

Assignment no 2

*The impact of Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)- Moodle on
the learning experience of the students at UWTSD London*

Student: Corina Bistriceanu (2011101)

Lecturer: Ejiro Esohwode

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Introduction

The recent pandemic crisis has been the trigger to ample usage of online platforms for learning.

From Board meetings to Primary and Academic Education, Virtual learning has experienced a surge in use of technological communication means enabling meetings and online classes taking place as well as content being downloaded to help students, teachers and peers to keep in close permanent contact during the legal restrictions enforced by the COVID-19 crisis. UWTSD, as well as other accredited education institutions is also making full use of the Virtual Learning Environment tools to promote and enable access to its education resources through platforms such as Moodle and Microsoft Teams. Extra support is also being offered to students via email channels and telephone communication, however the virtual learning environment platforms are pivotal in terms of ease of learning resource available online and availability of content through online library sources and other learning materials. The purpose of this report is to analyse the impact of VLE and provide with an overview of the analysis comprised by the primary and secondary data gathered through feedback from students at UWTSD by the use of online survey as a means to collect and measure information and provide with a statistic.

Rationale

Remote online classes taking place with the aid of technological means widely available in today's world and virtual learning environments have a major contribution to schooling and learning in general, as they enable students to continue their studies while they also remain engaged in other important commitments and activities. The VLE advantages also translate into eliminating travel costs and commute time, which is another huge benefit for students and teachers, who can enjoy the privacy of own accommodations while accessing virtual education platforms and can fully make use of maximising and capitalising on time resources. However, not every student is very proficient at using online resources and virtual platforms, and factors such as the quality of the internet connection, background noise and distracting circumstances as well as the inability to concentrate and filter the information received online can provide the setting conditions of a failing VLE experience for a percentage of the students. Therefore, the focus of the current report is to analyse the primary and secondary data provided by a proportion of the students at UWTSD and measure the level of satisfaction they are experiencing while making use of the virtual learning platforms at their disposal.

Research Aims and Objectives

This report endeavours to analyse the following data:

- Both the positive and the negative aspects experienced by students at our University over VLE experience in general
- Levels of satisfaction over the online learning resources that students have been provided with to further their studies (Moodle/Online library)
- Easiness of accessing resources and the frequency of using the online tools and platforms provided by the University.

Literature Review

As opposed to classic learning settings, virtual learning experience takes place entirely in the online. Elements such as the attention span of a student, the pitch of voice, the phrasing, the tone, as well the quality of the internet connection can obscure the general understanding and the message from a tutor towards an online audience. However, at the same time the virtual learning environment offers the advantage of ease of accessing sources and variety of resources that can be taped into at any given time and location both by teachers and students, providing that a solid internet connection is available. Often, in classic learning settings, the speed of enunciating ideas and the pressure posed by the volume of information to be shared can become overwhelming and difficult to be captured by all students. Resorting to online sources however offers students and teachers immediate access to multiple sources of information and provides immense opportunities towards individualised learning styles. Therefore, there seems to be a general consensus over the positive influence of virtual learning environments over learning styles and enhanced academic knowledge gain particularly since it eliminates travel constraints and binding time schedules. Positive impacts of the use of VLEs on student learning are supported by a study conducted in West Virginia, USA. (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1996). According to this particular study, upper-grade elementary students used a software collaboration tool that enabled students and teachers to communicate online to develop their understanding and analytical skills. During the study it was noted that “*Students performed significantly better on standardised tests in reading, language and vocabulary and on measures of depth of understanding, multiple perspectives and independent thought than students who did not use the software.*”

The General Positive Impact of Virtual Learning

The use of online resources and platforms provides students with great flexibility in managing their schedules and making use of a variety of materials required to complete their tasks and gain knowledge. Perhaps overall this is the most notable advantage of VLE over traditional class settings that tend to be somewhat more rigid or perhaps do not offer the same flexibility in terms of ease and speed of accessing knowledge. In general, virtual learning has created the right premises to an open mind learning style and brought about significant changes to the learning experience of students, mostly with a positive effect on the overall skill gain and employability of students. Notably, the internet acts as an inexhaustible source of information where students feel encouraged and empowered to look for answers and access in depended and collective sources, such as online libraries through Moodle and collate the information relevant to their research. Others, feel compelled to find specific answers and carry out research and learn how to organise their work and overcome complex issues in prioritising their learning and improving their professional and academic outlook. According to Barker, J., Grossman, P. (2013), *“VLEs have a range of research reported positive impacts form various contexts. They can; promote reflection, accommodate the needs of students, increase enthusiasm and confidence, improved readiness to learn, and broadly reported above improved course assessment performance”*.

