

# **THE IMPACT OF THE VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

**DIGITAL SKILLS AND RESEARCH METHODS BMSW4003**

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## INTRODUCTION

As a student of Digital skills and Research Methods at the University of Wales Trinity St. David I must write down a report about my colleague's experience with the Virtual Learning Environment or Moodle that we had the opportunity to discover and learn how to use from October until today and the purpose of my research is discovering which kind of impact had, under a positive and negative point of view, on the students, as new type of tool of learning to use to get new knowledge and skills.

## CHAPTER I

The first things to do when you want to start a research it is having an **aim** clear in your mind, a purpose, a topic to discover and analyse to get finally and answer to your question, however, sometimes have a clear interpretation of the data is not an easy process to go through.

The aim of this report is highlight in which way the Virtual Learning Environment had an impact on a group of students, perhaps analyse which kind of benefits and improving we got from this new style of scholastic lectures likewise all the limits connected to a virtual learning environment.

The types of research that I done, is based on **primary data** collected with a **quantitative, descriptive, fundamental research**; the specific steps that I followed to achieve my research aim, so research the objectives, has been define by the following questions: **what/why/who/when/how**.

During these months we learned what is **data collection**, which kind of data we are going to record if primary or secondary data for example, and which tools use to find them, obviously in a way that will help us to answer to our main question and because we learned all this skills during months of on-line lecturers, in a Virtual Learning Environment, it comes almost natural, start a reflection about it nor which kind of influences and how actually has been helpful or functional to the study path.

I did create during November, with the help of my Lecturer a **Survey**, using the platform SurveyMonkey specifically to collect feedback about the experience with the VLEs; only ten closed questions that helped me to discover the feelings of 20 people, that would let me understand if my colleagues had issues or difficulties or both of them while we were studying online, in fact this Survey has been a brilliant way to investigate whether the use of the VLE (Moodle) in teaching and learning helps to develop independent learning and weather increases student's motivation to learn.(Baker & Gossman, 2013)

It is a fact indeed, perhaps the 20 students that have done the Survey gave responses based on their personal feelings and experience, so every answer has been influenced by the previous background skills and knowledge although for example what can be an easy task for me could be very hard for someone else; in the meantime, the very generic nature of all the questions could give an idea of the percentage and the numbers of the people that find easy something nor difficult without proposing further actions or solutions to problems highlighted by the Survey.

## CHAPTER II

### Literature review

Moodle is part of the Learning management systems (LMS) and it is use around the world to help institutions to organize important course information. Moodle is the most widely used LMS because of his **open-source technology**. This literature review would like to outline the positive aspects of the VLEs as a secondary Data collected during the Research.

The first example is supported by a study (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1996) in West Virginia, USA. An Upper-grade elementary student used a software collaboration tool that enables students and teachers to communicate online to develop their understanding and analytical skills. At the end, the students performed much better on tests in reading, language, vocabulary, and independent thought than students who did not use the software. (Baker & Gossman, 2013)

Ethink as a Blog gave a list of the benefits that the students could get using VLEs or Moodle like for example: the **access to the learning materials anytime and anywhere**, Moodle has in fact a mobile app easy to download on your mobile phone or tablet. The **consistent content delivery feedback** it is a way for the teachers to encourage collaboration thanks to forum, perhaps it is also a **time safer** for the teachers thanks to the attendance tools likewise creating an organized eLearning environment. (Ethink, 2019)

## CHAPTER III

### Research Process

While I was creating my Survey, I had to think to a research method that could be helpful to in way while finding, collecting, and analysing data could be easy and quickly, perhaps the **Research Onion** has been the better one to use, it has been developed in 2007 by **Sanders** and it illustrates the stages that must be covered when developing a research strategy. (Bryman, 2012)

The empiric process that I have decide to follow is the **Epistemology**, as a part of the **Positivism**, the Epistemology investigate everything is connected to the acquisition of new knowledge, what is this new knowledge and how the people can get it. As I said Epistemology is part of the Positivism, a philosophy where the objective approach which relies of fact and quantitative data, that I was able to collect thanks to the Survey.

