

DIGITAL SKILLS AND RESEARCH METHODS

The impact of Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) in the University of
Wales Trinity Saint David

STUDENT NAME	ANAMARIA RICEA
STUDDENT ID	1910022
LECTURER NAME	KOUSHIK MODAK
UNIVERSITY NAME	UNIVERSITY OF WALES TRINITY SAINT DAVID
MODULE CODE	BMSW4003_LON

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THE IMPACT OF VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT (VLE) IN THE UNIVERSITY OF WALES TRINITY SAINT DAVID

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Introduction

Nowadays, the educational system is in constant development, partially because of the virtual learning environment (VLE). The impacts can be either positive or negative. According to Secker (2004), the traditional method to research and teaching has been changed with online platforms increasing the amount of the electronic resources available outside the library. Today the virtual learning environment (VLE) is a fundamental part of any educational system because it is available and affordable for everyone (McAvinia, 2016).

Statement of the problem

The study aims to determine the negative and positive impact of the virtual learning environment (VLE) in the University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

Significance of the study

Two primary groups may benefit from this research study. The first group can be considered the lecturers and all the employees from all the educational systems. They may identify approaches that the virtual learning environment (VLE) can affect or improve their work performance. The secondary group that may benefit from this study are the students who can achieve new levels of learning, developing new skills like time management or communication. Finally, educators can apply the findings as a helpful guide to include in their educational program. By highlighting to students, the importance of developing digital skills, the students may be able to develop their hard and soft skills. Data for this research were collected through the springtime of 2020.

Review of related literature

According to O'Neil, Fisher and Newbold (2009), an online learning environment reduces time and allows learning anywhere; moreover, the quantity and quality of processed data are significant. The authors explain how the virtual learning environment replaces the traditional way to learn and helps to increase productivity at any educational level. The virtual learning environment supports the system to include new methods of learning, as distance-learning or less paperwork. Developing the digital skills needed encourages contact between students and develop good relationships between the schools (O'Neil, Fisher and Newbold, 2009).

McAvinia (2016) works at the Dublin Institutes of Technology. McAvinia (2016) focus on different studies which have various theories regarding the virtual learning environment (VLE).

Therefore, the author trying to show how online platforms change behaviours in organizations and how, in the beginning, Moodle was seen as a non-pedagogical source. The Virtual Learning Environment is regularly password-protected, is accessible off or on institutional campuses and can facilitate online access to class materials, lecture notes, and library resources.

Darlene (2015) develop and delivered virtual training programs for various audiences and published numerous articles about e-learning. The author analyses the traditional method and the virtual system of learning. However, the purpose of the studies is to show how online education eliminates costs, for example, the traditional classrooms, and time. The virtual learning environment brings individuals and teams together, even if they are not present in the same place and at the same time. Darlene (2015) argue that VLE offers a wide range of features and functionality to support the organization to develop new strategies for learning.

Therefore, daily, universities and colleges include digital technologies into education and the learning process. Preceding, the authors relate the advantages and disadvantages of VLE. The virtual learning environment is the future of education, communication, and knowledge sharing. Moodle can be utilized either alternatively of face-to-face teaching or to supplement it. However, considering that in the last year's technology enhance significantly, the user changes their behaviour.

Methods of the study

Source of Data

The evidence and statistics for the study were congregated applying primary and secondary data. The primary data were collected utilizing a questionnaire developed by a student from the University of Trinity Saint David (Appendix 1). The survey was divided into two sections. The purpose of section one is to understand how the responders feel about the virtual learning environment and the positive and negative impacts. The second part of the questionnaire was designed as a demographic profile of the respondents.

The survey was executed using quantitative and qualitative investigation methods. According to Hogan, Delan and Donnelly (2009), qualitative research is focusing on the smaller samples, and quantitative research is directed on larger samples. Consequently, for the VLE research, the qualitative data is non-numerical and is formed by the students who responded, while the quantitative includes charts and statistical data from the study.

