



Research Report of VLE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I - INTRODUCTION

II - FINDINGS

III - CONCLUSION

IV - REFERENCES

I - Introduction

This report will focus on the experience that the students at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David had with the new approach of learning. Stands for "Virtual Learning Environment." A VLE is a virtual classroom that allows teachers and students to communicate with each other online (TechTerms, 2008). With a pandemic that is going worldwide, there has been introduced a new learning approach that helps the students in university to stay safe and keep other people safe. The system that the University of Saint Trinity Wales David uses is Moodle, in which they have placed all their lessons online for the students to follow and access at any time. This helped a lot of students that maybe have missed some lessons due to the fact that they would be busy with workplace or even being sick and couldn't attend the lesson. It gave them the chance to catch up to speed and see the lesson that was presented that day and learn it by themselves.

It was my task to conduct a survey that will focus on how much it impacted the students at the university. It was hard for many students to adapt to the new way of learning. Most of them not being used to the new technology that was offered, finding it very hard to use the new tools that were offered. They have also found it hard to use the computer, the new program that was offered to attend the online lessons and the new ways that were introduced with the Virtual Learning Environment.

II - Findings

After the students have completed the survey I created, it can be seen that for most of them that the new method in which they would learn, wasn't very popular. They have found the website confusing and hard to use. It was hard for them to adapt to the online sessions. Being at home, students would feel more in their comfort zone than usual so they would not pay as much attention as before when they were in a classroom. Also finding the learning tools to be harder to use than they were intended to. Most of them not having experience with a computer from before, this change affected a lot in a negative way. They have started to feel anxious and insecure, thinking that is too late to learn all this stuff and not having faith in themselves. One recommendation would be that the page design would have a simple layout, clear fonts, and use a minimum of graphics for better speed of download. Alongside that, the interactivity of Moodle should be a priority so that students can interact with their teachers and they can therefore get help with the platform when needed. (Dougiamas and Taylor, 2000)

Another factor that affected them in a negative way was the timetable. Some of the students were having a full-time job and they would find themselves at the workplace, trying to attend the lesson and trying to pay attention while working. This has created a big interference through the online lessons that has left many students confused. Also, before when the students had to physically go to their classes, they would have attended all of them before leaving. Now with the online studying, it is much easier to skip a class if something important comes up and then miss out on important information. This results to more students remaining behind with their work and having to do more catching up as online classes are skipped more frequently than classes that take place in an actual classroom. Also, many of them have said because their

breaks became smaller, it was hard for them to recreate and relax and recharge for the next lesson. Also, the breaks were always mixed, sometimes it would be 5 minutes, the other time 15 minutes which made the students feel insecure. With only few small breaks it became harder for them to focus and made them feel uncomfortable. Being used to know the exact number of breaks and for how long they will last, it made it very difficult for them to adapt. One recommendation would be that the students would try to focus to improve their time management. One way to do that is through the Pomodoro Technique which states 4 simple steps which would help them not lose focus and have consistent breaks which will improve their attention (Cirillo, 2009). (Appendix 2)

A factor that has improved the students learning were the lecturers. Most of them have been very satisfied of how the online lessons are presented and have shown how satisfied are of the teachers. This is showing how important is the bond between the person that is presenting and the audience. 90% of the students have shown how attached they are to the lecturers by showing their presence by always asking questions. Even if the students have found the online lessons very difficult, they can see that the teachers are also trying extra hard to make the lessons as understandable as possible. Observing the teachers struggling as well, made the students understand that is not just them having a difficult time.

When asked how much they spend of their days studying, most students have answered with minimal hours. Not having to worry that someone is watching them, as they would be watched in class before the pandemic. Used to someone always seeing them, the feeling of being watched was less during the online classes. The anxiety that some may had in the classroom when asked a question from the teacher was gone, as many of them during the online course would have their camera turned off. Many have responded they are spending only about 1 hour of individual study for each online class they have. We had 8 hours of online classes per week so with the Rule of Thumb: 2 hours of study per 1 hour of class (University of Michigan-Flint) would mean we had to study at least 16 hours per week, not the 8 hours that most of them stated they are spending on their individual studies. One recommendation that I have for students to get better and gain more hours, are some small but very essential and easy steps to improve focus which will result in longer periods of individual studying (Rumens, 2020). One of the firsts steps to find out your own learning style (Visual, Auditory, Reading/Writing, Kinesthetic); another one would be to set regular study times and try to respect them as much as possible; also trying to not get distracted by any social media platform or any other form of distraction.

Most of the students stated that they felt uncomfortable during the online classes as they had to meet new people through their camera and not face to face as how they were used to before the pandemic issue. This has made most of them feel more hesitant and therefore less active in their classes which resulted to them underperforming. Furthermore, some stated that they felt nervous when asking questions and many times they have decided not to, whereas before in the classroom they were not nervous at all and asked questions every time they were confused about a topic. One recommendation for the students to overcome their nervousness during online classes would be to have their lecturers base their first lesson on getting to know everyone and forming a bond with the students, and also forming bonds amongst the students. One way to do that would be by doing team-building tasks such as: each student writes down 5 interesting facts about themselves of which one should be a lie and the other students should

guess which one it is. This has been proven to make people feel more comfortable around others that they have just met. (MindTools, 2020)

The average answer that students have given when they were asked if the online classes were organised, was that they were not very organised as a lot of students would come late and interrupt the session mid-way. Also, a lot of technical issues like the bad internet connection that some students had, register not sending itself due to an error to the website and many background noises that interfered with the lesson. Many students have stated that because of the background noises, which were not only coming from their place of studying, but also from the other students that forgot to mute their microphone, they are not capable to focus enough on the information that is given by the lecturer and tend to not ask again as they become frustrated. One recommendation that I have so students can improve their focus, is to follow 5 easy steps to escape the background noises that are interfering with the online lesson (Brooks, 2018). One of the steps is to buy noise cancelling headphones which have proved to be very useful in the day-to-day studies of students; another step is to listen to Ambiantal music which is calming and has no lyrics to improve your focus.

