

UNIVERSITY OF WALES TRINITY SAINT DAVID

MODULE:
DIGITAL SKILLS AND RESEARCH
METHODS

REPORT

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ABSTRACT

Virtual learning environment (VLE) is a web- based platform used for educational purposes. Moodle is one of the most popular Virtual Learning Environment. That is an online learning platform using for teaching and learning. Plenty of tools are included in Moodle and could be used from students and their teachers. Moodle makes easier the learning process by sharing materials between the University, teachers and students. It also delivers information and learning activities, organize virtual classrooms, forums and discussions and gives an online access to the University's library. Moodle is the virtual learning environment used by University of Wales Trinity Sain David.

INTRODUCTION

This report is about the impact of the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), especially Moodle, to the students at University of Wales Trinity Saint David, London campus.

This report is based on lessons, learned from the module Digital skills and research methods. This module gave us a lot of knowledge regarding how to make research, what methods to use, how to collect and analyse data, etc.

This report introduces a survey, about the mentioned topic above. It included rationale, explaining the reason for conducting of this research, following by objectives of the research. The report continues with the methodology- short explanation of the research methods and the methods used for my primary data collection and analysis. Primary data analysis is based on a questionnaire (made by me) and participated 15 students, studying in different courses at UWTSD, London campus. The questions are regarding that what the students really think about Moodle: do they find all the information needed for their study, how they find their work with Moodle (difficult or easy to operate), how they describe the impacts of using Moodle (more positives or more negatives), and how they describe their experience with Moodle at all (like it or don't like it). These four questions are classified as main questions and the results from them will be described in detail, including tables and charts. The results from another questions, will be explain in generally. For the secondary data analysis, I am using an information on a similar topic, published on the website of University of Cumbria, and written by Barker, Jenny and Gossman, Peter in 2013. A conclusion in the end of this report gives some general opinion about the presented topic.

RATIONALE

The reason for conducting of this research report is a task, assigned from the University of Wales Trinity Sain David (UWTSD), London Campus for Assessment 1 in the end of the first

term of our course. The research is regarding the student's experience with Moodle in that University.

Using Moodle or other Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) in education is not new, but in last few years it became more popular, especially last two years, during the Covid-19 situation. Moodle is a complex platform, providing plenty of tools such as communication and collaboration tools, online assessments and marking, controlled access to university resources, etc. All students use Moodle for some reason: to find information for their course, or some of the modules they are studying at the moment, or to check their timetable, or dates and terms of their assessments, to contact via email to some of their teachers or to the University, to ask for some support, and many, many other things. One of the most useful tools on Moodle is the virtual classroom. A virtual classroom is an online learning system where students and teachers communicate to each other like in a real classroom. The system contains all necessary tools, so the learning process can run smoothly and effectively. The students can use live video and audio, or text chat to learn. For that aim they just need a computer or any smart device and an Internet access.

OBJECTIVES

The objective of this report is to investigate the student's experience and their opinion regarding the impact of using Moodle. The using of VLE in the education becomes more and more popular. The reason for that is the plenty of the advantages, which it gives. One of the main advantages of using VLE is the opportunity for online studying. This option makes easier the education process for all students and helps them to manage their time effectively. Also, the online studying increase the convenience and the students have the choice to study and finish their coursework whenever they want. Other advantages from online studying are the improving of the digital skills, saving time and money for traveling to the University, access to plenty of information just by few clicks, etc. The VLE gives opportunity to everyone, who wants to study to do that from home everywhere in the world. During the Lockdowns last two years that was very helpful and allow the education process to continue normally.

Using the VLE in the education has and some disadvantages. Some teachers and students are not confident using digital e-Learning tools and need extra training. Some technical problems could make the education process difficult. Also, the high volume of online students, needs good network infrastructure, which could cost large amount of money. EzTalks (2021),

What the students at UWTSD think about using of VLE and especially Moodle? Do they find it more positives or more negatives? On these questions I have found answers by primary data collection and analysis and the results from it will be presented below in this report.

METHODOLOGY

Research methods are specific techniques for collecting and analysing data. Depending on the type of knowledge we want to build, there are two methods for data collection and analysing: qualitative and quantitative.

Qualitative research method communicates in words. This method of research uses open-ended questions for better understanding of theories, ideas, or experiences.

Quantitative research method communicates in numbers and graphs. This method of research is used to test or confirm theories or hypotheses. It can be used to prove facts about the topic. This method uses closed (multiple choice) questions.

There is and third method used for collecting and analysing data- that is the mixed method. In mixed method of research and analysing, are used both other methods- qualitative and quantitative.