The secondary data is the collection of information from the authors with the same subject developed. According to Dadhe (2016), secondary data is the data that has been already collected by and readily available from other sources.

Sample Selection

The respondents included in the research were students from the University of Wales Trinity Saint Davis. The questionnaire was distributed within the University of Wales Trinity Saint Davis from Holborn Circus London for twenty students (20). The student responsible for distributing the survey to the members of the sample need to ensure confidentiality and self-addressed. The student was responsible for eliminating the duplication of the answers.

Limitation of the study

The research may be limited through the use of a questionnaire as a data collection tool. Because the questionnaire must regularly be short, areas that may have been affected by the virtual learning environment may not have been included in the survey. Additionally, the study may also be limited because the sample elected for completing the survey has a total of twenty individuals. Finally, the use of sample statistical techniques may include a factor of subjectivity in the interpretation and analysis of the data. All attempts have been made to reduce the impacts of these limitations on the research.

Ethics in data collection

Wood and Smith (2015) argue that in the ethical research process, the participants have the right to know about the scope of the research, and how the data generated will be managed or stored. Therefore, considering that the VLE study was conducted within the university campus, the researcher had to have permission from the school. Secondly, consent from the respondents. The data collected from the respondents will be utilised exclusively to determine the impacts of VLE. The research will be published within the University of Wales Trinity Saint David online platform.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

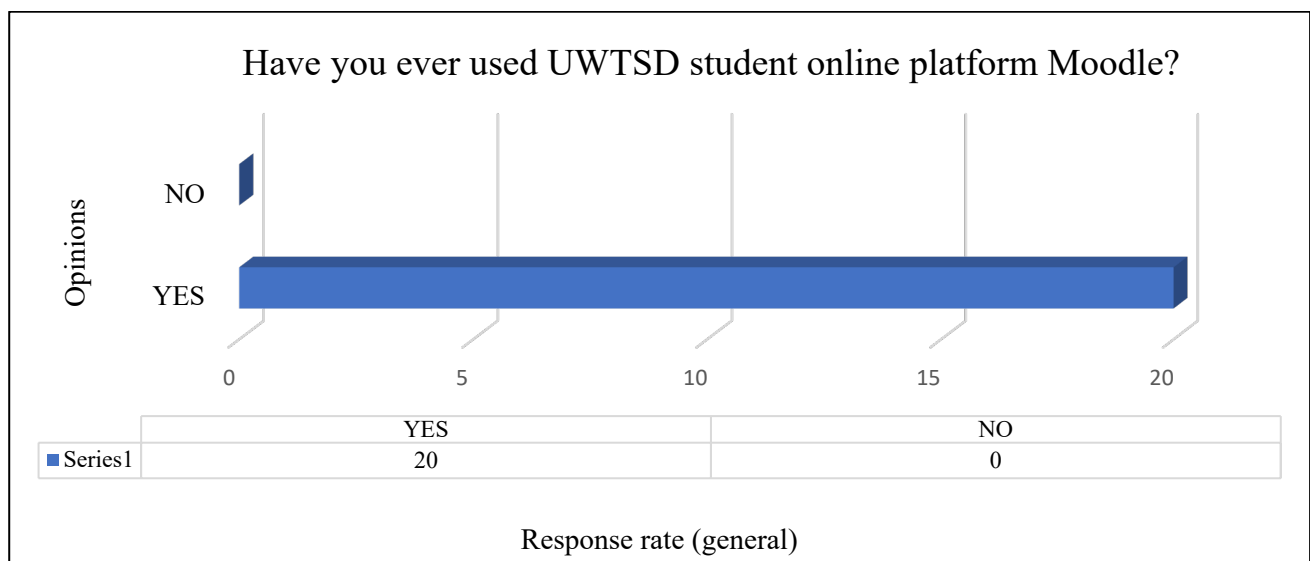
The investigation was designed to determine the impacts of the virtual learning environment. The researcher shared twenty questionnaires within the university campus. The answer rate was 100 per cent (Appendix 2). Thus, the following section includes the findings, conclusion and recommendations from the study.

