



Prifysgol Cymru
Y Drindod Dewi Sant
University of Wales
Trinity Saint David

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DIGITAL SKILLS AND RESEARCH METHODS

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Prepared for: Suneth Fernando

Prepared by: Eric Silva 1914231



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Introduction

This study aims to elaborate the impact of virtual learning environment (VLE) in students learning experience at UWTSD London Campus. In this study, the reader will find a questionnaire made by me.

This questionnaire will have primary and secondary data research and this was achieved with the help of my colleagues. The information contained in this study is a sum up of their answers and it is organized in different types of graphics as well the analysis of the answers that helped me to have better understanding about how VLE affected our learning environment on UWTSD. It is important to refer that some of these analysis are not so obvious by the numbers, but after I speaking with many of my colleagues I could understand better their point of view wich helped me to construct the rest of the commentary that was made.

Rationale

During this pandemic time the entire population had to adapt their needs to a new reality, so most of our life started to be done in a virtual environment. Our university was not an exception, and in order to understand the evolution of the UWTSD London Campus students in a Virtual Learning Environment we had to make a study. The main objective is to understand if students are happy with the VLE and find solutions to problems that will help our learning program to be better.

Research Objectives

For my goal to be achieved in this work I would like the reader to understand different types of topics related with digital skills and research methods as: Data (Primary and Secondary); Sample and Sample Size; The process to collect the data and discussion of results. I would also like the reader to understand the concept behind Virtual Learning Environment (VLE).

To help start this study, 3 questions were made. Trough the assignment they will be responded.

1. VLE increases student motivation?
2. VLE has a positive impact on student learning?
3. VLE helps increases independent learning?

Methodology

Research Methods

Research methods are the strategies or techniques that are used in data collections or analysis in order to find out new information or getting better knowledge about a topic.

There are different types of research such as:

1. Qualitative Research – data that cannot be measured
2. Quantitative Research - data that is measured (numbers)
3. Mixed Method – Combination of both 1 and 2.

This assignment uses the mixed method.

Data

Data is Factual Information, such as measurements or statistics used as a basis for reasoning, discussion or calculation (**H.A. Gleason, Jr. 1961**)

Data $\neq$ Information;

Data has to be transformed in information, because sometimes data is all about numbers, measurements and units so it has to be transformed in useful information with context for people to use and take conclusions.

There are 2 types of Data

Primary Data

Primary data is collected by the researcher himself.

- Example: Me in this study.

The data is collected by an individual and it can be gathered in many different ways, like: asking questions; talking to people or making surveys. There are some advantages about using primary data such as the quality of the information that we gather (it is a very important topic in a study). But at the same time there are some disadvantages, for example if the study requires a big amount of people it becomes very difficult to obtain results.

In this assignment I have conducted primary data research with an online survey with 15 questions related to virtual learning environment and it was sent to my colleagues of UWTSD in pursuance for the opinions of the daily users of this technology. The survey was sent by e-mail and the data collected was stored in tables and charts for the analysis process.

Secondary Data

Secondary data is the data collected by someone else and we use it to obtain information.

- Example: The number of students affected by school closures due to COVID-19.

This is an example of a type of data that can not be collected by a single individual so we have to use the data from other studies or articles to complete our research. There are some advantages in this type of data such as the easiness to obtain results (we don't have to make a big of an effort to get information); and the person who uses as no responsibility for the quality of information because it was not gathered by it.

Some of the disadvantages can be that the information founded was not used for a certain study (it becomes harder to adapt the information gathered by other to a specific topic in a specific study made by us); and sometimes the information can be unreliable. During this assignment, I have used secondary data research in order to understand how the educational institutions including our university UWTSD where affected with this pandemic disease and forced to start using VLE.