Create a Survey is not an easy task perhaps you need to have clear in your mind not just the aims of your research but the purpose, so get more knowledge about a situation, getting data to analyse and have answers that could maybe help to increase the service provided. My Survey has 10 questions, mostly of them give the possibility to decide between 4/6 choices, in a way I might could understand how much the students use nor spend time on Moodle as a VLEs and which kind of evaluation they could make of the platform as a service for the other students so actually how in a realistic and practical way VLEs helps students during the study path.

Thanks to a specific tool as it is a Survey now, I got the answer of 21 students, all the data that I collected are Primary Data, basically they all come directly from my research and from people that I personally selected, my classmates. The Survey it is a scientific tool, and it is directed to a **Quota**, a sample group member that has been selected based on specific criteria. The ten questions have been created based on the people entitled to answer it lately. Language, structure and different kind of possibility to answer are the three important prerogatives that guide me while I was projecting the questionnaire.

The Quota is part of the **Samplings**, so a predetermined number of observations are taken from a larger population, so a defined **target** of population, in this case, my classmates; the Quota are the twenty-one students selected from the Samplings that will give generic responses for the whole category to my Survey. These twenty students have some criteria in common like they all start in October with me, they never used before VLEs or Moodle as a study platform, they all speak a good level of English and they all start again to study after long time.

## CHAPTER IV

### 1. Are you enjoying the use of the VLEs?

|          |     |   |    |    |
|----------|-----|---|----|----|
|          | YES |   | NO |    |
| TOTAL 21 |     | 2 |    | 19 |

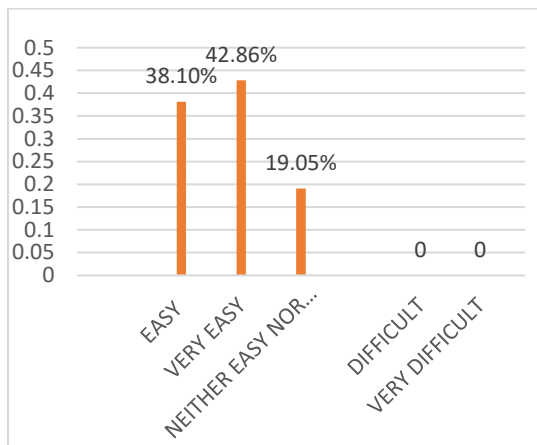


Most of the people, 19 on 21 are not enjoying using VLEs as a learning tool.

### 2. Is the VLEs easy to access online?

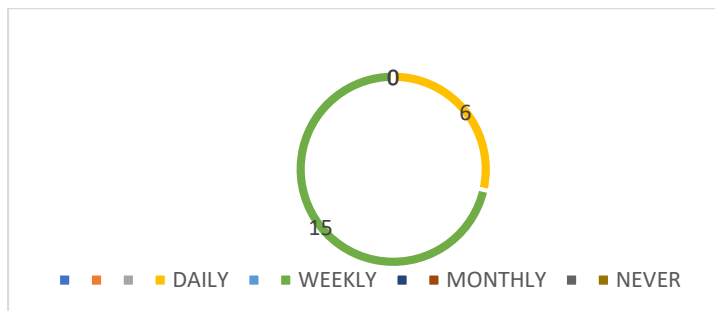
|          |           |                            |           |                |
|----------|-----------|----------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Easy     | Very easy | Neither easy nor difficult | Difficult | Very difficult |
| 38.10%   | 42.86%    | 19.05%                     | 0.00%     | 0.00%          |
| TOTAL 21 |           |                            |           |                |

Basically, most of the students, the 42.46% thinks that use VLEs is a quite easy task, the 38.10% thinks instead it is just easy but a little portion of the 21 students, the 19.05% thinks it is a neither easy nor difficult task use Moodle.