Findings

The survey findings will be presented in two parts, and the researcher will interpret the answers. In the first section, the researcher will show the positive and negative aspects of the online learning platform Moodle. While in the second part will be present the demographic profile of the respondents. Lastly, the researcher will present a summary of the findings.

The positive and negative aspects

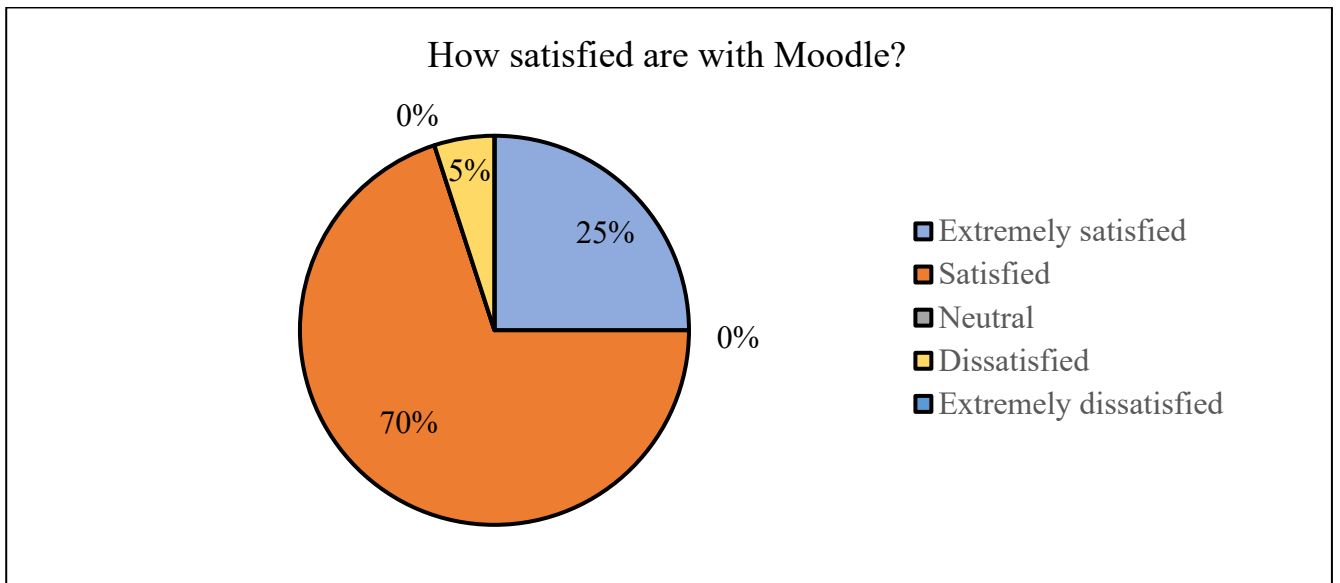
Figure 1: Q – A



Question A was presented to respondents with the purpose to check how many are utilising the online platform Moodle. The question had two options that the students could select.

The bar graph (Figure 1) shows the respondents rate for both options. However, a total of twenty students has chosen - yes. Therefore, the researcher will have the opportunity to determine the negative and positive impacts on the majority of students.

Figure 2: Q – B



Question B aim was to indicate how satisfied the students are using Moodle. The researcher provides a list of open-ended options, including extremely satisfied, satisfied, neutral, disappointed and extremely disappointed (Figure 2). The pie graph is showing the respondents rate for each choice. Following the answers, 25 per cent of the students chose extremely satisfied, 70 per cent satisfied and just 5 per cent disappointed.

However, the investigator examines farther in question C to analyse how often the students are using the online learning platform. The responders could select from the options base daily, weekly, monthly or never. Following the responses, 30 per cent chose daily, 65 per cent weekly and 5 per cent monthly (Figure 3).

Therefore, the percentage of students who do not use Moodle as regularly or they are disappointed is not high. However, the university requires to encourage and assist the students in using the platform more frequently.

