

Digital Skills and Research Methods

DSR Component 2 – Individual Report

Research Title -The impact of Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)

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Introduction

This report is about VLE which stands for Virtual Learning Environment and starting off with this - learning environment is how the surroundings has an effect on you as a person towards studying. The learning environment usually matters of how the teacher, your classmates and your course the learning you are taking in that information as well as how you deal with will show by the grades you get.

The rationale of this research is to see what the student's opinions are and advises about the Virtual Learning Environment.

Virtually is however different from what I have experienced this year, as a new university student the experience to studying online is much different than in person.

Last two years for example as a recent college student I went physically to college and it had many different effects then this year. As an example, college gave me the opportunity to make friends which you still can online but it's much harder as you only have the chance to talk to them in your online classes but most of the time you don't even get the chance.

The teacher is presenting the lecture where you have to process the information and you don't get many chances to ask question because of the minimal time available which is quite a negative point to look at as making friends and being sociable either with classmates or teachers in person makes a difference of receiving help you require which isn't available much online.

The main point is that little things like social life and physical technical support do make a difference for students.

Taking electronic feedback from other students that go to University Trinity Saint David by sending this questionnaire to review and analyse people's opinions about using VLE so we can have a look at what is better: Virtual or in person learning experience.

This questionnaire gave students the option to write whatever they want; I've decided to leave a place so that the students have the possibility to write more than expected.

Having tick off boxes would be easy enough to complete and that doesn't give them actually that much time to reconsider and think carefully about how their virtual learning environment actually is.

On the next page it'll show how the questionnaire actually looked to the students. My objective is with this questionnaire and results I will now be able to see students' thoughts on VLE.

Primary data analysis

Questionnaire about your learning experience using Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David London Campus

1. Male or Female?

Enter response to the first question

2. Do you feel like VLE has made it harder for you to get in contact with the teachers?

Enter response to the second question

3. Has online learning made it easier or harder for you to track your personal progress?

Enter response to the third question

4. While using VLE did you get the opportunity to make new friends?

Enter response to the fourth question

5. Do you think there is any way that VLE can be improved?

Enter response to the fifth question

6. Are you comfortable with the level of technology you are using, or would you rather have human-to-human contact?

Enter response to the sixth question

I have asked more than 10 students to complete by questionnaire but as expected there always will be people that aren't bothered, are too busy, don't know how to complete it or any other understandable reasons, I have however managed to get 10 people to answer my questionnaire and with the information received I've successfully made a table to show the results I have received from them.

In this table I have created question by question answers in a row showing each person's answers.

From this table we can go in more in-depth and take each question to analyse it and with that we can find more information.