### 3. How often do you use VLE(Moodle)?

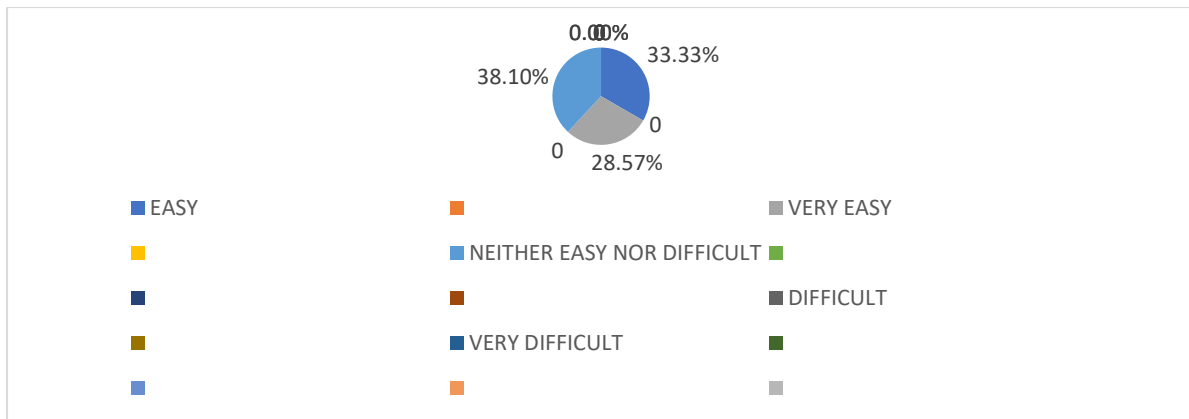
|          | DAILY | WEEKLY | MONTHLY | NEVER |
|----------|-------|--------|---------|-------|
| TOTAL 21 | 6     | 15     | 0       | 0     |



Every week on 21 students the majority so 15 students use VLE(Moodle) weekly all the rest, 6 students, has like a good habit to consult Moodle every day.

### 4. Is the VLE(Moodle) a simple tool to use when you must study?

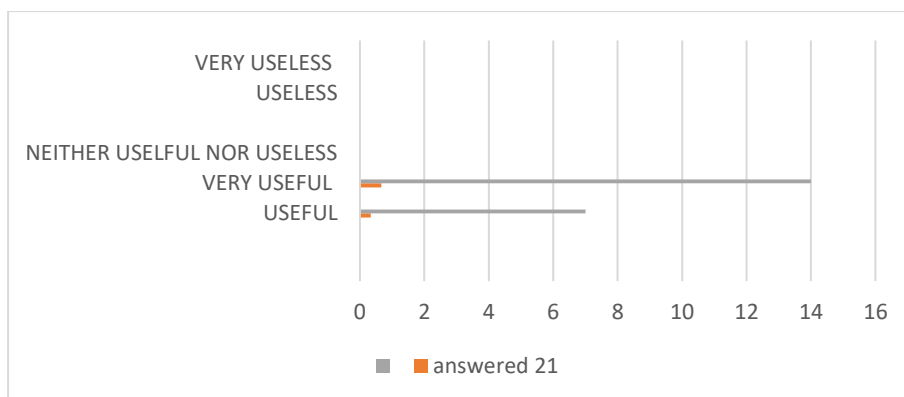
| Easy     | Very easy | Neither easy nor difficult | Difficult | Very difficult |
|----------|-----------|----------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| 33.33%   | 28.57%    | 38.10%                     | 0.00%     | 0.00%          |
| 7        | 6         | 8                          |           |                |
| TOTAL 21 |           |                            |           |                |



Most of the students, the 38.10% so 8 on 21, seems using Moodle with no issues while they are studying but, in the meantime, they did not choose Easy as an answer but only the 33.33% thinks Moodle is an easy tool to use, the rest the 28.57% so 6 people find Moodle very easy.

