

Digital Skills and Research Methods

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Produce a research report on the impact of Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) – Moodle on students' learning experience at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David London Campus. Students are required to collect and analyse both primary and secondary data as part of the research. In class (online for the time being), each student has to develop a questionnaire on the above topic, which should be operationalised as a primary data collection tool. Then the students need to use that questionnaire to conduct a survey. Due to the current pandemic situation, students are strongly advised to conduct the survey online only instead of face-to-face. This is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the students. Students are then required to present their survey results in an excel table to generate graphs.

Research of published material on the topic of the impact of Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) on students' learning experience in general should be gathered and analysed as a secondary data collection tool. Finally, a conclusion should be provided from the analysis of both primary and secondary data. Students are also advised to provide in-text citations and references as per the Harvard referencing style.

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Introduction

In this report I'm going to talk about how virtual learning environment has had an impact in my university (UWSTD). I am going to do this by collecting primary and secondary data. I will be collecting primary data from my classmates by doing a survey about what they think about virtual learning experience. I am also going to research on what professionals and experts think about the impact that virtual learning has on students. I will be doing this by reading books, researching online and watching videos about their opinions and thoughts on the subject.

Rationale of the study

I am doing this research because virtual learning is the new thing now and it would be good to see people feel about this new method of learning. Virtual learning has its advantages and disadvantages. Its advantages is that you are able to gain digital skills which can be helpful in the future and it also teaches you to be independent. It's also really good because you are able to learn in the comfort of your home and it also saves you a lot of time. The disadvantages can be that it's really hard to communicate with your teacher because of connection or just simply because it's really hard to get through to them. It could also be very hard to interact with other students or even concentrate in class because of distractions around you. In addition to my last point, I believe that many people learn differently, so for those who are physical or visual learners will really struggle to engage with their teacher.

Virtual learning is very important because it prepares you for the real world. It teaches you how to use your time wisely and how to be disciplined with how you organise and prepare yourself to complete tasks that are given to you. An author called Raji Srinivasan said that "In virtual learning environments, technologies can be used to show students' profile pictures, names, titles, pronouns and pronunciations. All of this enables students to bring their full identities into the open, enhancing their engagement and learning outcomes. It also eliminates differences that hinder in-person learning."

Literature Review

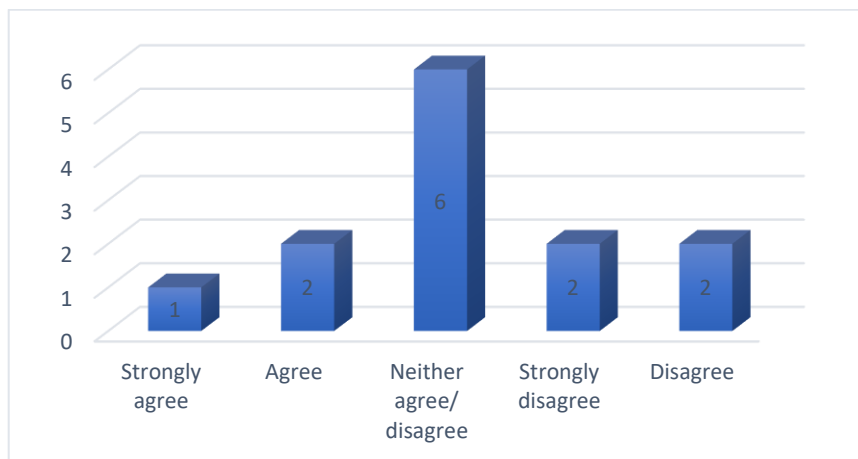
There are many different methods that were created to make it easy for students to communicate with each other and their teachers. It also allows them to access tools and materials that will help them with their work and complete tasks. Moodle is my university's student portal, where I'm able to find information that I need about my courses, assignments and any updates. Whilst doing my research I found that there are many new ways for students to learn online and courses. I decided to use my class mates to do this research because for many it was their first time experience learning online and I thought that it would be an accurate result. I also decided to choose my class because it was a decent amount of people of different ages and background, which makes it a neutral outcome.

Research Methodology

To collect data information about what people in my class thinks about virtual learning. I first decided to use the primary data method, by creating a survey and write down specific statements about online learning experience and using Moodle. After I used the information that I got from the survey, I put the result on to a chart so that it would be more clear for me to see the outcome. Then I had to analyse the chart so that I could see any patterns from the results, that I gathered. I then used the secondary data method by reading some articles online and read people reviews online. I done this because it help to expand my understanding on virtual learning experience and also compare it to the information I also collected from people in my class.

