

Assessing the positives and negatives of VLE and how it has impacted student's learning

Introduction

Virtual learning environments (VLE) provide people the privilege of accessing learning resources and information via the internet. Many resources are made accessible online and have helped improve basic skills of students into improving themselves. This report aims to assess the positive impacts of VLE on students at University of Wales Trinity Saint David.

Objectives

The aim of this report is essentially to see how students have been impacted by VLE. The impacts are expected to vary with some students likely to appreciate VLE and some more likely to oppose it and this report aims to establish these differences to provide feedback that can potentially aid in improving VLE. The unforeseen interference by COVID-19 on our studies will definitely affect the opinions of fellow students but I am keen to explore the different perspectives between the genders and how they find it.

Features of VLE

There are many key features of VLE that have helped improve communication between teachers/lecturers and students. These involve tools such as e-mail and virtual chat facilities which allow communication between multiple parties without having to actually be present in person. Feedback is made easier because of self-assessment tools which allow students to better reflect on themselves and look for areas of strengths and weaknesses. Another feature that is one of the key material features that has helped student learning is the readily available access of lecture materials including power-point presentations and video recordings. This means that if a person is absent because of unforeseen circumstances they can catch up on anything they have missed previously (Shore, 2013). There are also many student tools available such as drop boxes for the upload of coursework which makes it more efficient in submitting work rather than having to travel and hand it in person (Skinner, 2015).

Advantages and disadvantages for VLE

There are many advantages and disadvantages of VLE (Johnson, 2019). Some of the advantages include:

- Easily accessible for students and lecturers
- Provide students with a wide range of resources online
- Can assist a large number of people and is not restricted to individuals
- Flexible for both students and lecturers meaning they can communicate from almost anywhere
- Students aren't restricted to learning in one way and can learn in multiple

As well as advantages there also come some disadvantages with VLE (Grant, 2016). These include:

- Not all resources will be used and some will go unnoticed by students
- Communication relies on teachers or lectures actually reading the emails and whatever is sent to them
- Uploading resources and making them accessible can take time
- Support from lecturers will most likely be limited via VLE depending on the clarity of the response that they provide to any students.

Methodology

To assess the influence VLE has on students, I will produce a questionnaire that has about 12 questions enquiring into the effects they have on students. The potential answers will include:

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

These are all varying answers and provide a safe insight into how students feel about different aspects of VLE. The questions I ask will include ones that are referring to the amount of time spent using resources provided by VLE, how useful it is having access to VLE and if it makes learning easier for them because of it. The questionnaire will be distributed amongst my course mates. The survey will be conducted online and from the results I achieve I will produce some form of analysis from it to see how the answers varied. An excel graph will be produced which will provide an insight into different opinions of different genders.

Primary data analysis

To determine the extent of the influence of VLE on the learning of my peers I will dissect each survey statement of mine and see how they reacted. There were 11 questions and I will display a pie chart of the responses and then comment on them.

1. I have made good use of access to VLE

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Strongly Agree	0
Agree	9
Neither agree nor disagree	1
Disagree	0
Strongly Disagree	0



From the responses for this statement the majority of the people who have taken part in the survey would agree that they are using VLE to help them with their studies.

2. I prefer to work in online settings rather than classroom-based settings

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Strongly Agree	1
Agree	4
Neither agree nor disagree	2
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	1



There were mixed feelings for this question. VLE is more closely related to online settings and it appears that not everyone appreciates working through zoom as we have been doing and would rather have face to face interaction with their peers and lecturers. This suggests a slight negative view on VLE.

3. My knowledge has expanded due to the introduction of VLE

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Strongly Agree	2
Agree	5
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Disagree	0
Strongly Disagree	0



From these results it is clear to see that VLE has helped everyone in improving their learning and expanding their knowledge since no one seemed to disagree with the statement.

4. VLE has helped increase how much students use the learning resources available

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Strongly Agree	0
Agree	9
Neither agree nor disagree	1
Disagree	0
Strongly Disagree	0



VLE has had a positive impact on how much the students are using the online resources available. Almost 100% of students are making full use of the available resources online. Without the introduction of VLE people would have had to directly access information maybe through libraries and other resources which may not have been as efficient without VLE.

5. I feel more comfortable learning online rather than classroom-based settings

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Strongly Agree	1
Agree	3
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	1



Mixed feelings were found for this statement too. Some students feel more at ease in online settings and feel less under pressure to answer anything. As a result of VLE people are able to learn in easier settings and less intensive.