##### 5. Do you think VLE(Moodle) is useful for your study?

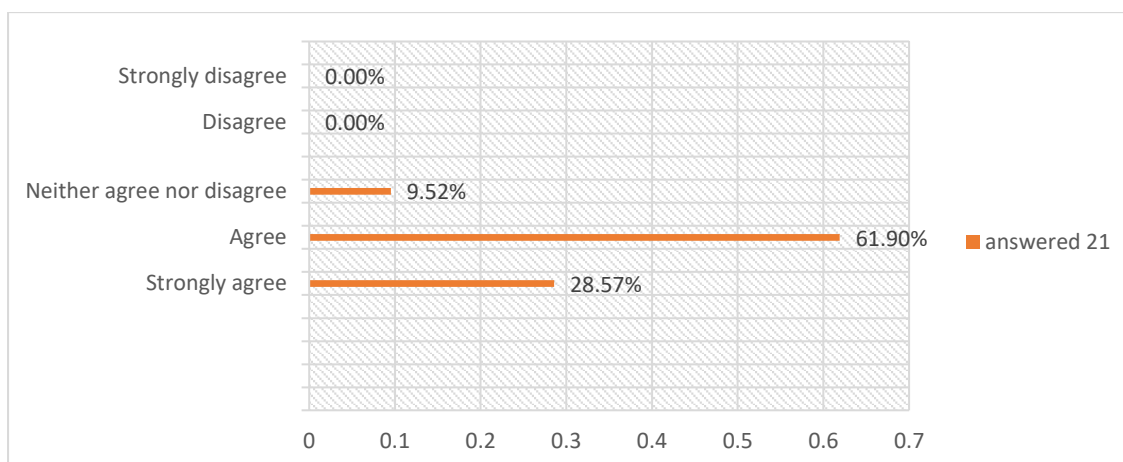
| USEFUL | VERY USEFUL | NEITHER USEFUL NOR DIFFICULT | USELESS | VERY USELESS |
|--------|-------------|------------------------------|---------|--------------|
| 33.33% | 66.67%      | 0.00%                        | 0.00%   | 0.00%        |
| 7      | 14          | 0                            | 0       | 0            |



More than the majority 66.67% so 14 people on 21 thinks that VLE(Moodle) is very useful as a tool to use to study and research aims.

##### 6. Do you think VLE(Moodle) makes easier for you to do research?

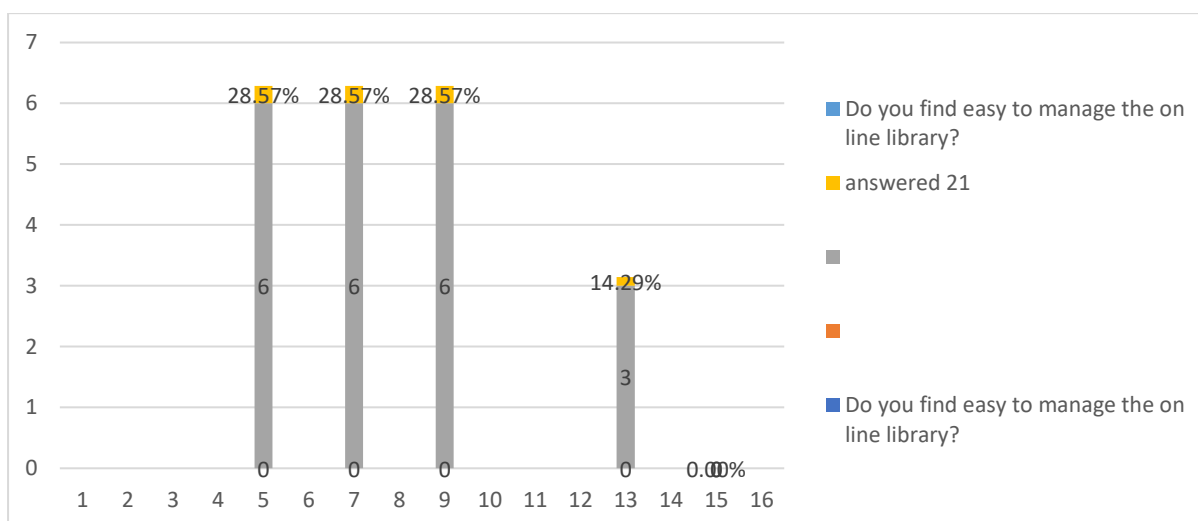
| Agree  | Strongly agree | Neither agree nor disagree | Disagree | Strongly disagree |
|--------|----------------|----------------------------|----------|-------------------|
| 28.57% | 61.90%         | 9.52%                      | 0.00%    | 0.00%             |
| 6      | 13             | 2                          |          |                   |



The majority of the 21 students so the 61.90%, 13 people, thinks the VLEs makes easier to research a topic for an essay, only 2 people so the 9.52% is neither agree nor disagree, although the 6 people, the 28.57% is just agree that VLEs makes easier to research something online.