Figure 3: Q - C

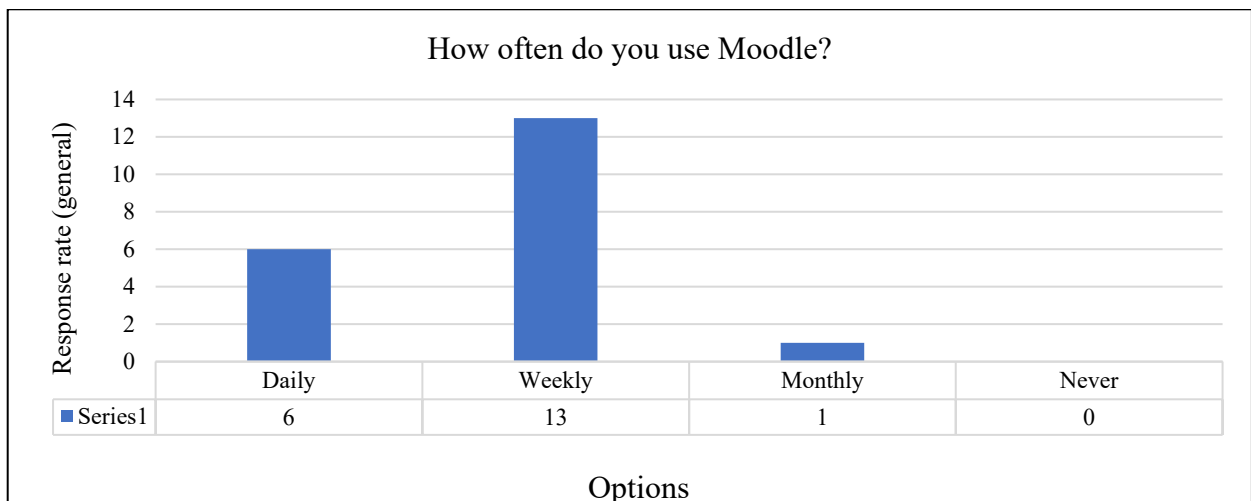
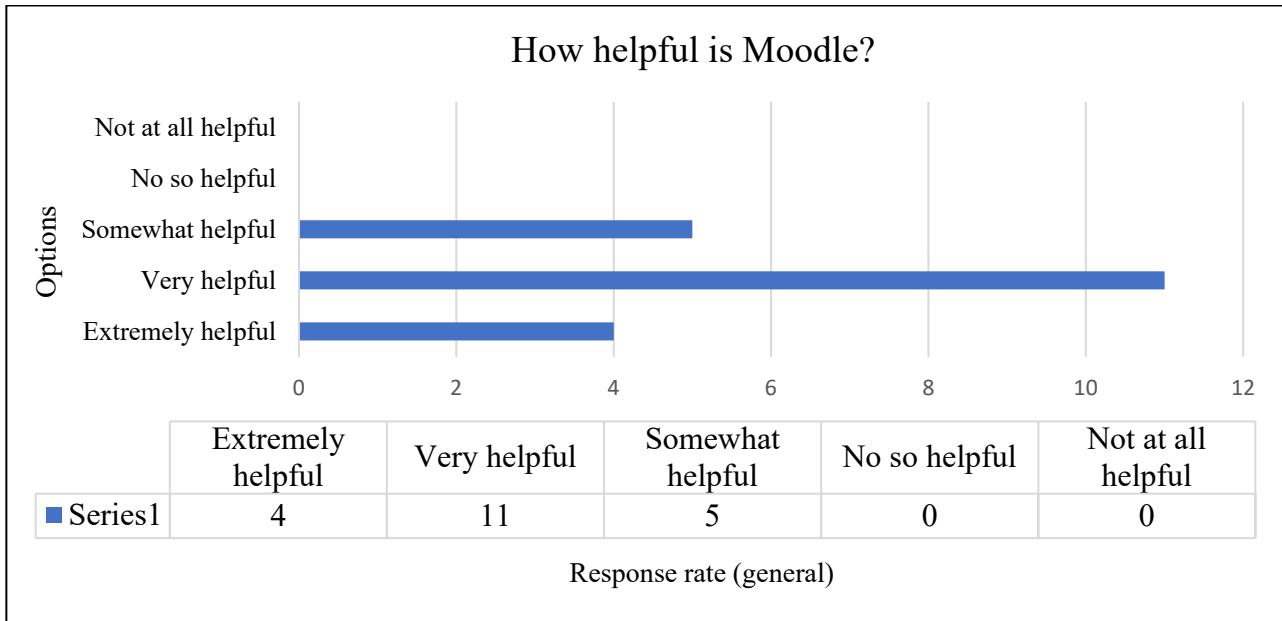