Most of the student are very familiar with the work they must do and understand the material, so they are not really bothered that they must do attend their classes online as it makes no difference for them. Most of the material that they must learn is found online anyway so they said there is not much change to their studying. Adding to that, some people even said that they are glad that they have online classes instead of actually going into the classroom as they save a lot of time which can be allocated to their jobs and they can eventually apply what they learn in this course to their workplace.

The average of the students had the necessary equipment to adapt to the new environment of online classes, while the rest of the students had to make a sacrifice to purchase the necessary tools to access the online courses. This has created a very uncomfortable situation for them as they have been put in the spotlight indirectly. One recommendation I have is for the university is to come up with a scheme that can help the students that cannot afford the equipment, with funds so they are able to acquire them. It has been proven that over 4.4 million households do not have access to the right equipment to attend the online classes and access the Moodle page (USA FACTS, 2020).

All the percentages of the survey can be found in (appendix 1).

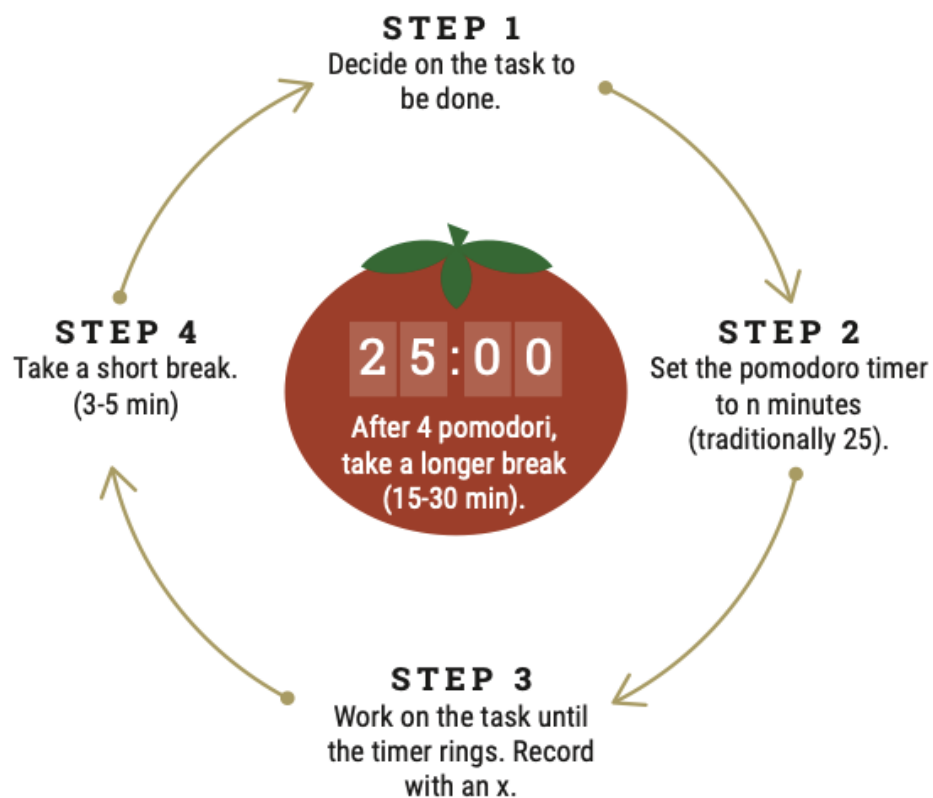
III - Conclusion

After reviewing all the answers of the students that have completed my survey, I have found that for the majority, the experience with the new method that has been implemented due to the pandemic that is going worldwide, it has not been the easiest to adapt to. There have been some problems such as: the students not being able to adapt to the timetable; learn to navigate easily on the Moodle website; having difficulties with the equipment that is being needed to participate in the online classes, etc. However, on the other hand the rest of the students have found to prefer the Virtual Learning Environment rather than the old approach. One of the reasons would be the fact that it saves time which can be allocated to their professional life. In my opinion I have found that I prefer the VLE more because it was more convenient and also,

I have found it easy to understand the material that have been presented during the online classes.

Questions	Answers		
How did you find the VLE working tools ?	Useful 30%	Neutral 10%	Not useful 60%
Did you adapt to the timetable ?	Yes 20%	Kind of 10%	No 70%
How did you find the lecturers ?	Helpful 70%	Neutral 20%	Not helpful 10%
How many hours do you spend studying per day ?	1 hour 90%	2-3 hours 10%	3+ hours 0%
How did you feel during the first week of online classes ?	Good 35%	Neutral 0%	Bad 65%
Did you find the online classes to be organised ?	Yes 0%	Kind of 25%	No 75%
How did you find the module ?	Helpful 95%	Neutral 5%	Not helpful 0%
Did you own all of the required tools ?	Yes 30%	Kind of 10%	No 60%

(appendix 1)



(appendix 2)

IV - References

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