(Scribbr)

For this report I use quantitative method of research to collect and analyse the data.

PRIMARY DATA ANALYSIS

The following analysis is on base of a Questionnaire, which contained 10 closed (multiple choice) questions, regarding the student's experience with Moodle. In this survey took participation 15 students from different courses at UWTSD, London campus. All of them have some experience in using Moodle and answered truly to the presented Questionnaire.

The questions in that Questionnaire are as follow:

Q1: What is your gender?

Q2: In what group is your age?

Q3: Are you an online student?

Q4: Did you use Moodle or any other VLE before starting this study?

Q5: How many hours per week you spend in Moodle?

Q6: Do you find all the information you need for your study in Moodle?

Q7: How do you find your work on Moodle?

Q8: How do you describe your experience with Moodle in your study?

Q9: How do you describe the impacts of using VLE?

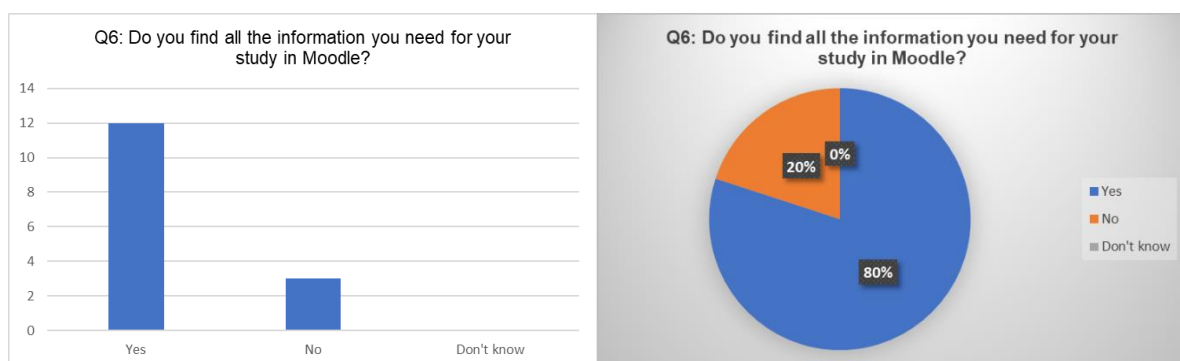
Q10: Do you like Moodle?

(Notice: Full Questionnaire could be found below in Appendix 1)

In this primary data analysis, I am going to pay more attention to four questions, which mostly presenting the topic of this research. The results from these questions are supported by charts:

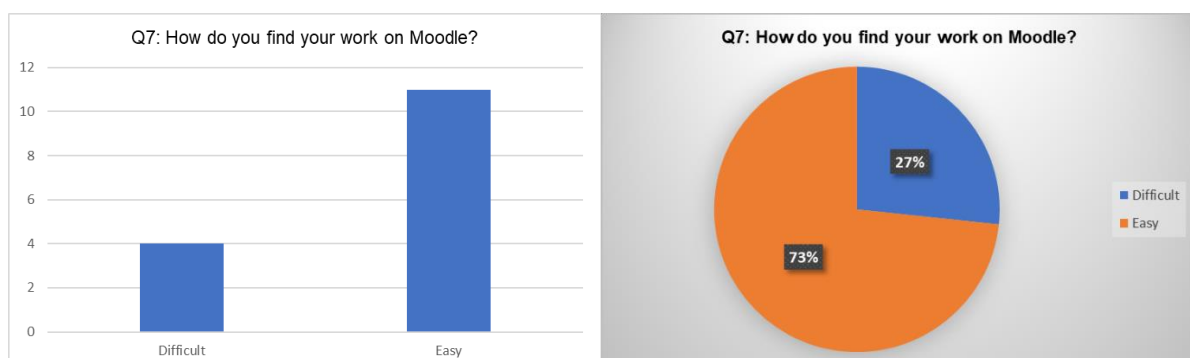
Q6: Do you find all the information you need for your study in Moodle?

This question is about the student's experience in finding information for their study in Moodle. 12 of 15 (80%) students answered 'Yes', and only 3 of 15 (20%) students said 'No'.