6. VLE has made it easier to access online resources

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Strongly Agree	3
Agree	6
Neither agree nor disagree	0
Disagree	0
Strongly Disagree	1



One of the main purposes of VLE was to make it easier for students to access online resources. From the results it is clear to see that almost every student agrees with the statement and are able to find what they need whenever they need it.

7. There are more positives than negatives with VLE

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Strongly Agree	1
Agree	4
Neither agree nor disagree	4
Disagree	1
Strongly Disagree	0



The majority consensus for this statement was that there are more positives than negatives for VLE since that was what most people chose. However a lot of them were unsure which suggests that not everyone knows the full extent of what VLE has to offer so it may pave way for an opportunity for the students to completely understand the purpose and everything that comes with VLE.

8. It is easier to communicate with lecturers/teachers because of VLE

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Strongly Agree	0
Agree	6
Neither agree nor disagree	1
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	1



VLE involves emails and other forms of internet communication between people. VLE has made it easier for multiple people to communicate. However some people would disagree which may indicate a lack of knowledge on communication so will not be able to communicate as effectively.

9. My organisation skills have improved due to VLE

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Strongly Agree	2
Agree	3
Neither agree nor disagree	3
Disagree	2
Strongly Disagree	0



VLE may not offer as many opportunities for people to organise files and documents etc. However there are still multiple resources available online that allow people to organise their belongings.

10. I completely understand how to make full use of VLE

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Strongly Agree	1
Agree	8
Neither agree nor disagree	1
Disagree	0
Strongly Disagree	0



Surprisingly over 80% of those who were surveyed find that they know how to make full use of VLE. This includes things mentioned earlier above such as communicating with others and organising any documents. This could mean that they appreciate the value of VLE and wanted to learn about how to use it.

11. Producing reports is made easier because of VLE

[More Details](#)

Strongly Agree	0
Agree	8
Neither agree nor disagree	2
Disagree	0
Strongly Disagree	0



Peers would have to complete many reports and essays during the semester. Fortunately for them they have the opportunity to do it online and type it out which is found easier for the majority that writing it out. As well as this, it also includes the immediate access to online resources available that help students when it comes to producing these reports.

Secondary data analysis

I have further split up the data received into how opinions of males and females differ to each other. The numbers below represent the different survey statements.

Female	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	0	7	1	0	0
2	1	4	2	1	0
3	2	4	2	0	0
4	0	8	0	0	0
5	1	3	3	1	0
6	3	5	0	0	0
7	1	4	3	0	0

8	0	5	1	2	0
9	2	3	3	0	0
10	0	7	1	0	0
11	0	8	0	0	0

Male	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	0	2	0	0	
2	0	0	0	1	1
3	0	1	1	0	0
4	0	1	1	0	0
5	0	0	0	1	1
6	1	0	0	0	1
7	0	0	1	1	0
8	1	0	0	0	1
9	0	0	0	2	0
10	1	1	0	0	0
11	0	0	2	0	0

Both males and females generally agreed that they have made good use of access to VLE. It was found that males prefer more than the females to work in classroom-based settings which corresponds to the nature of men who are more usually confident in person. Similar responses were found for the increase of knowledge due to VLE for both genders as well as appreciating how much they use the learning resources available online. The males again feel less comfortable in online settings which are proving to be a common trend. Only half the male participants found it easier to access online resources whereas all female participants find it easy to access the resources. Some of participants of both genders have found that there are more negatives than positives for VLE. They also find it slightly more difficult to communicate with lecturers/teachers with VLE. The male participants do not feel their organisation skills have improved due to VLE whereas the majority of the female participants have felt slight improvement. Both sets know how to make full use of VLE which is understandable and they both find that it is easier to produce reports since the introduction of VLE.

From my secondary data analysis I think I can conclude that the female participants appreciate VLE more and know how to make better use of it whereas the male participants feel like they have not improved their personal skills due to VLE. Both sets of participant appear to understand what VLE is about and how it works. Males seem to generally prefer working in classroom based settings whereas the females prefer and appear more comfortable in online settings. The overall consensus from the survey is that the students have all benefitted from the introduction of VLE and it has helped them out more.

Conclusion

VLE has been essential to all students ever since COVID-19 has been introduced. Many people have relied on VLE to either complete their studies or continue them. I am one of those students who have benefitted off the introduction to VLE. From my survey it was found that I was not the only one

who benefited off VLE and majority of the responses were positive and people appeared to favour VLE. However, after further analysis I can conclude females prefer VLE more than male participants but I would need to increase my number of participants to strengthen this conclusion.

References

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