The General Negative Impact of Virtual Learning

Although the general feeling towards VLE tends to be a positive one, more reserved opinions are also to be noted. Generally, the main concerns are stemming from students feeling isolated. This can lead to a lack of interaction, inability of expressing themselves properly or overcoming certain personal aspects such as shyness and fear of public speaking. Other aspects are of practical nature and are manifested in the form of not being able to practice with colleagues or rehearse tasks other than through technological channels resulting in a lack of confidence in performing tasks and the feeling that they are missing out on the real experience. As a result, this can often led to a lowered attention span of students, inconsistency of results and feeling alienated and can trigger a general loss of involvement and interest in their studies. According to Durban and Hermsdorfer (2015), inability to interact effectively and properly with the classmates and teachers are the main negative impact of the virtual learning. Other issues include poor or loss of internet connection during classes where students are missing out important content or information that isn't necessarily available on line whilst it can also have a negative impact on their class attendance record at the same time.

Methodology

Data collection is going to be made by using primary and secondary data sources as detailed below:

Primary Sources come in the form of recorded information acting as an original source of information for a study. Examples of primary sources include statistical methods such as manuscripts, letters, file notes, diary annotations, reports, interviews, government reports and polls –to name just a few. In my study, I will collect my primary data by using a survey that I designed online and that I've sent to a percentage of my colleagues to gather information.

Secondary Sources include records generated by an event but recorded by non-participants or data originating in primary sources that have been interpreted or analysed. In my study, I will use as reference the similar studies conducted by academics in analysis the impact of e-learning in various academic settings.

Primary Sources	Secondary Sources
These are original documents or original research.	These are works that synthesize, summarize, and/or interpret primary sources.
<u>Examples</u> • Diaries • Interviews • Speeches • Academic research – often printed in scholarly journals • Fiction (novels, poetry, short stories)	<u>Examples</u> • Encyclopedias • Histories • Reviews • Textbooks • Magazine articles • Biographies

https://s3.amazonaws.com/libapps/accounts/1648/images/Primary_vs_Secondary.png

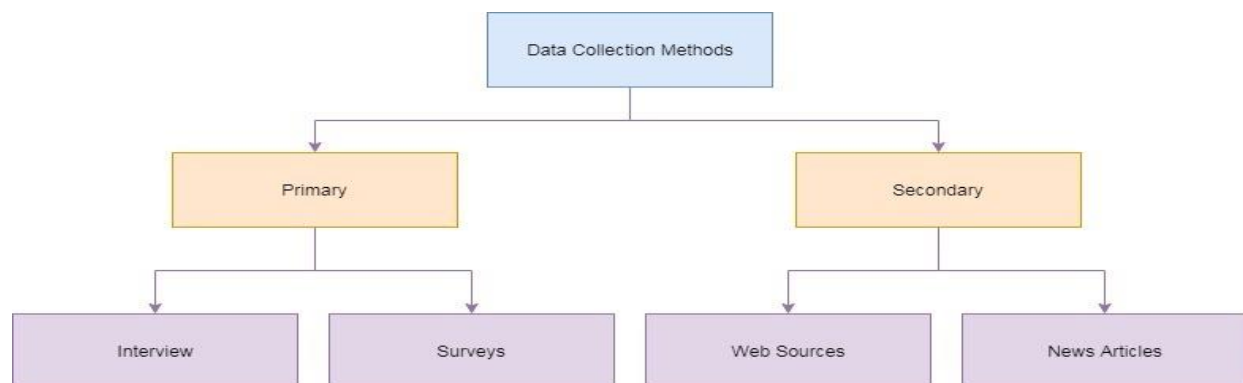
Qualitative and quantitative research will be used in order to analyse the data collected and generate a statistics report to measure the efficiency and proficiency of the VLE at UWTSD.