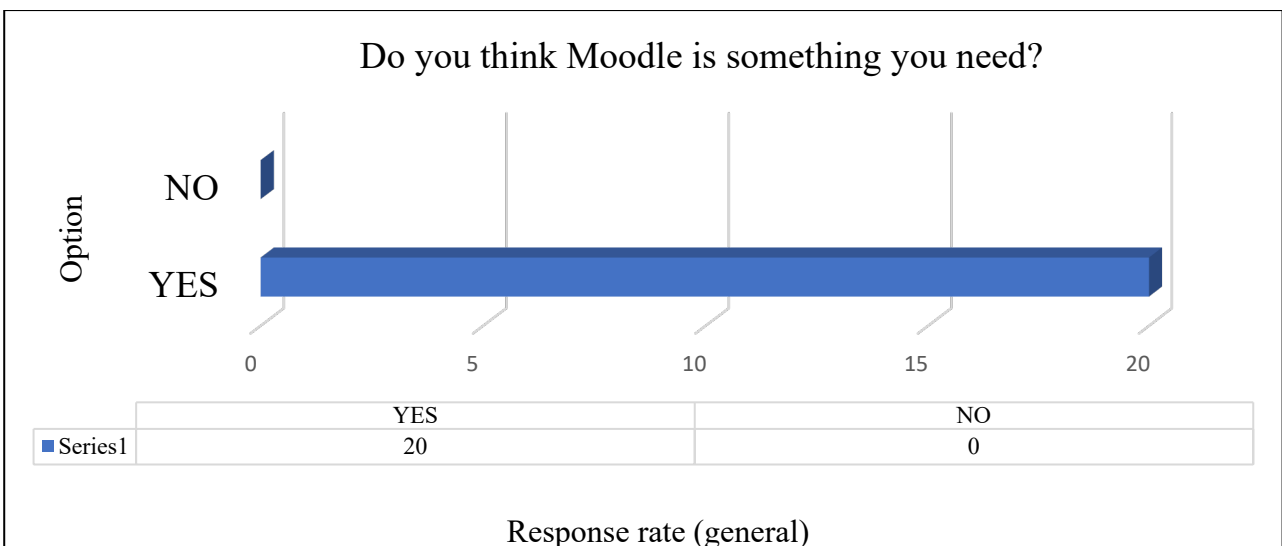
Figure 4: Q - D



Furthermore, to determine the impacts of VLE within the university, the researcher analyses question D. The purpose of the question is to understand how helpful and efficient Moodle for students is. The bar graph shows that out of twenty students, four answered extremely helpful, eleven replied that is very helpful, and five that is somewhat helpful (Figure 4). The possibilities - not so helpful and not at all helpful, were not taken into consideration

The next question (Q - E), from the survey, is related to question D. The researcher goes further and desires to determine if Moodle is something the students need. The respondents could choose from the close-ended question, whit the option base yes or no. The data collected from the inquiry reveals that twenty students answered yes (Figure 5). Therefore, considering the results from question D and E, the majority of students believe that Moodle is a valuable and beneficial platform in their educational experience.