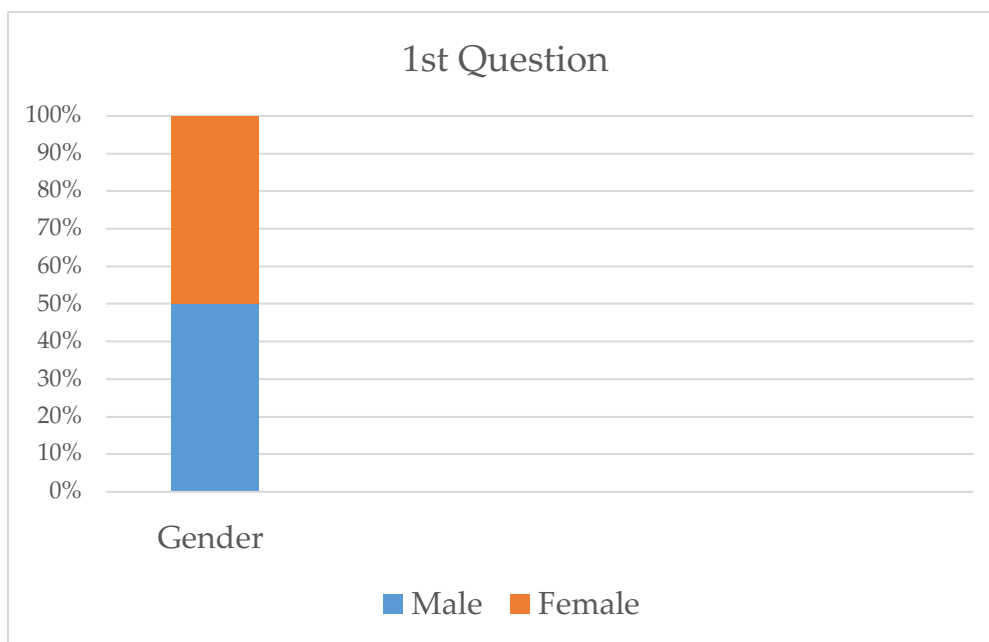
Report Results

Virtual Learning Enviroment

1st Question	2nd Question	3rd Question	4th Question	5th Question	6th Question
Male	No	Easier	Yes	No	human-to-human contact
Female	Sometimes	Easier	Not really	Yeah if they made it easier to log in	comfortable with the level of technology
Female	Not sure	Harder	Yes	No	human-to-human contact
Male	Yes	Easier	Yes	No	human-to-human contact
Female	Yes	Easier	Yes	No	comfortable with the level of technology
Male	Sometimes	Easier	Yes	Yes,when acceseing your moodle there should only be your course assignments	comfortable with the level of technology
Male	No	Harder	Yes	No	comfortable with the level of technology
Male	No	Harder	Yes	No,but teachers should explain better for everyone	human-to-human contact
Female	Yes	Harder	Yes	No	comfortable with the level of technology
Female	No	Easier	Yes	No	comfortable with the level of technology

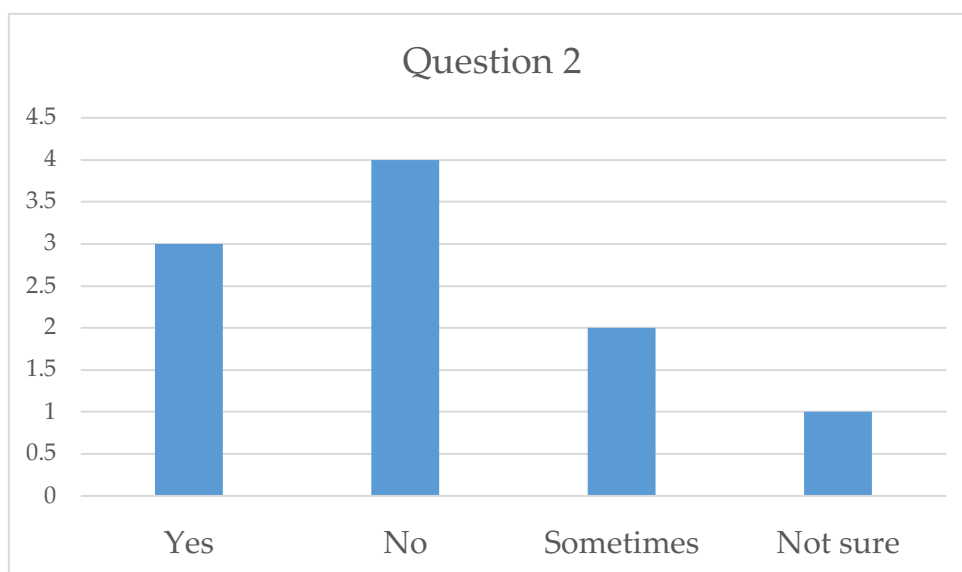
Starting off with the first most basic question given in a questionnaire- Male or Female.

In this century this question allows you to choose or not to. Nobody is ever forced to put their gender on a questionnaire because of personal reasons but the gender could have an impact on our report towards finding out if males struggle more or less than females with using VLE.



Looking at this graph we can easily see that the number of females and males that answered this questionnaire is equal which we can use for further questions to see if there is any relevance looking at the genders.

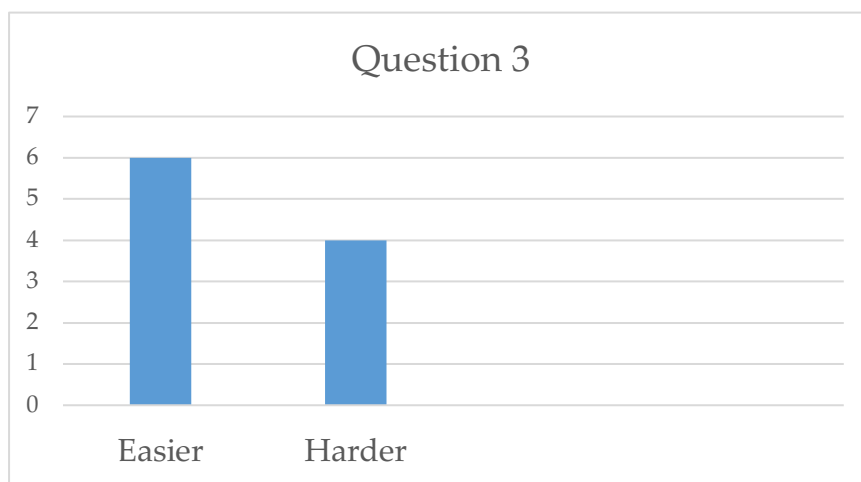
Second question is asking -do you think VLE has made it harder for you to get in contact with the teachers and going by the results most students didn't find an issue with getting in contact with teachers using VLE. However, 3 of the students did find it difficult so comparing with the amount that said they didn't struggle, there are a good number of students that did struggle meaning there is high chance that there are many other students that struggle with getting in contact with teachers.