While countries are at different points in their COVID-19 infection rates, worldwide there are currently more than 1.2 billion students in 186 countries affected by school closures due to the pandemic. (UNESCO Institute for Statistics data, 2020, *Global tracking of COVID-19 caused school closures and re-openings*,)



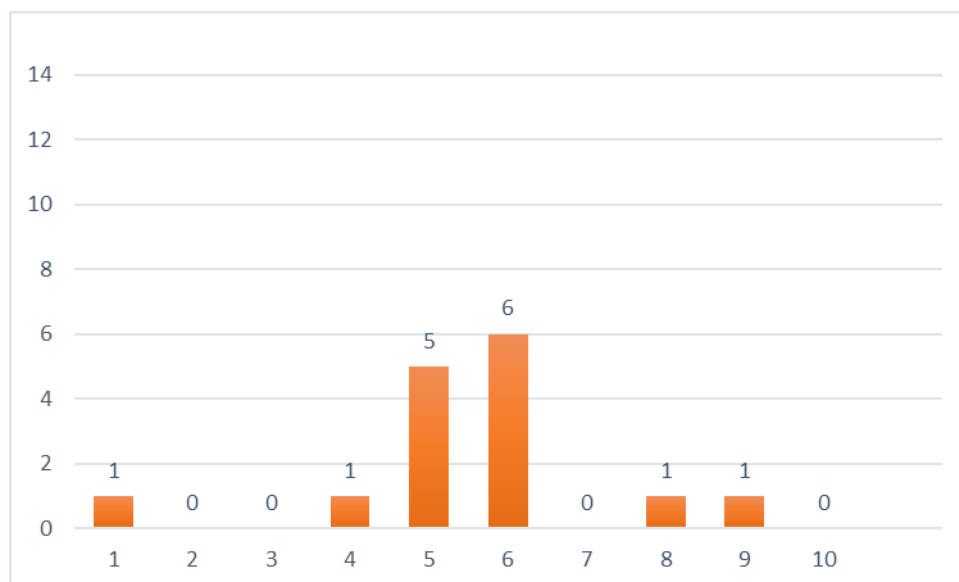
For my study I have selected 15 students from all of the university.

Results

Findings, Analysis and Discussion – 15 STUDENTS

1. From 1-10 how do you rate Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)?

1	1
2	0
3	0
4	1
5	5
6	6
7	0
8	1
9	1
10	0



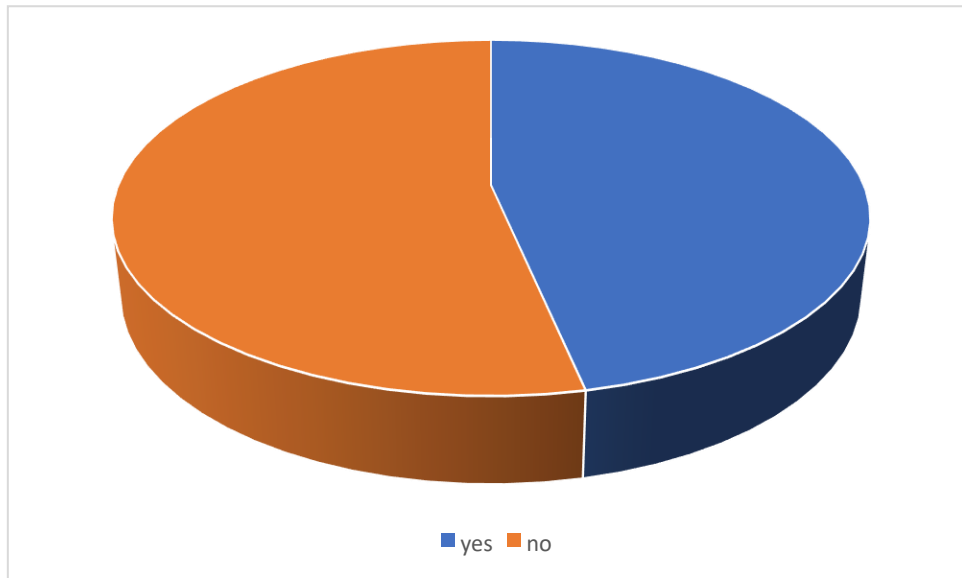
Analysis

Overall, students gave to VLE a 5,5 out of 10. This means that most of the students feel ok about virtual study. None of them gave 10 and the reason of this is because students are used to a face-to-face teaching regime, and we had to adapt to a different concept, this adaptation takes time and depends on person to person.

