it was hard while 6% thought that it was very hard to access learning materials on Moodle. From these responses, I can see that the school authorities need to find a way to make Moodle easier for students to access.

Appendix 2



1. Most of the learners had had technical problems with virtual learning, however, some learners found virtual learning easy to access. Overall, most of the learners thought that induction on how to use virtual learning before the resumption of full lectures will be beneficial to them.

Conclusion

Studying online makes it possible for people to stay in different places and be able to communicate and share and learn things of common interest with the aid of digital technology. This mode of learning is gaining more ground with most institutions of higher education and the method is being combined with conventional classroom learning and teaching. There has been much research carried out intending to find out which among classroom teaching and online teaching makes a better impact on students.

The advent of the covid-19 pandemic created a significant amount of panic and confusion all over the world and has subsequently led to new ways and reshaping of how things are done. Virtual learning environment (VLE) is one of the many new trends that has been accepted by both schools and offices to carry out either schoolwork or office schedule at home. The virtual learning environment (VLE) has helped in making life move on by creating the enabling environment for academic activities and office work and meetings to be conducted.

From the above research, it could be deduced that studying online makes it possible for people to stay in different places and be able to communicate and share and learn things of common interest with the aid of digital technology. This mode of learning is gaining more ground with most institutions of higher education and the method is being combined with conventional classroom learning and teaching.

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APPENDIX 3

In-Class exercise: Questionnaire Design

Student Name: George Onyeka Student ID: 1919241

Module Name: Digital Skills and Research Methods BMSW4003 (p85c) Term 2 Group: 1

Aim: This exercise is aimed to help you in your questionnaire design. Please note, you need to use this questionnaire to conduct a survey which is also one of the important parts of your research report.

Please write down your questions that you are going to use in your primary data collection. Try to have different types of questions such as close-ended question, open ended question, multiple choice question, Likert-scale question.

Question 1: Have you used virtual learning before?

Yes No

Question 2: Has Moodle been helpful in your studies?

Yes No

Question 3: How often do you use Moodle in a week?

1 – 5 hours per week 6 – 10 hours per week

11 – 15 hours per week 16 – 20 hours per week

Question 4: How easy are you able to access learning materials on Moodle?

A) Very easy B) Easy C) Do not know D) Very Hard E) Hard

Question 5: What difficulties are you having with virtual learning?

.....

Question 6: Is virtual learning easy to access?

A) Strongly agree B) Agree, C) Neutral D) Disagree, E) Strongly disagree

Question 7: What could you suggest to make virtual learning better?

.....

Question 8: Which do you prefer? A) Virtual learning B) Classroom.

Question 9: How would you evaluate your Virtual Learning experience in UWTSO? A) Very satisfied, B) Satisfied, C) Neutral, D) Dissatisfied and E) Very dissatisfied

Question 10: On a scale of 1 to 10 how likely are you to recommend virtual learning environment as a good method of learning? (where 10 is excellent)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Further questions, please list your questions below.

APPENDIX 4



The Impact of Virtual Learning Environment (Moodle) on the learning experience of the students at UWTSO London Campus

Student: George Onyeka (1919241)

Questionnaire results

Sample size: 15 Students

Question 1: Have you used virtual learning before?

Yes 8
No 7

Question 2: Has Moodle been helpful in your studies?

Yes 13
No 2

Question 3: How often do you use Moodle in a week?

1 – 5 hours a week 0
6 – 10 hours a week 8
11 – 15 hours a week 5
16 – 20 hours a week 2

Question 4: How easy are you able to access learning materials on Moodle?

Very easy 3
Easy 4
Do not know 0
Hard 7
Very hard 1

Question 5: What difficulties are you having with virtual learning?

Most students are having technical problems, while a few find no difficulties at all.

Question 6: Is virtual learning easy to access?

Most of the students found virtual learning easy to access while a few disagreed.

Question 7: What could you suggest to make virtual learning better?

Most students want an induction on how to use virtual learning while a few had no suggestion at all.

Question 8: Which do you prefer?

Virtual Learning 6
Class room 9

Question 9: How would you evaluate virtual learning experience in UWTSO?

Very satisfied 3
Satisfied 8
Neutral 3
Dissatisfied 1
Very dissatisfied 0

Question 10: On a scale of 1 to 10 how likely are you to recommend virtual learning environment as good method of learning? (Where excellent is 10)

6 3
7 4
8 4
9 3
10 1