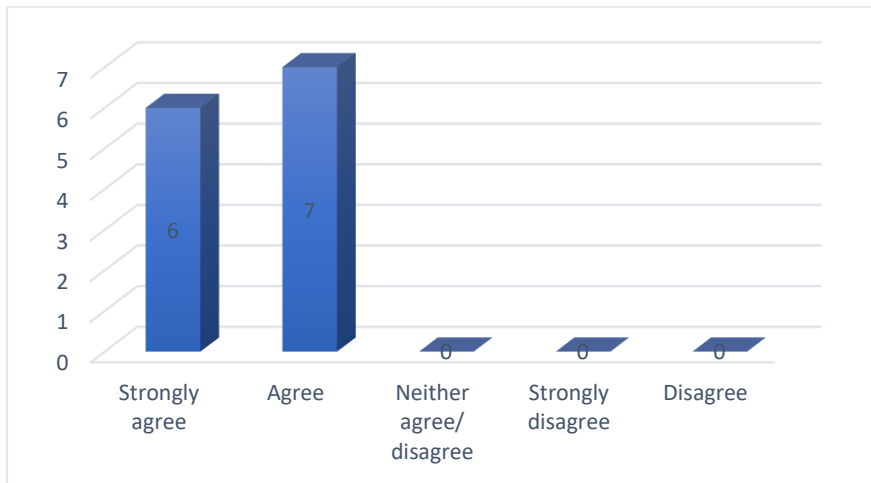
Report of Virtual Learning Environment in UWTSD

1. Online learning is better than going into class



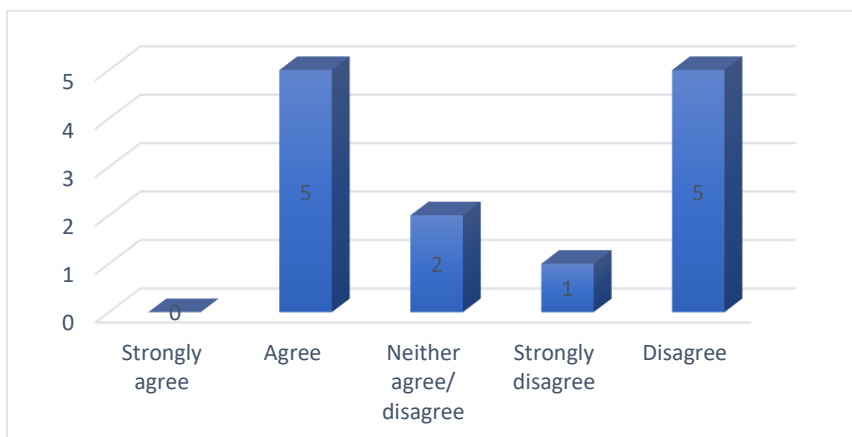
This chart gives information about if people in my class thinks that online learning being better than going to class. According to the chart the highest percentage is that people neither agree or disagree but the lowest percentage is that someone strongly agree that online lesson is better online. The other results were even. Overall nearly half of the class were on the same page about how they felt about learning online than a classroom, which can be a good thing especially has we had covid hic was very help. Also has things are advancing it ill also be really good in the future.

2. Its very easy to access Moodle



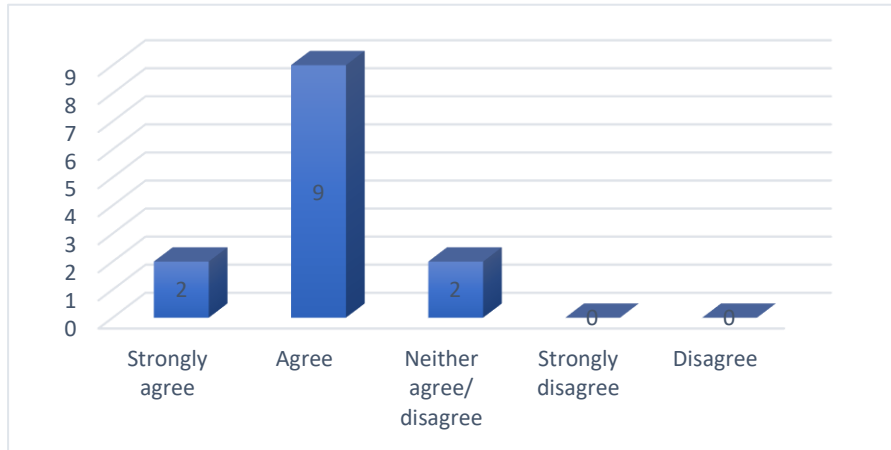
This chart shows that's how many people in my class think if it's easy to access moodle. The chart shows that using moodle is very easy and simple for students as it shows that half of the class strongly agreed and agreed.