This question had an average rating witch in not that positive. After many of the conversation that I had with colleagues I could understand that eventually this rating might go up next semester because students already developed the skills necessary to study in VLE.

2. Do you think you can learn better on a virtual learning environment (Yes/No)?

Yes	No
7	8

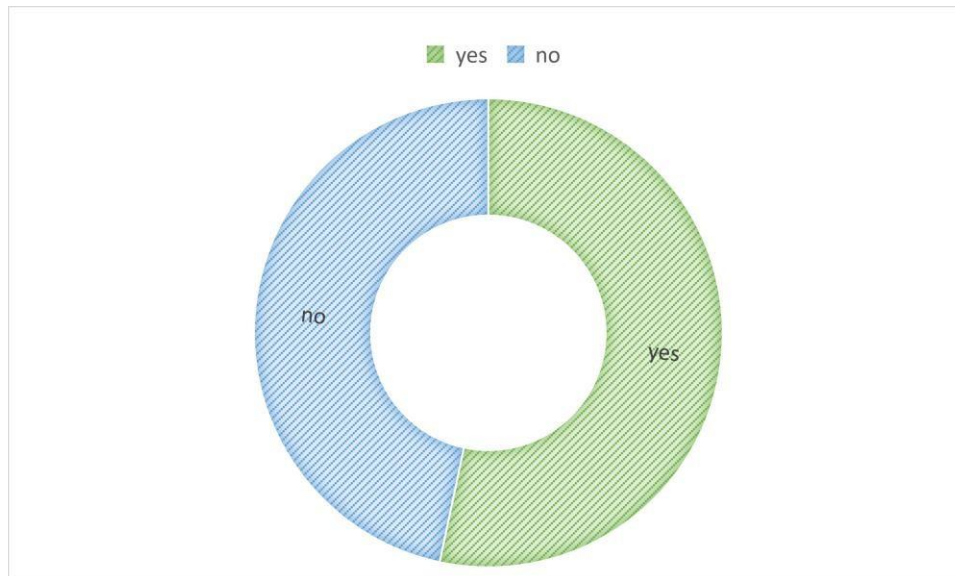


Analysis

According to the graphic more than 50% of the students answered no. This can be an indicative that their achievements are not as good as their expected and their grades will be lower. If we relate question 1 with question 2 we can understand that students feel ok about a VLE but they still prefer face to face regime, however through conversations I could also understand that moodle and Teams are good and useful apps.

3. Do you think that you can interact well with your classmates and teachers on a VLE?
(Yes/No)

Yes	No
8	7



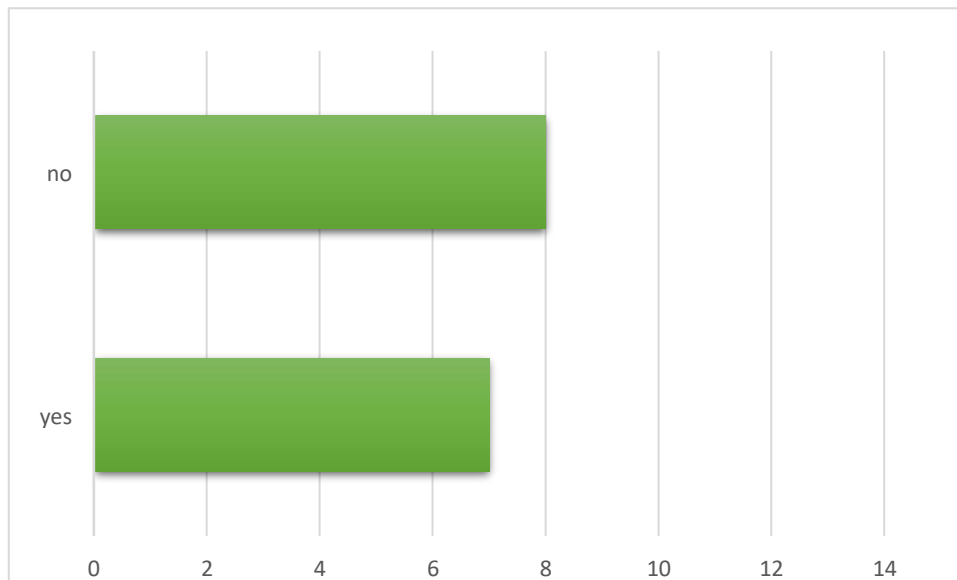
Analysis

53% of the students answered yes and 47% no. Once again, the answers are almost even, and this represents that there is a division. There is clearly a group of people that are adapting well to this regime but there is another group that is still developing what it takes to get through this.