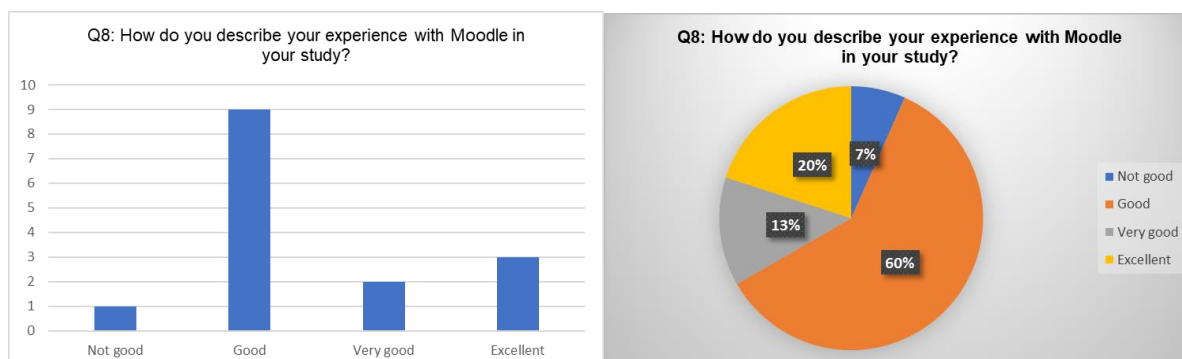
Q7: How do you find your work on Moodle?

On this question 11 of 15 (73%) students answered that is easy to operate with Moodle. 4 of 15 (27%) students find it difficult to operate.



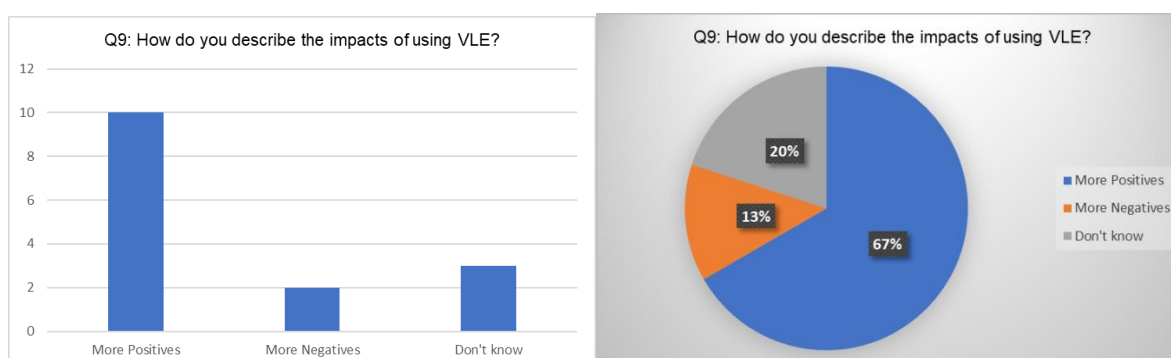
Q8: How do you describe your experience with Moodle in your study?

On this question more of the students describe their experience with Moodle as 'good', 'very good' or 'excellent' (14 of 15 or 93%). Only 1 of 15 (7%) students find it 'Not good'.



Q9: How do you describe the impacts of using VLE?

On this question 10 of 15 (67%) students answered that the Moodle has more positive impact. 2 of 15 (13%) students think the Moodle has more negative impact. 3 of 15 (20%) answered 'Don't know'.



From the 15 interviewed students in London campus at UWTSD, 7 of them are male and 8-female (Q1). More of them (9) are in age between 26 and 40 (Q2). Only 1 of 15 students answered that he/she is an online student, another 14 are in-campus students (Q3). 7 of 15 students said that they have use Moodle or any other VLE before starting this study, 6 of 15 students said they did not use it before and 2 of 15 are not sure (Q4). 7 of 15 students contend that they spend between 0 and 5 hours per week in Moodle, 7of 15 students spend between 5 and 10 hours and 1 of 15- more than 10 hours (Q5). All 15 students like Moodle. Their answers are as follow: 'not so bad' (1), 'like it' (12), 'very like it' (1), 'extremely like it' (1).

(Notice: Summarising table of the results could be found below in Appendix 2)

SECONDARY DATA ANALYSIS

For the secondary data analysis, I am using an article on University of Cumbria, written by Barker, Jenny and Gossman, Peter (2013) on topic: 'The learning impact of a virtual learning environment: students' views'.

That article is based on an online survey about using VLE (Moodle). It investigates the student's experience and their opinion regarding the impact of Moodle for their study. For that aim, have been invited to complete the survey 248 students at an English Sixth Form College (SFC). For my secondary data analysis, I am using a little extract of that survey, based on three research questions, which are mostly close to the topic of my research:

RQ1. Does the use of a VLE have a positive impact on student learning?

RQ2. Does the use of a VLE in learning and teaching help develop student independent learning?

RQ3. Does the use of a VLE for learning and teaching increase students' motivation to learn?

For collecting and analysing the results for that survey have been used the quantitative research method.