Qualitative data is data that can be observed and recorded but can't be expressed as a number. An example could be hair colour of players on a football team, the car a person drives, the area or street a person lives on, etc.

Quantitative data is objective data that can be communicated through statistics and numbers.

An example illustrating quantitative data can be the number of people living in a town, number of students that take a statistic, and in general anything that can be quantified numerically.

For my study I will be using both the quantitative and the qualitative research and I will collect data with the help of a six questions survey summarising a brief understanding of the impact of VLE over student's experience at our University. The secondary data source will be extracted from a similar previous study conducted on the learning platform Moodle and other similar published studies. While conducting my study I will ensure that the data collection ethics will be strictly maintained and followed during and after the completion of the research as I am under legal obligation to adhere to The **Data Protection Act of 1998** and other privacy regulations in place.



What are some methods to collect primary data? - Quora

Data Analysis

Analysis of Primary Data

Question1.

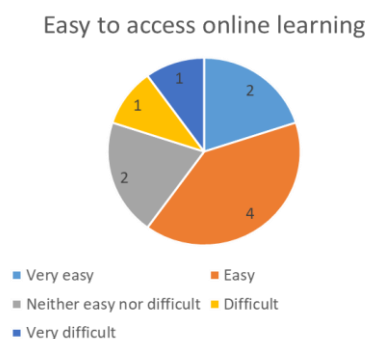


Figure 1: Easiness in accessing the online learning

Analysis: The study was conducted with the help of 10 participants who completed the survey. The aim of *Question1* was to find out how easy it is to access the online learning resources. Out of the 10 participants, 2 responded that it was very easy, 2 responded that it was neither easy nor difficult, 1 responded that it was very difficult, 4 responded that it was easy, while 1 responded that it was difficult.

Question 2.

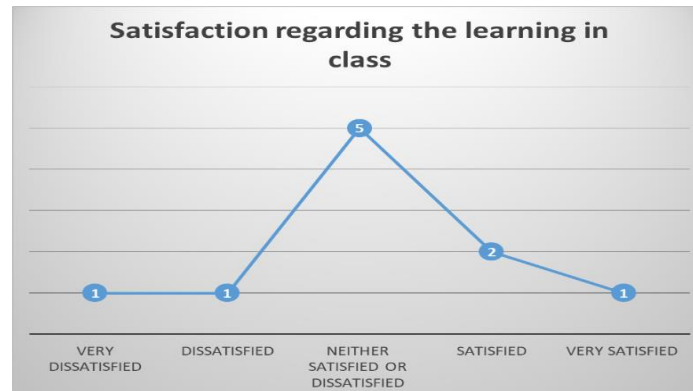


Figure 2: Satisfaction level with the learning in the class

Analysis: To record the level of satisfaction in class over VLE, the same participants provided their answers as following: 1 participant was very dissatisfied, 1 participant was dissatisfied, 5 participants were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, while 2 were satisfied and 1 participant was very satisfied with the overall experience of online learning.

Question 3.