Figure 5: Q -E



Thus, the following questions, F and G, were designed as open questions, where the responders could communicate their opinions about Moodle. They were asked what they prefer most regarding Moodle (Q - F), and what they want to improve (Q - G).

As a result, examining their answers from question F, the researcher understands that the students find Moodle (VLE) useful and concise. They like that it is off-campus meaning that they can study outside the lecturer hall. A small percentage find the online learning platform somewhat helpful; however, the pieces of information and platform accessibility are essential for their academic performance.

Furthermore, in question G, the responders listed the elements which they consider that can be improved about Moodle. The responders suggest that they need more information on each topic (course)—moreover, the application speed required to be fixed. Lastly, the students specify the app security and design are not enough and sometimes is challenging to use.

Demographic profile

In this section, the researcher purpose is to develop the responder's demographic profile to understand further how the VLE it impacts them. He composed two questions which will indicate their age group (Figure 6) and their academic quarter (semester) within the university (Figure 7).

The data analysis from question H includes - 5 per cent under age twenty, 75 per cent between twenty and twenty-nine, fifteen per cent between age thirty and thirty-nine and 5 per cent over forty. Moreover, in the open-ended question I, the majority of the students (80 per cent) selected from the option base the first term, and 20 per cent the second term.

Figure 6: Q – H

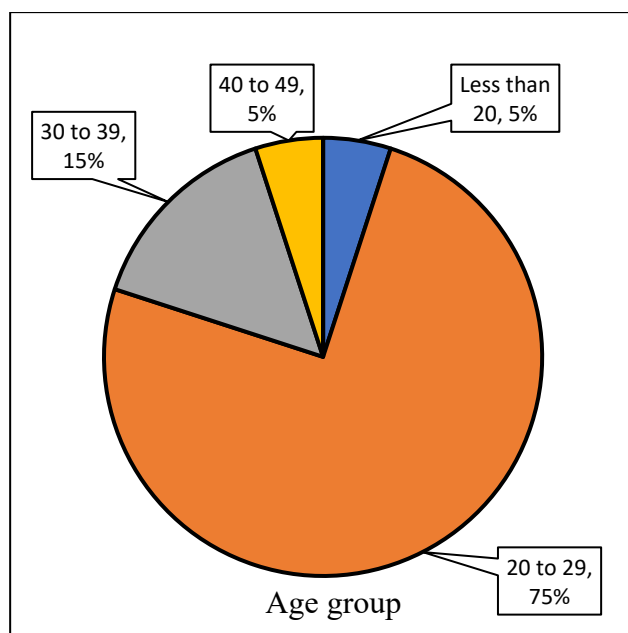
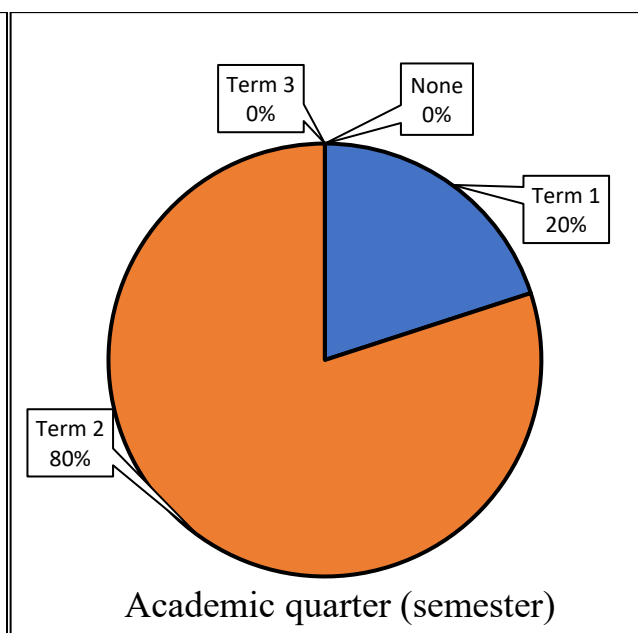


Figure 7: Q – I



Summary of the findings

The section presents a summary of the data collected above. Considering this, the researcher will analyse the results and give some recommendations for future research.