The results show that on the first question: "Does the use of a VLE have a positive impact on student learning?", 53% of respondents have been answered 'agree' or 'strongly agree' and 16% of respondents answer 'disagreeing' or 'strongly disagreeing'.

For the second question: "Does the use of a VLE in learning and teaching help develop student independent learning?", 55% of respondents have been answered 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that the use of SFC Moodle encourages independent Learning.

On the third question: "Does the use of a VLE for learning and teaching increase students' motivation to learn?" 43% of students have been answered 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that the use of SFC Moodle increases motivation to learn with 22% 'disagreeing' or 'strongly disagreeing'.

(Barker, J., Gossman, P. (2013))

CONCLUSION

This report was written on base of research on topic 'The impact of the Virtual learning environments, especially Moodle, to the students at University of Wales Trinity Saint David

(UWTSD), London campus. For this report I did survey amongst the students at above mentioned University, studying in different courses. The information from that survey I collected, analysed, and presented in this report in my primary data analysis. As a secondary data analysis, I have used an information on a similar topic, published on the website of University of Cumbria, and written by Barker, Jenny and Gossman, Peter in 2013.

On base of the primary and secondary analyses, presented in this report, my final opinion is that the Virtual learning environments and especially Moodle have more positive impact to the students, than negative. Moodle provides wide set of tools for education purposes. Moodle gives opportunity to the students to study remotely and encourages them to learn independently. Moodle increases student's motivation to learn. More of the interviewed students at UWTSD find that Moodle is very helpful learning platform and is easy to operate with it. More of the students said they can find all the information for their study in Moodle. Almost all students describe their experience with Moodle as 'good' to 'excellent'.

In conclusion I would like to say, that for me, personally, Moodle is a very good and useful online platform for learning. I did not know anything about VLE and Moodle before starting this course. Now, I find it for very interesting and helpful in my study at UWTSD.

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APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE

In-Class exercise: Questionnaire Design

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Module Name: Digital Skills and Research Methods Term 1 Group: 4

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 open-ended questions and close-ended questions (yes/no questions, multiple choice questions, Likert-scale questions).

Question 1: What is your gender?

☐ Male ☐ Female ☐ N/A

Question 2: In what group is your age?

☐ Under 25 ☐ 26- 40 ☐ 40+ ☐ N/A

Question 3: Are you online student?

☐ YES ☐ NO

Question 4: Did you use Moodle or any other VLE before starting this study?

☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ Not sure

Question 5: How many hours per week you spend in Moodle?

☐ 0- 5 ☐ 5-10 ☐ 10+

Question 6: Do you find all the information you need for your study in Moodle?

☐ YES ☐ NO ☐ Don't know

Question 7: How do you find your work on Moodle?

Difficult to operate/ Easy to operate

Question 8: How do you describe your experience with Moodle in your study? Please rate it in the scale below:

Very bad/ Not good/ Good/ Very good/ Excellent

Question 9: How do you describe the impacts of using Virtual Learning Environment?

☐ More positives ☐ More negatives ☐ Don't know

Question 10: Do you like Moodle?

Extremely don't like/ Don't like/ Not so bad/ Like it/ Very like it/ Extremely like it

Further questions, please list your questions below.

APPENDIX 2: SUMMARISING TABLE OF THE RESULTS

QUESTIONS	ANSWERS	RESULT	TOTAL
Q1: <i>What is your gender?</i>	Male	7	15
	Female	8	
	N/A	0	
Q2: <i>In what group is your age?</i>	Under 25	1	15
	26-40	9	
	40+	3	
	N/A	2	
Q3: <i>Are you an online student?</i>	Yes	1	15
	No	14	
Q4: <i>Did you use Moodle or any other VLE before starting this study?</i>	Yes	7	15
	No	6	
	Not sure	2	
Q5: <i>How many hours per week you spend in Moodle?</i>	0-5	7	15
	5-10	7	
	10+	1	
Q6: <i>Do you find all the information you need for your study in Moodle?</i>	Yes	12	15
	NO	3	
	Don't know	0	
Q7: <i>How do you find your work on Moodle?</i>	Difficult to operate	4	15
	Easy to operate	11	
Q8: <i>How do you describe your experience with Moodle in your study? Please rate it in the scale below:</i>	Very bad	0	15
	Not good	1	
	Good	9	
	Very good	2	
	Excellent	3	
Q9: <i>How do you describe the impacts of using VLE?</i>	More positives	10	15
	More negatives	2	
	Don't know	3	
Q10: <i>Do you like Moodle?</i>	Extremely don't like	0	15
	Don't like	0	
	Not so bad	1	
	Like it	12	
	Very like it	1	
	Extremely like it	1	