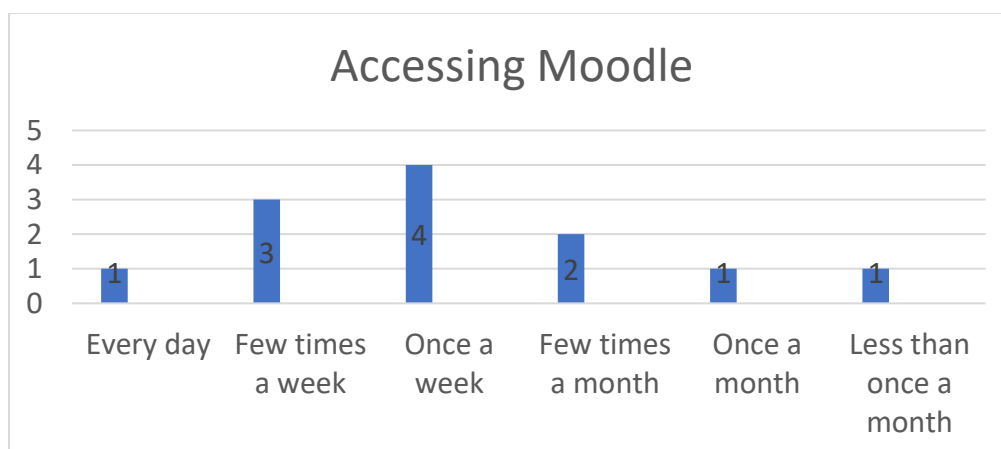


Figure 3: Accessing Moodle

Analysis: In ref to the frequency of students accessing Moodle, 1 participant accesses Moodle on a daily basis, 3 participants are accessing Moodle few times a week, 4 participants answered that they were accessing Moodle once a week, while 2 responded that they were accessing Moodle few times a month, and the last two 1 for each category- were accessing Moodle once a month or less than once a month.

Question 4.

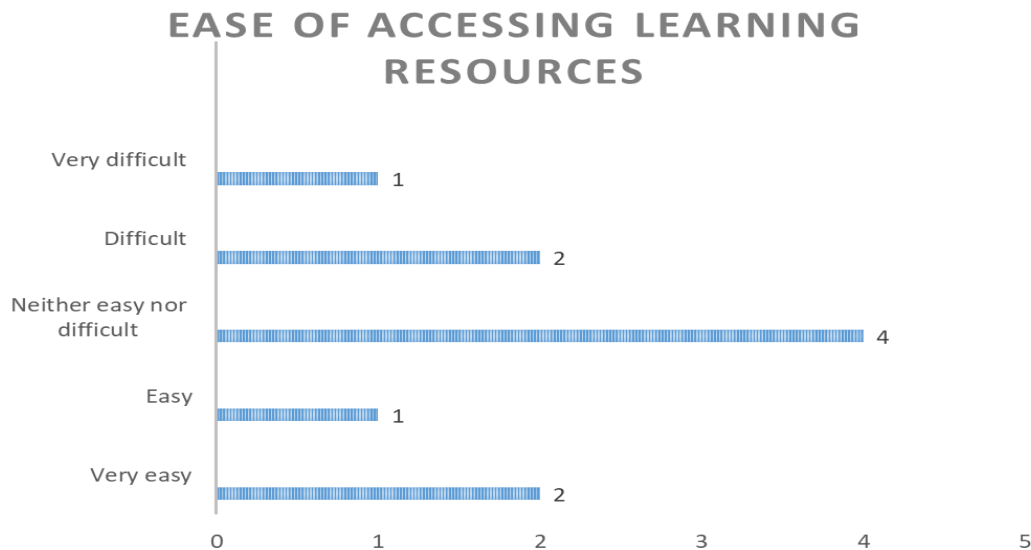


Figure 4: Easiness in accessing the online learning resources

Analysis: On *Question 4* referring to the ease of accessing learning materials, 4 responded that it was neither easy nor difficult, 2 replied that it was easy, 1 responded that it was very easy while only 1 responded that it was difficult and only 1 responded mentioned that it was very difficult accessing online resources. Majority of responses were therefore positive and only couple of participants had issues and difficulties in accessing VLE sources.

Question 5. What suggestions for improvements you have on DSR class?

Analysis: This question was an open-ended question where respondents were asked to suggest their improvement for the DSR class and the majority of participants left the answer to this question blank. Only 2 respondents mentioned that they would've liked to have more time in

class to practice PowerPoint and Excel charts while 1 participant responded mentioned that there are no suggestions to be made at the present time.

Question 6.