The research indicates that the students recognise the benefits and advantages of a virtual learning environment. The majority of the responders argue that Moodle is something they need in their educational experience.

A small percentage of the students claim that VLE is not necessary for them. The reasons can vary, they need to be encouraged to use it, it is challenging to utilise, or the app speed is not satisfying. Thus, the university must acknowledge the situation and find a new approach, considering that Moodle is a primary source for the students.

Therefore, the researcher had identified the negative and positive impacts of Moodle for the students at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. However, considering that the sample size was twenty students, the investigation needs to be taken further. The researcher recommends that for future research, the university should involve more students in the study. The next investigation should include online interviews or questionnaires. This method will save time, and the universities will get the results faster.

Conclusions

The conclusions of the study show that Moodle can influence the way we learn and develop new skills. The virtual learning environment opens up new opportunities and chances, which have great significance for the future of our information and learning society. The online learning platform still has some limitations and difficulty. However, the students have understood the importance of online learning and the utility of VLE.

Moreover, technologies evolve constantly, become more portable and less expensive, with a high level of functionality. Savage and Barnett (2017) argue that if the technology is used correctly can enhance learning to develop new abilities.

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APPENDIX 1



VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT- MOODLE AND STUDENT HWB EVALUATION QUESTIONNAIRE – Anamaria Ricea (1910022) BMSW 4003 – TERM 2

I would like to hear your thoughts regarding our student online platform (Moodle and Student Hwb). I value your feedback so much and I will like to thank you for completing this survey. Please take your time to complete the questionnaire by ticking your answers.

A. Have you ever used UWTSD student online platform Moodle? (Select one)



(Yes)



(No)

B. How satisfied are with Moodle? (Select one)

1 - extremely satisfied

2 - satisfied

3 - neutral

4 - dissatisfied

5 - extremely dissatisfied

C. How often do you use Moodle? (Select one)

1 - daily

2 - weekly

3 - monthly

4 - never

D. How helpful is Moodle? (Select one)

1 - extremely helpful

2 - very helpful

3 - somewhat helpful

4 - not so helpful

5 - not at all helpful

E. Do you think Moodle is something you need? (Select one)



(Yes)



(No)

F. In your own words, what are the things that you like the most about Moodle?

G. In your own words, what are the things that you would most like to improve in Moodle?

Note: Question H and I are included in this questionnaire as a means of developing a demographic profile of our respondents.

H. Please select your age group. (Select one)

1 - Less than 20

2 - 20 to 29

3 - 30 to 39

4 - 40 to 49

5 - 50 or over

I. Please select your semester (term). (Select one)

1 - term 1

2 - term 2

3 - term 3

4 - none

APPENDIX 2

QUESTION	ANSWER	ANSWER	ANSWER	ANSWER	ANSWER
Q - A	YES	NO			
	20	0			
Q - B	Extremely satisfied	Satisfied	Neutral	Dissatisfied	Extremely dissatisfied
	5	14	0	1	0
Q - C	Daily	Weekly	Monthly	Never	
	6	13	1	0	
Q - D	Extremely helpful	Very helpful	Somewhat helpful	No so helpful	Not at all helpful
	4	11	5	0	0
Q - E	YES	NO			
	20	0			
Q - F	In your own words, what are the things that you like the most about Moodle?				
	The students find the VLE useful and concise.				
	They can access and off-campus meaning that they can study outside the lecture hall.				
	For a small percentage, Moodle is somewhat helpful; however, the information and accessibility are useful.				
Q - G	In your own words, what are the things that you would most like to improve in Moodle?				
	The students want to improve app speed.				
	They requested more information for each topic.				
	More limited security, challenging to use and system design are a few additional reasons why the students want to improve Moodle.				
Q - H	Less than 20	20 to 29	30 to 39	40 to 49	50 or over
	1	15	3	1	0
Q - I	Term 1	Term 2	Term 3	None	
	4	16	0	0	