

Module Title: Digital Skills And Research Methods

Module Code: BMSW4003

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Research Objective

The impact of virtual learning environment (VLE) – Moodle on students' learning experiences at the University of Wales, Trinity, St David's London Campus.

Rationale

According to the JISC (2009), virtual learning environment (VLE) can be defined as a web based software system which is designed so that learning and teaching can be facilitated with the use of activities and tools. Students when they use a VLE can allow for a task to be set to be completed in class and then do this at their own location, time and pace and also being able to contribute to both discussions that are asynchronous and synchronous so that learning can be developed (JISC, 2009). According to the JISC (2008), empirical evidence has suggested that the use of the VLE will have an impact on the achievement of students whereby they can encourage independent learning and also increase the motivation of students.

The study explores the views of student regarding the impact of VLE –Moodle on the learning experiences of students at the University of Wales, Trinity St David's London Campus.

Objectives

- To identify the impact of VLE on student's learning experience.
- To determine the device which is mostly used to access the VLE by students.
- To find ways to improve students' experience of the VLE and how it impacts on learning experiences.

Literature review

According to Barker and Gossman (2013), there is some amount of difficulty in define the exact length of time in which VLE have been in use. The Open University in the UK has been making use of computers for learning from the 1970s, however, it was in 2000 that the commercial computer which is based on the VLE Blackboard was patented. Since 2010, the Blackboard software is being used by more than 3700 educational institutions in more than 60 countries according to Blackboard (2011). In 2002, the other most popular form of VLE which is Moodle was introduced (Ofsted, 2009). Moodle was originally developed so that educators could make a creation of

online courses having a focus on collaborative and interaction construction of content according to Ofsted (2009). However, by 2011, Moodle had increased to having a user base in around 212 countries having 49,365 sites that were active and being in more than 75 languages (Moodle, 2011). Because of the post-compulsory sector within the UK in 2008/09 around 92% of further education colleges will have a virtual learning environment and this figure having increased from 58% in 2003/04 (Sero, 2009).

According to Barker and Gossman (2013), there are positive impacts for the use of VLE on the learning of students. In a study carried out by Scardamalia and Bereiter in 1996, upper-grade elementary students made use of a software collaboration tool which allowed both teachers and students to communicate using online means so that their analytical skills could be developed and their understanding better developed. From this, it was realised that students would perform better on tests which were standardised in language, vocabulary and reading and also on understanding and independent thought than those students who did not make use of the software. As such it was concluded that the use of VLE will maximise the reflection of students and encourage thoughts which are progressive and also independent thinking.

This is supported by Diochon and Cameron (2001) who in their study carried out on undergraduate business students learning materials which is accessed only from VLE and it was found that there was a necessity to be active learners when they are using VLE. This resulted in the students having confidence, enthusiasm and capacity which was increased. Students were also able to create their own knowledge through the use of experiences which are collaborative with their peers in a number of different locations and this allowed for an opportunity to be created so that graduate employability skills and competencies could be developed and improved (Diochon and Cameron, 2001).

However, Ofsted (2009) in their study concluded that despite there being elements in VLE which are good as subject use and coverage in institutions tend to be variable this can impact on the efficiency of VLE. Also, they found that success of the use of VLE would be linked to the individual teacher's enthusiasm to the use of technology (Ofsted, 2009). Also, access to broadband internet from the staff, and students' homes can also have an impact on VLE and also its effectiveness. Thus it was suggested that there is a

need for quality assurance strategies and self-assessment should be formalised for VLE in order to improve its effectiveness.

Methodology

According to Saunders et al (2012), the methodology of a research is based on the steps which are taken to carry out a research. It includes the participants and the type of data which will be used within the study.