There were 2 students that though it was 50% out of 100 with finding it difficult to contact teachers and one person wasn't sure meaning going by these results its probable that there are students that struggle and some that don't, and it could depend on how they were taught to use the VLE in the first place.

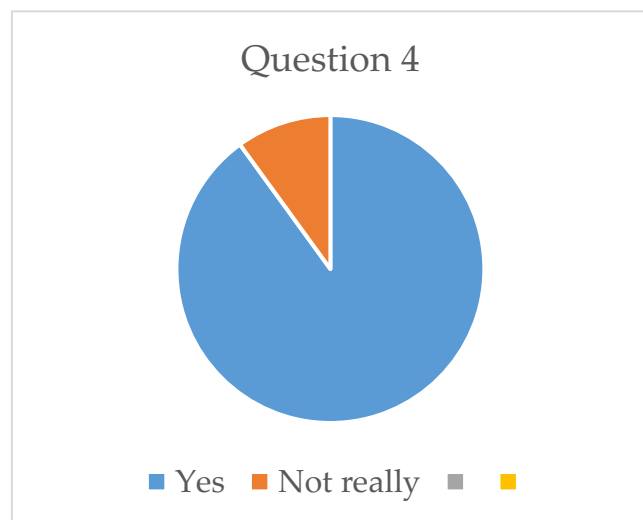
Third question is talking about: has online learning made it easier or harder to track your personal progress and going by this graph we can see that 6 from 10 of the students have found it easier to actually track their own personal progress and that could be because online on VLE personal track is easier to get access of then in person.

There are 4 of the students that did found it harder to track their progress online which is most likely because they haven't been properly introduced to VLE or they might just not be used to using just online services to see how their progress is going and prefer going in person instead. The summary of this is that some students need to be showed how to use the VLE again as they might not be used to such things.

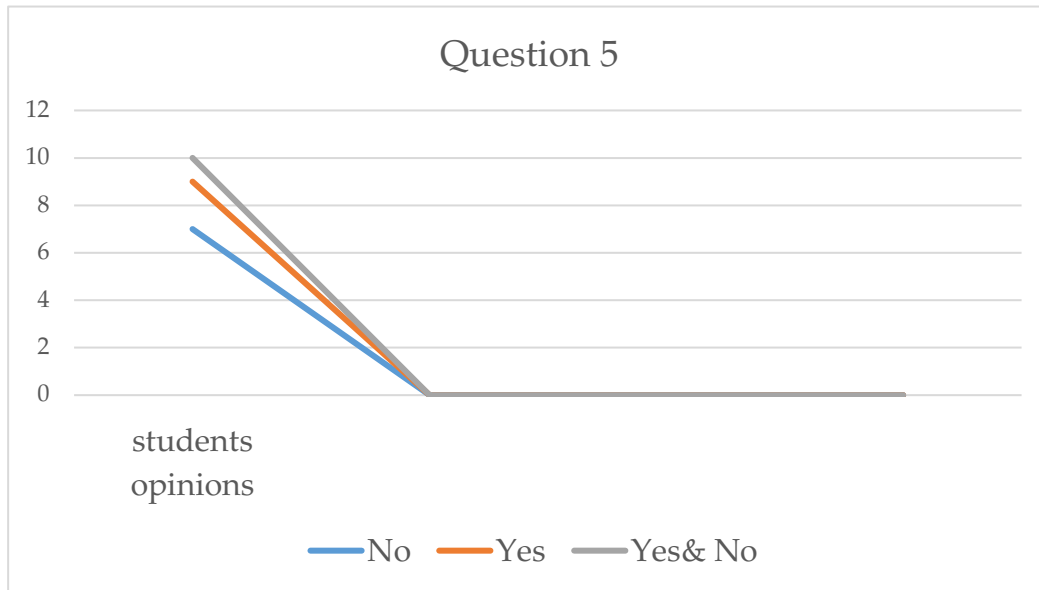


The fourth question asks: while using VLE did you get opportunity to make new friends and going by the results 99% of the students that took my questionnaire did in fact get the opportunity to make new friends and 1% didn't really get the chance which might be of personal problems or being continuously busy.