7. Is it simple for you find books or article uploaded on the online library?

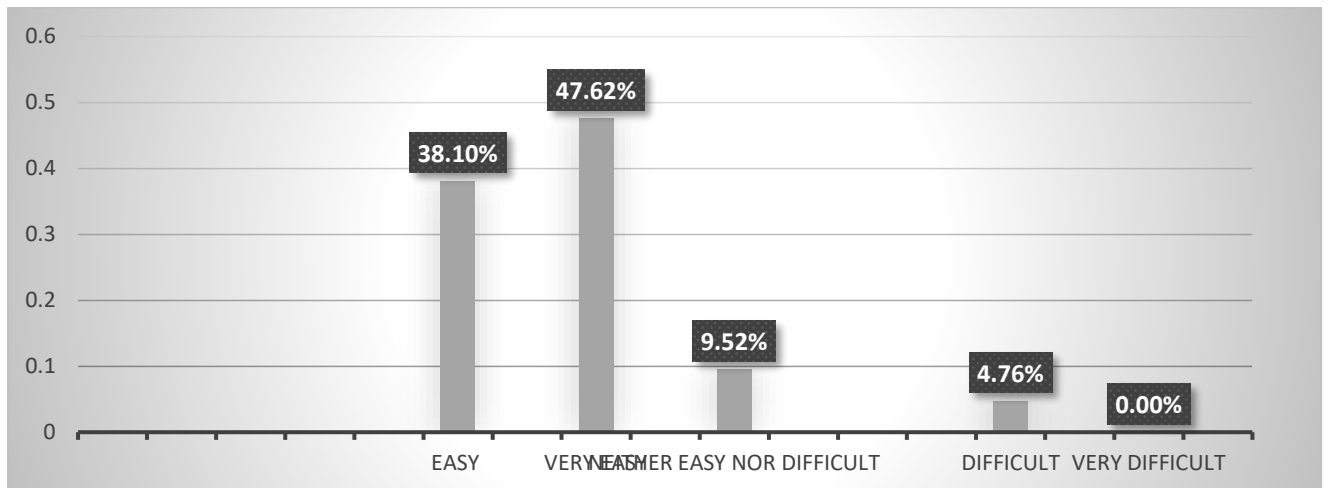
| Easy   | Very easy | Neither easy nor difficult | Difficult | Very difficult |
|--------|-----------|----------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| 28.57% | 28.57%    | 28.57%                     | 14.29%    | 00.0%          |
| 6      | 6         | 6                          | 3         | 0              |



A small number of people, 14.29% has a problem to find books or articles on the online library, instead of the rest 28.57% that find the task easy, very easy or neither easy nor difficult.

8. Are the topics discussed in class effortless to find on Moodle?

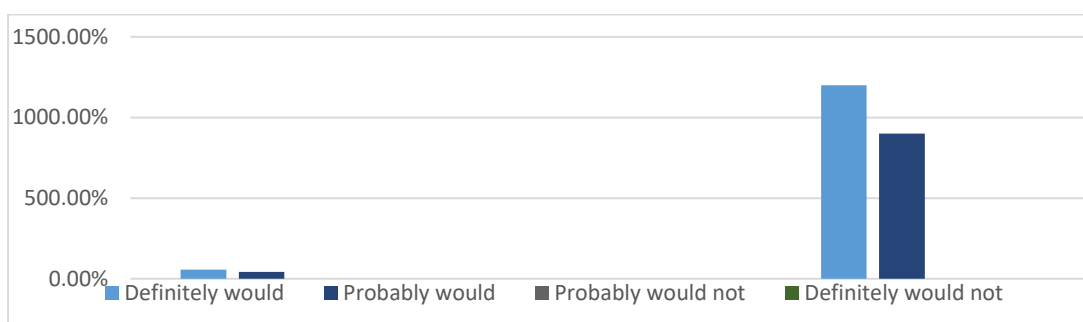
| Easy   | Very easy | Neither easy nor difficult | Difficult | Very difficult |
|--------|-----------|----------------------------|-----------|----------------|
| 38.10% | 47.62%    | 9.52%                      | 4.76%     | 0.00%          |