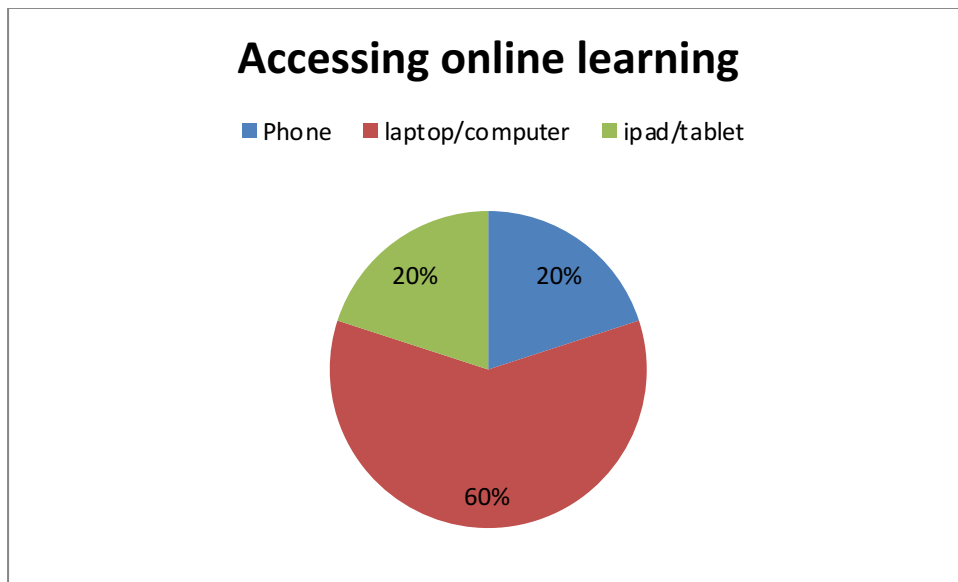
There are two main sources of data when conducting research and this is primary data and secondary data (Saunders et al., 2012). Primary data is data which is collected for the first time and has a specific purpose. Methods of collecting primary data include questionnaire, survey, focus groups and semi-structured interviews. For this study, questionnaires was used and this method has advantages in that it allows for large data to be collected from respondents and it also cost efficient. The disadvantages are that it takes up time and the data has to be analysed.

Secondary data is data which has been collected by others for a specific purpose and has been printed in books, academic journals, reports and magazines. The advantages of using secondary data is that it allows for large sums of data to be collected in a limited amount of time and it is also cost efficient. The disadvantages are that the data can be outdated as it has to be collected, analysed and then published and there can be changes in trends and information during that time.

Data can either be qualitative or quantitative. Qualitative data can be defined as data which is subjective and allows for thoughts, perceptions and feelings of the respondents to be gathered. However, the data cannot be generalised but it provides data which is rich for the study which allows for better understanding to be derived. Quantitative data on the other hand is data which is numerical in nature and allows for statistics and numbers to be used to analyse data. This allows the data collected to be generalizable for a larger population. The study collects both qualitative and quantitative data in this study.

Primary data analysis

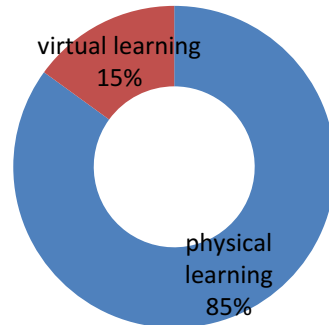
Accessing online learning



The pie chart shows that 60% of the respondents have indicated that they use the laptop/computer to access online learning, while 20% each indicated that they use their phone and ipad/tablet. This shows that the majority of the respondents use laptop/computer.