3. Its very hard to concentrate on online classes



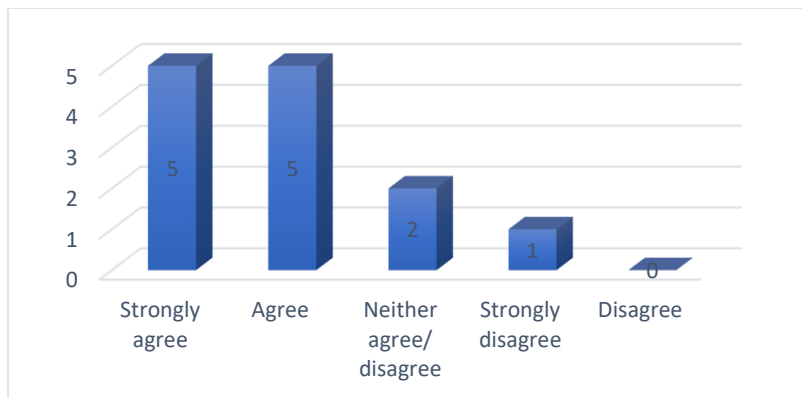
The results in this chart is was flexible has many people opinion on finding it hard to concentrate in class were different. One half of the class agreed that its not really easy to focus during online lesson as the other half of the class disagreed and one even strongly disagreed, that they are able to pay attention. Other people neither agreed or disagreed.

4. **Finding assignments on Moodle can be very simple**



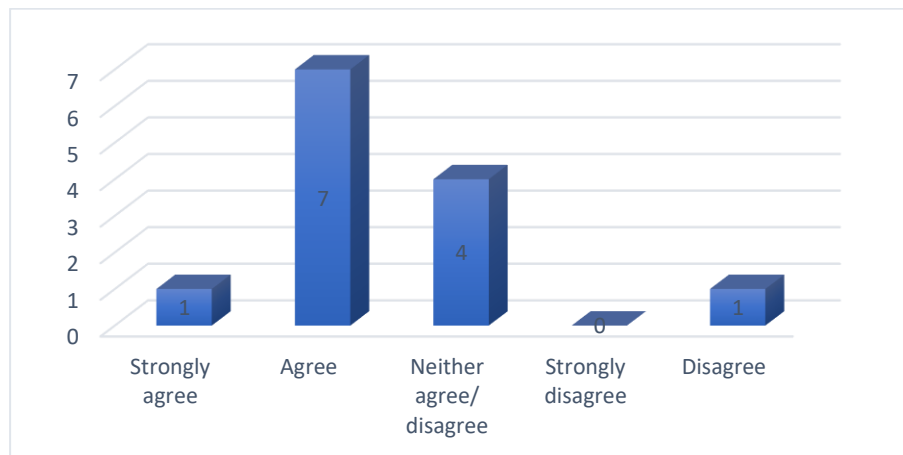
This chart illustrates that majority of the class agreed and strongly agree that finding their assignments on Moodle is very easy and simple to find. On the other hand the rest of my class neither agreed or disagreed.

5. **Its always very easy to communicate with my lecturer online**



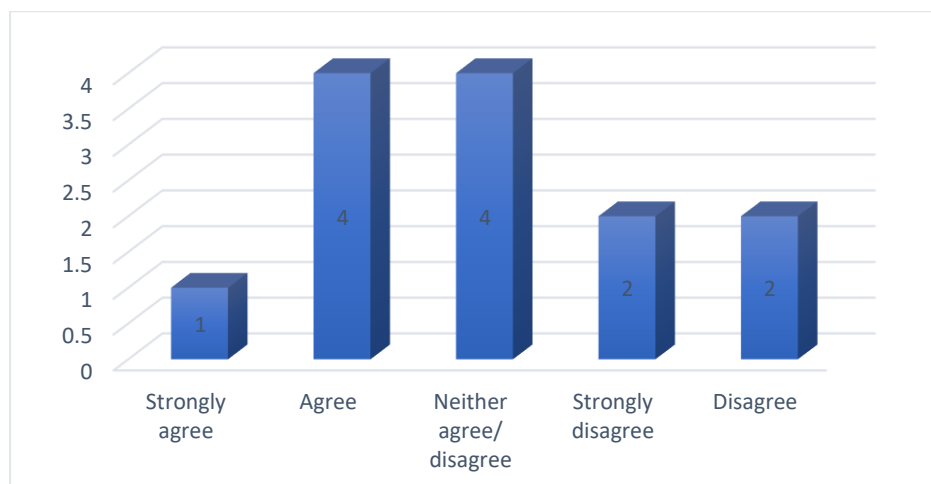
This chart it demonstrates that students in my class find it easy to communicate with their teacher online as it shows that the class strongly agree and agree. But the other class members neither agree or disagree and someone strongly disagrees.