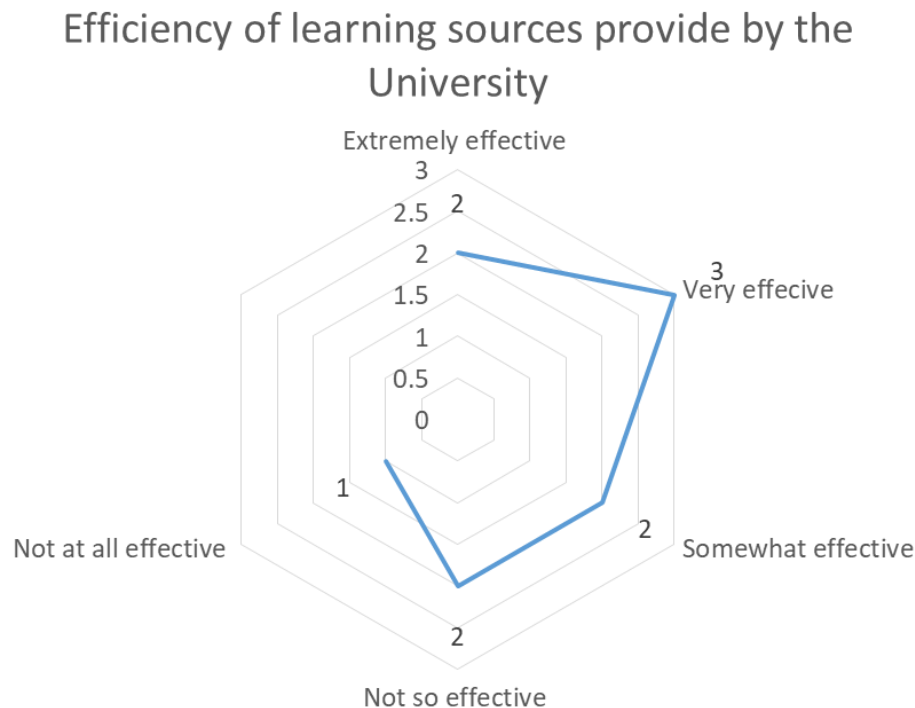


Figure 5: About the learning sources provided by the University

Analysis: The last question of the survey has been on the effectiveness of sources provided by our University to students and 2 responded mentioned that they find these extremely effective while 2 responded that they find the sources very effective. Out of the rest of the respondents 2 answered that they find the sources somewhat effective while a similar number of respondents replied that they do not find the sources so effective. Overall, the answers to this question had been positive and none of the respondents indicated that they do not find the sources at all effective.

Analysis of Secondary Data

In the secondary data analysis, information and studies conducted by various other academic bodies have been factored in to determine the positive context occupied by VLE in general and at our University in particular. The primary data that analysis collated from UWTSD students is

generally favourable to the positive effects and ease of use of VLE through the platforms and teaching at our University and the secondary data research published on similar journal articles and scholar studies are also favourable to the fact that students are generally comfortable and happy with the use of VLE in their academic settings as they achieve better results in their studies.

Conclusion

Prior to the Covid-19 a large number of accredited institutions and academic bodies have resorted to the use of VLE due to easiness of accessing resources and utilising online materials to help with the development of skills, knowledge and understanding of students. Post-pandemic the use of VLE has become norm in most academic settings enabling students and teachers to become more accustomed by the day with the use on online platforms and tools and less frustrated when dealing with inherent challenges. According to a study published in 2017 in the Universal Journal of Educational Research, “*The learning interactions occurring within the classroom are complex by nature, but the use of virtual learning environments enables the obtainment and the processing of large quantities of data from each interaction between the several players in the process.*” Therefore, the current exercise and the majority of published studies support the findings to highlight the overall positive impact of VLE on the learning experience of UWTSD students and of other students in general.

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Appendix

Survey Form (used in the study)

1. How easy has it been for you to access online learning?
 - Very Easy
 - Easy
 - Neither Easy nor Difficult
 - Difficult
 - Very Difficult
2. Generally, how satisfied are you with the learning that you got in class?
 - Very Dissatisfied
 - Dissatisfied
 - Neutral
 - Satisfied
 - Very Satisfied
3. How often do you access the Moodle?
 - Every day
 - A few times a week
 - About once a week
 - A few times a month
 - Once a month
 - Less than once a month
4. How easy do you find the accessing Library Resources?
 - Very Easy
 - Easy
 - Neither Easy nor Difficult
 - Difficult
 - Very Difficult
5. What suggestions for improvements you have on DSR class?

6. How happy are you with the learning resources provided by the University?

- Extremely Effective
- Very Effective
- Somewhat Effective
- Not so Effective
- Not at all Effective