Thorough the conversations with my colleagues I could understand a little bit better the group of people that answered “No” to this question. These are the type of students that are shy or do not feel comfortable enough to speak or interact during classes. This is a process to them but if we continue on this type of regime their skills will developed.

4. Do you think the learning environment should go back to what it was before the pandemic? (Yes/No)

Yes	No
7	8



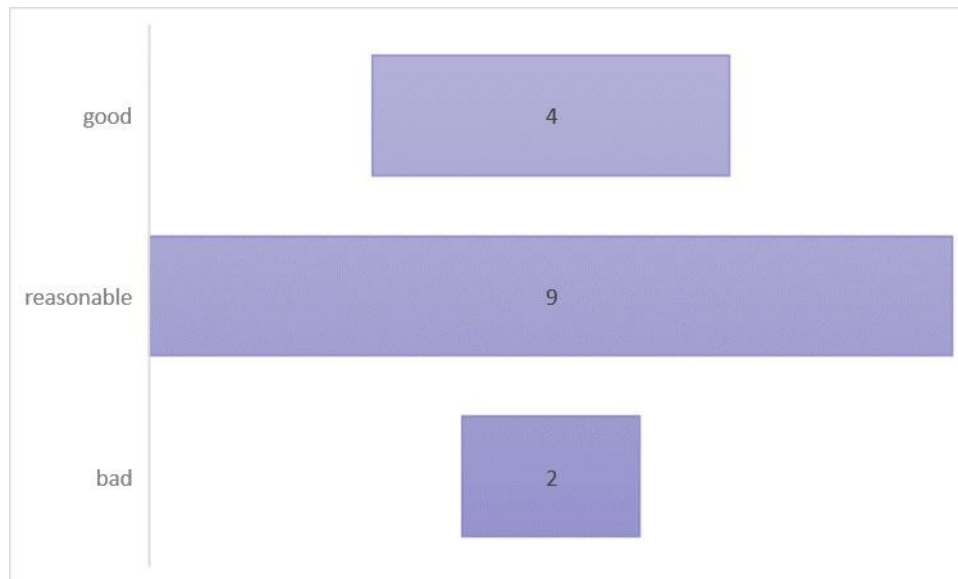
Analysis

Once again the answers are similar to what it was said before. This population shows division and the answers of this question helps us understand and confirm what was said before. Some of the people already have the skills and others are still adapting.

For one group of people it is easier to be in school because of interaction, many times teacher stimulate them in to out of their comfortable zone, or just because they like the normal and simple routine, this are types of obstacles that trough this pandemic they had to come over.