So, in result students don't really find issues with using VLE and some do which is okay and maybe they require help.



The fifth question asked: do you think there is any way VLE can be improved and taking a look at the students results we can see that 7 of the students didn't have anything else to say about VLE being improved.

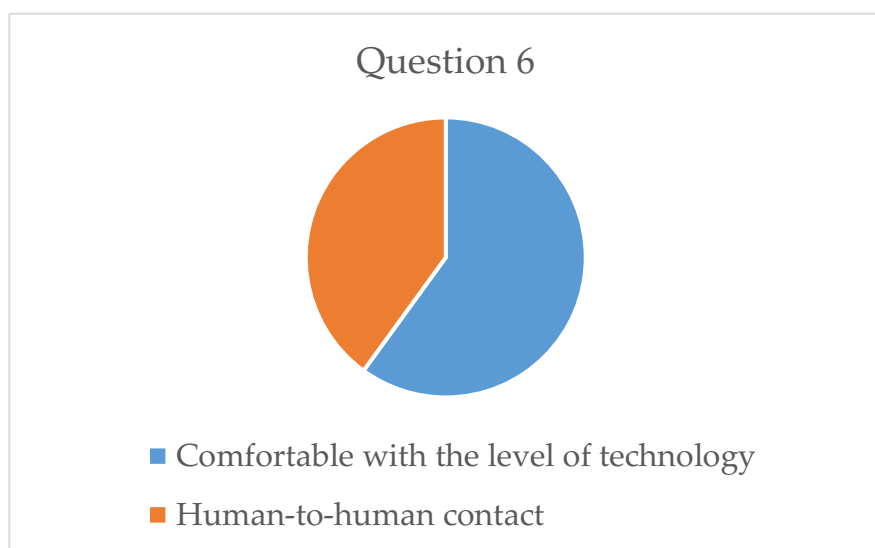


3 of the students however did -for example one of them mentioned that they could make it easier to log in which I can personally relate to as well. Another student said that that they struggle seeing their assignment as there are too many visible and not from the same course which could be solved by making the assignment line in red so it could be more visible which one is theirs.

One of the students made a point that the teachers should explain better which could be easily fixed.

Last but not least- the sixth question asked: are you comfortable with the level of technology you are using, or would you rather have human-to-human contact and going by the results we can clearly see that 60% of the students said that they are comfortable with the level of technology they are using which could be as they are used technology.

Going off from that point 40% of them said they would rather have human-to-human contact which is understandable as this year 2020 is a new experience for everyone having to do University at home and would rather go into the London campus .As its in central London with many beautiful touristic and fun places but unfortunately students this year won't get to experience that and taking a summary of that the students would rather have human-to-human contact but are also comfortable with the level of technology they are using like VLE.



Secondary data analysis

Going into secondary research, I have found that there is evidence of the positive impact of a VLE on students in other education settings. In a higher education study (Downing & Chim, 2004), they found that around 79% of students said that learning via the VLE made a positive difference to studying. This also confirms my initial findings from my own primary research that I have done.

On the UWTSD website for a case study done by (Davies, C., & Harris L, 2016) on engagement of professional learners with the VLE, they found that around 68% of enrolled students view one or more of the resources within a VLE 'course'.

However, in another paper (Robertson and Klotz, 2002) talks about the students that are in online learning environment and that specifically require and lack some of the opportunities from the university and any benefits which given by the teachers in form of dialogue in class as well as extra after class help. It also prevents students from getting socially active with the community created in the traditional normal on-site classroom environment that the students are missing on right now because of the current situation.

Conclusion

The methods I've used to undertake the research about VLE were using a questionnaire's students answers to create a table which let me see how many and what the students have said about VLE in the questions given. I have analysed the data by creating a chart or tables for each of the questions so eventually we can see the results clearly.

Looking over all the questions and paying attention to all the graphs and charts we can make an overall summary that the students overall have good capability of using and understanding the Virtual learning Environment.

Some students going by the results struggle using VLE and they would rather have in person education which is understandable as it is probably more efficient and gives out more opportunities, however because of the pandemic we cannot do that for our and others safety.

VLE is the best option at the moment to study in the current conditions and doing your best as a student at UWTSD to understand how it works is what counts right now.

I personally think that to be able to use virtual learning environment to the best capability students need to practice more on how to access for example Moodle.

I recommend for students to contact IT services of UWTSD whenever they have any issues with logging in or not knowing how to access it.

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