Find the lectures on Moodle is very easy task for the 47.92% of the students, the 38.10% think its easy and the 9.52% thinks it is a neither easy nor difficult task; only one student that represents the 4.76% thinks it is a difficult task.

9. Would you suggest to a friend to use Moodle?

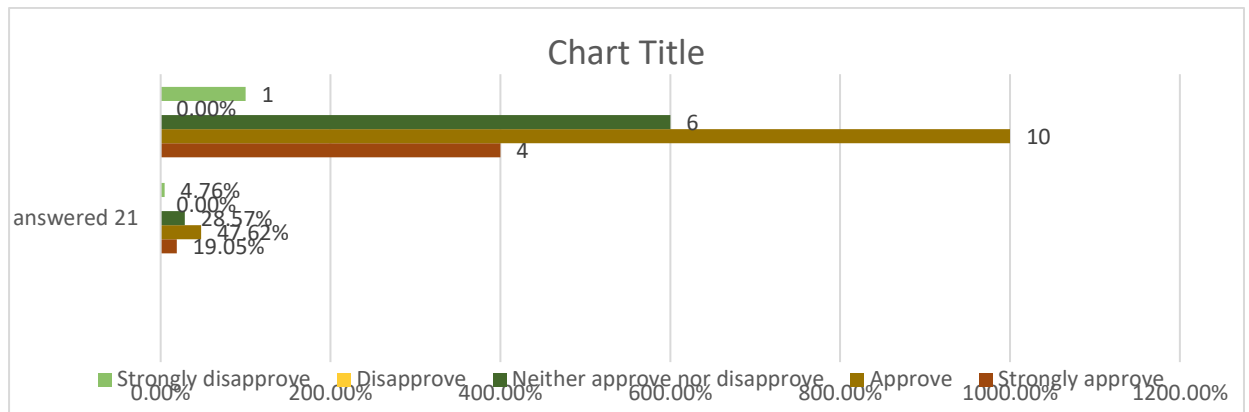
| Would  | Probably would | Probably would not | Would not |          |
|--------|----------------|--------------------|-----------|----------|
| 57.14% | 42.86%         | 0.00%              | 0.00%     | Total 21 |
| 12     | 9              | 0                  | 0         |          |



Most of the students so 57.14%, 12 people, would recommend Moodle to a friend, the 42.85% responded probably would so 9 students.

10. Do you think VLEs or Moodle is more efficient than the regular scholastic system?

| Strongly approved | Approved     | Neither approve nor disapprove | Disapprove | Strongly disapprove |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------------------------|------------|---------------------|
| 19.05%<br>4       | 47.62%<br>10 | 28.57%<br>6                    | 0.00%<br>0 | 4.76%<br>1          |



The 47.62% of the students approved Moodle more than the regular scholastic system, the 19.05% strongly approved Moodle, the 28.57% nether approve or disapprove but the 4.76% so 1 person strongly disapprove Moodle.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

The questionnaire has been created for collect 20 answers, I has been lucky because I collected 21 answers so I can consider my survey as a great success thanks to my classmates who have joined the project with a lot of enthusiasm, perhaps they provide me all the answers that I was looking for. In fact, at the beginning, I approached to this study research with one theory, that the Moodle is giving to us a lot of possibilities that the regular scholarship system was under some point of view containing creating some useless boundaries, although my research proves with Primary and Secondary Data to me that all the students apart one is all happy about this experience and are enjoying using the VLE while they are learning in more than on way improving their own technological skills.

# REFERENCES

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