6. I am able to understand everything in my online classes



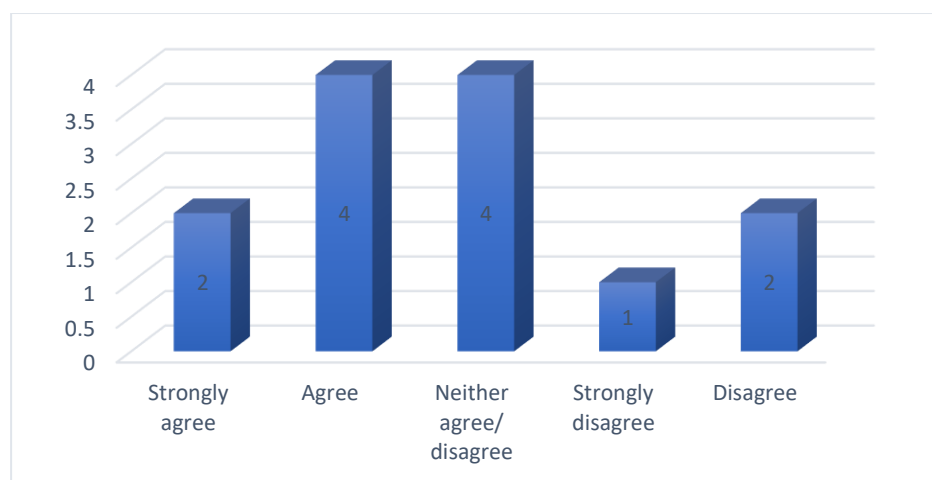
This chart tells us that the large number of the class agreed and strongly agreed that they are able to understand what is said in class and are clear about what they have to do. It also shows that the other half of the class neither agree or disagree and someone disagreed. As the majority of the class agreed that it's very easy to understand it shows that virtual learning is going to be the best new thing in the future.

7. I feel limited on online classes



This chart shows a mix opinions of what people in the class thinks about feeling limited whilst learning online. As shown on the chart, you can see the a huge part of the class strongly agreed and agreed that they feel limited during online class, when the other part of the class neither agreed or disagreed. This could be because there's only such much you can do on the laptop and also because you cant physically interact with other people. But the rest of the class strongly disagree and disagreed and found it very comfortable and fine learning online.

8. Technology can be a problem when trying to use Moodle



Lastly this chart shows the results of what people thought about technology being a problem whilst using Moodle. A large amount of students in my class strongly agreed and agreed that technology can be a huge barrier, when trying to access your online lessons or even communicate with others. This could be because of bad connection. The other half of students neither agreed or disagreed with the statement, but the rest of the class strongly disagree and disagreed.

Research Ethics/ Ethnical Consideration

Before collecting data, I made sure that everyone that I collected from was from my class and got approval from them before they took it. I also contacted them separately and made sure that I didn't ask for any personal details so that they could remain anonymous.

Limitation

As I was work on a time schedule, I gave people in my class 2 weeks to complete the survey then gather all the rest of my research on the 3 week so that by the 4 week I have all the information I need.

Conclusion

In summary, both primary and secondary data showed me that virtual learning has been a great asset to majority of students because it has allowed them to continue with their studies in the comfort of their home. When doing my primary data research I found out that half of the class neither agree or disagree that online learning is better than going into class. I personally prefer to go into class because I enjoy interacting with others and its also quite difficult for me as I am a physical and practical learner. The whole class agreed that accessing Moodle is very simple. Both half of the class agreed and disagreed that being able to concentrate on online lessons can be difficult and a large amount of the class agreed that finding their assignment on Moodle is very easy. They also agreed that communicate and understanding our lecture is very easy. I totally agree also because the app Teams allows us to send emails and message our lectures easily. But on the other the class did neither agree or disagree that they feel limited during online learning. Also technology can be a down fall when trying to attend class or communicate with you lecturer or class mate. I would also say that it can definitely be a really bad issue when it comes to speaking or presentation because the connection can be really bad at times.

When doing my secondary data I found out many positive things online about virtual learning. Michael Van Beek who is a director of education policy at the Mackinac Center for Public Policy in Michigan, US, found that a "VLE helps students to engage in personalised education." He also said that "Students reported more positive learning experiences, and teachers found that using a VLE freed up some of the time they would have traditionally spent planning and teaching lessons, allowing them to focus on coaching individual pupils to achieve their full potential."

From doing my research and collecting data I think that for the future it would be really good give our lecturers could give us activities that we could participate in during class so that we could engage more and a full understand of the lesson. I also think that it would help students so struggle to concentrate. Overall Virtual Learning has had an amazing impact on students as it would help them to improve or learn a new skill for the future.

Reference

(Michael Van Beek, 2012) <https://www.virtual-college.co.uk/resources/2012/05/virtual-learning-environments-benefit-students-and-teachers>

(Raji Srinivasan, 2020) <https://news.utexas.edu/2020/09/30/the-positives-of-virtual-learning-that-nobody-is-talking-about/>