5. How well you think you can learn on a VLE?

Good	4
Reasonable	9
Bad	2



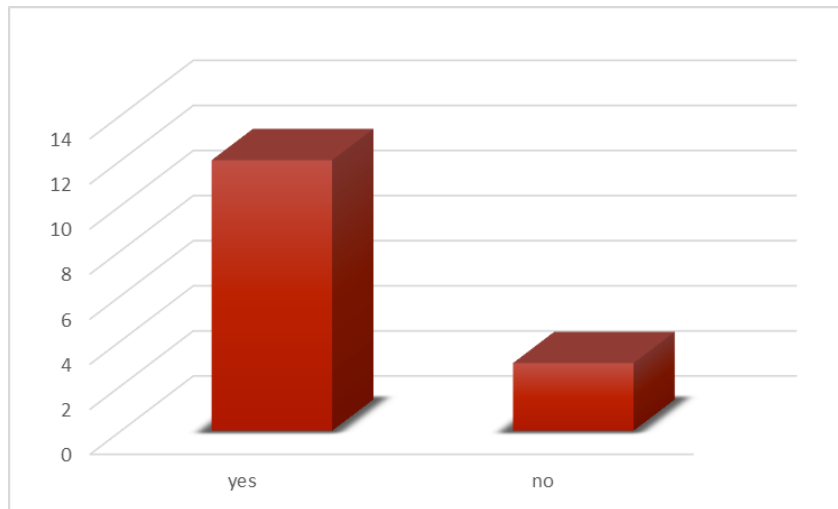
Analysis

Throughout this study it was clear that opinions were divided and once again it shows that there is nothing wrong with this method and the platforms are good as well, however there is a lot of space to improve.

I have spoken to some of my colleagues and I could understand that some of the students were not ready to go home, and by that, I mean that some students did not have computers 100% working to start this on-line courses (broken cameras or broken microphones were the usual difficulties that were found in this process).

6. You like to study on a VLE? (Yes/No)

Yes	No
12	3

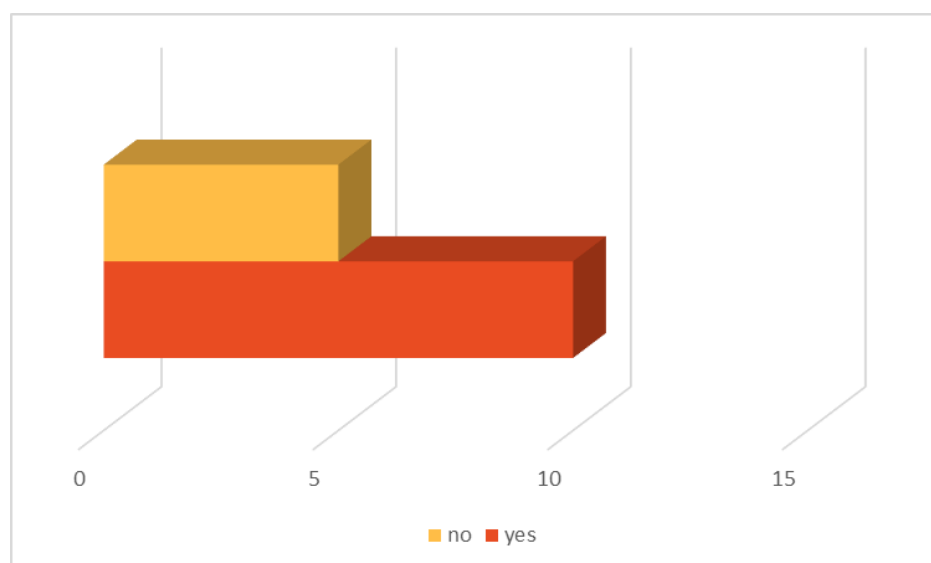


Analysis

This answers probably will seem incorrect, but it makes sense. We live in a virtual world, students are more very used to study trough virtual platforms, and even before of this pandemic, we already did virtual study, so it is understandable that student like the method because they always have used it.

7. You think classes should be interrupted until thinks go back to normal? (Yes/No)

Yes	No
10	5



Summary of the Results

In my opinion the results were more divergent than what I was initially thinking. We could see that this pandemic affected students in very different ways, mostly in their learning skills.

Positive aspects

- Student had a direct contact with VLE and were able to develop their technology skills.
- More time to do schoolwork and therefore get a deeper thoughts in some subjects
- More time at home/family time

Negative Aspects

- A less comfortable group of people sees their grades being lower
- More pressure during classes

However, in general, students feel that UWTSD is doing everything they can for the students to succeed. And my belief is if we continue the next semester in this conditions, things will improve as well the students too.



Conclusion

This study had the objective was to understand the impact of virtual learning environment (VLE) in students learning experience at UWTSD London Campus, and that was achieved. There is still a journey for some students but the thoughts are positive.

This study helped me understand that Moodle and Teams are very effective platforms to help us study, also helped me see that teachers were always available to help us through e-mail or teams which made some of the students more comfortable.

If we continue in this regime in the next semester I personally will be happy, but I will also be more aware to help other students in need.

References

Number of students who had their studies affected by the COVID-19

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