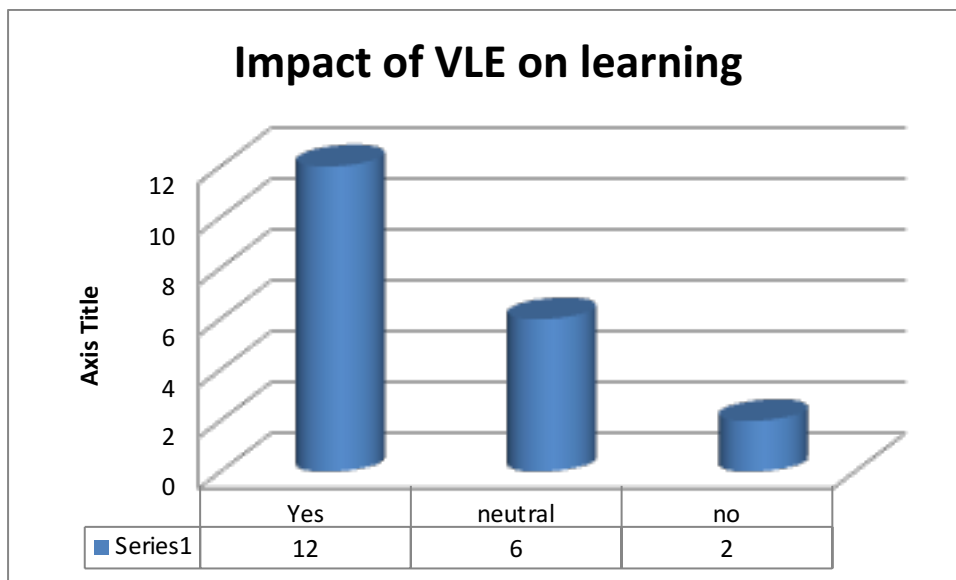
Preference for physical learning or VLE

Preference for physical learning or VLE



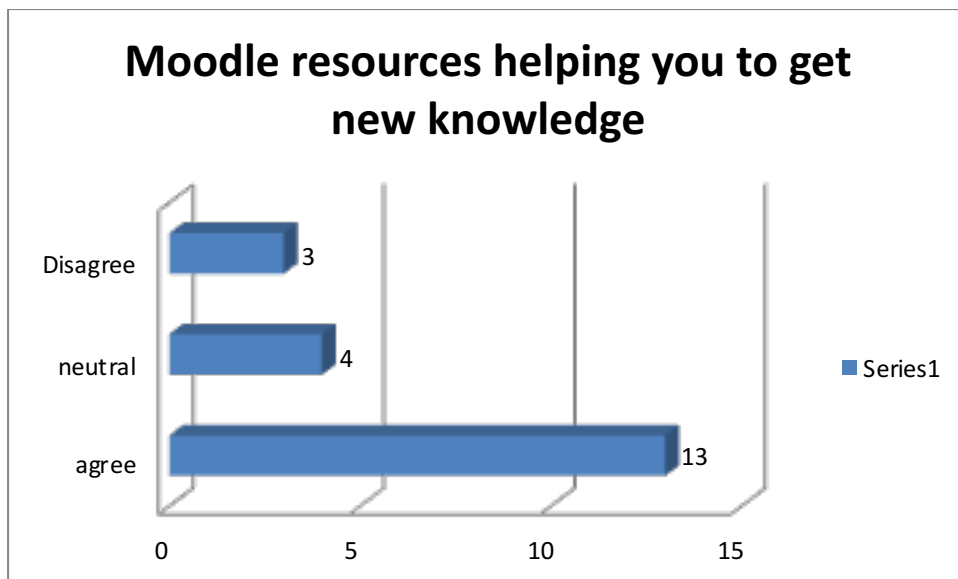
85% of the respondents indicated that they a preference for physical learning when compared to VLE which had 15% of the respondents. This shows that students' have a preference for physical learning over VLE.

Impact of VLE on learning



Students were asked if VLE had a better impact on their studies than physical learning and 12 said yes which is 60 percent of the study, 6 said neutral which is 30 percent of the study and 2 said no which is 10 percent of the study.

Moodle resources being used to get new knowledge



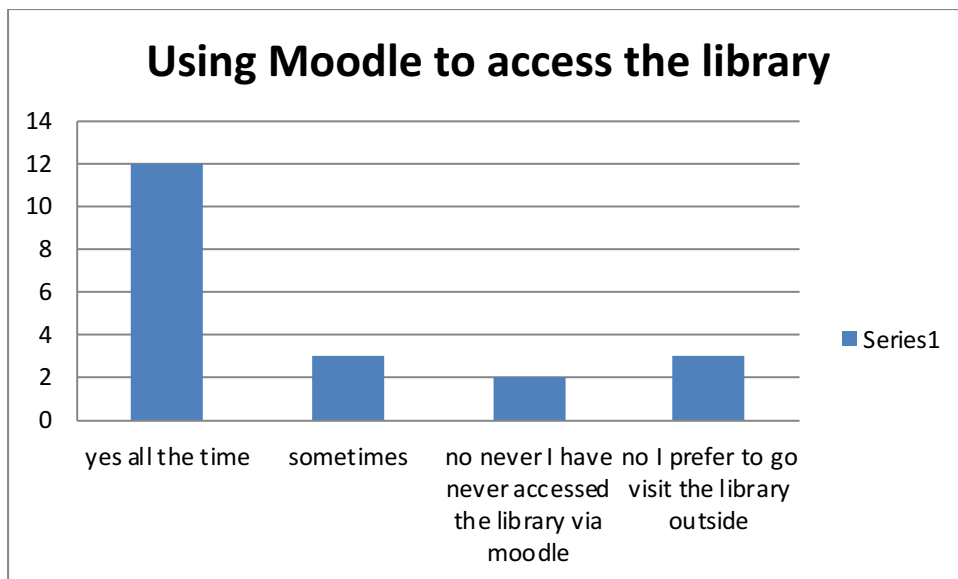
Students were asked if moodle resources have helped to gain new knowledge for future careers and 13 respondents agreed, 4 said neutral and 3 said that they disagreed.

Rating moodle experience

Rating	Responses	Percentages
1	0	0
2	0	0
3	3	15
4	0	0
5	2	0
6	0	0
7	10	50
8	5	25
9	0	0
10	0	0

In rating the moodle experience where 1 is low, 5 is neutral and 10 is highest, 3 respondents indicated 3 which is 15%, 10 said 7 which is 50% of the study and 5 said 8 which is 25 percent of the study.

Question 6. Have you been using Moodle to access the library?



Students were asked about using moodle to access the library and 12 said yes all the time, 3 said sometimes, 2 said no and 3 said that they prefer to visit the library outside. This shows that most of the respondents had a preference for using moodle to access the library.

Secondary data analysis

Based on the secondary data analysis it shows that VLE is very good to be used to support the learning and development of students. In cases such as Covid-19 where social distancing measures have to be put in place, the use of VLE has improved learning and been used to facilitate learning. There are however, disadvantages in that many individuals have a preference for physical learning which can negatively impact on the use of VLE by students. Additionally, internet problems can negatively impact on VLE's efficiency especially when both students and teachers are not technology savvy. However, VLE can motivate students to learn at their own pace and time which allow for the learning experience to be improved and used alongside physical learning it allows for different types of learners to develop strategies to better improve learning.

Conclusion/recommendations

It can be concluded that VLE-Moodle plays an important role in improving the learning of students. Based on the data, it shows that more than half of the students find that VLE will improve their learning. It also can be concluded that students are using their laptop more to access VLE from homes. The study can also conclude that technology is playing an important role in the learning of students and based on pandemic such as Covid-19, it is expected that this will continue in the future to come.

Recommendations

Primary study needs to be carried out making use of focus groups or semi-structured interviews so that more in-depth information can be gathered regarding the impact of VLE on students' learning experiences. This is especially in relation to the primary focus question where students were asked about the impact of VLE on studies than physical

learning. It is recommended that Ofsted carry out a more up to date study on the perceptions of students on the use of VLE and its efficiency in improving learning so that this can be used to develop better understanding of VLE and how it can be used to foster learning and the learning experience. Also, a larger study should be carried out on the entire school using a larger sample so that St Davids can have a better understanding of how its VLE is impacting on the learning experiences of students.

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Appendix

[VLE] virtual Learning Environment

Secondary Questionnaire

Student Name:

Student ID:

Module Name: Digital Skills Research Methods

This Questionnaire will analyse how University Of Wales Trinity Saint David Has supported your academic learning and studying through the virtual Learning Environment.

Please answer the following questions below, Sharing your experience
Thank you

Fill in Your Details Below
circle or tick your answer

NAME:

Gender: Male/Female

Age: (18-24) (25-30) (30-45)

Q1. How Do You Access Microsoft Teams?

- A) Phone
- B) Laptop
- C) iPad/Tablet
- D) Computer

Q2. Have you ever experienced any difficulties with getting into your online lessons via Microsoft Teams?

- A) Yes all the time
- B) No not at all
- C) Yes this happens sometimes
- D) Yes most times, but hardly ever

Q3. Do you think the university has provided enough support for your online lessons.

- A) Yes Definitely
- B) Somewhat
- C) No not all

D) I don't know

Q4. How do you access Microsoft Team to go online?

A) Mobile Data

B) Home [WiFi]

C) University [WiFi]

Q5. Please Tell me how you think you did for you assignments?

A) Excellent

B] Good

C] Average

D] Not Sure

F] Not So good

G] Bad

Q6. How Satisfied are you with [VLE]

Please give a score rate 1-10

1 Lowest

10 Highest

5 Neutral

Answer:

Please give a reason in the box below on why you chose that score

Primary source questionnaire

[VLE] virtual Learning Environment

Module Name: Digital Skills And Research Methods

Term 1 Group 2

Student Name:

Student ID:

This Questionnaire is about how your VLE Has been, please share your experiences and Tick the boxes below that relate best to your answer.

Question 1.

How do you access your online learning Microsoft Teams?

Phone	
Laptop/Computer	
iPad/Tablet	

Question 2.

Do you prefer VLE or physical learning?

Physical Learning/	
Virtual Learning	

Question 3. Has VLE had an better impact on your studies than physical learning?

Yes	
Neutral	
No	

If yes please give your reason in the box below

Question 4.

Has the moodle resources helped you to gain any new knowledge for your Future Career path?

Agree		
Neautral		
Disagree		

Question 5.

Can you please rate your moodle experience from 1 – 10

1 – Lowest 5- Neutral 10 – Highest

1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	

Question 6. Have you been using Moodle to access the library ?

- Yes all the time

- Sometimes
- No never I have never access the library via moodle
- No I prefer to go visit the library outside

Thank You, this is now the end of the Questionnaire