

Digital Skills and Research Methods

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The impact of Virtual Learning Environment on the learning experience of the students at UWTSD London campus

Abstract

In this report I will present the reflection on the impact of a Virtual learning environment on the learning experience of the students of UWTSD to conduct the research. Both primary and secondary research data will be used for this. The primary data will represent a questionnaire capturing 8 questions on which some of the students will answer and then the answers will be shown as some graphs representations in order to show the outcome of the research. Moreover, for the secondary data, I will research online materials and describe all the relevant findings.

Table of Contents

Abstract.....	iii
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Rationale of the study	1
1.2 Research Objectives	1
2. Literature Review	1
3. Research Methodology	2
3.1 Research Approach.....	2
3.2 Data Collection and Sampling	3
3.3 Ethics in Data collection	3
4. Data Analysis and Discussion	3
4.1 Primary Data Analysis.....	3
4.2 Secondary Data Analysis	9
4.3 Summary of the findings.....	9
Conclusion and Recommendations.....	10
Reference	11
Appendix	13

1. Introduction

A virtual learning environment (VLE) for the learning process refers to the addition of digital technologies in the traditional format of learning (Li et al.,2021). Adding a virtual learning environment can enhance the student's attention to learning and also make the learning process enjoyable (KALAYCI, 2015). In this study, the virtual learning environment has been analysed based on the response collected from the students of the UWTSD London campus. Moreover, the VLE that UWTSD used is called Moodle. The goal of the Moodle learning platform is to give teachers, administrators, and students access to a single, reliable, secure, and integrated system for building customized learning environments. (Moodle, 2022)

1.1 Rationale of the study

The reason for conducting this research is firstly that it is an important aspect to understand whether the current system is being helpful for the students in a way that it helps them achieve a complete learning experience, or if it is not a well functional system and if there should be made any changes. Also, considering to understand how and what could be improved to the current system in order to better facilitate both students and lecturers. Secondly, this research is being a part of my coursework, therefore exhaustive research needs to be conducted.

1.2 Research Objectives

There are the following objectives the study is focused to achieve:

- To analyze the factors related to the virtual learning environment in the UWTSD.
- To analyze the factors affecting the students of the UWTSD in the learning experience.
- To analyze the impact of the virtual learning environment on the students of UWTSD.
- To recommend some strategies to improve the virtual learning environment and make a positive impact on the students of UWTSD.

2. Literature Review

A virtual learning environment consists of having a classroom or learning process using different tools and technologies which makes the teaching process easier for the instructors as well as easier for the students to learn. Vaganova et al., (2017) suggests that since in all aspects of daily work, technologies are used to make traditional work easier and smoother, it is necessary to use

the updated technologies in the learning process also to make the students have a clear understanding of the topic they are learning.

According to KALAYCI, (2015), proper resources are needed to make the entire institution technologically strong and effective since the classes will be conducted online. Besides, broad knowledge can be gathered since all the libraries in the world can be found on technological devices and can be accessed through the internet. In contrast Silverman, (2019) refer that it is not true for every university in the world, since it requires more investment which universities do not have. That makes the students of those universities stay back from others.

A virtual learning environment also harms the students' health and mental conditions. According to Ramos et al., (2021), virtual learning helps the students to boost their energy and motivation for learning and focuses on personalized inclusive learning. On the other hand, Tan et al., (2021) refer that the challenges and limitations of properly implementing the virtual learning environment in educational institutions make it difficult for the students to enjoy the benefit of virtual learning. Thus, Silverman, (2019) suggests that proper training should be provided to the instructors about the benefits of the technologies in the teaching process and make them comfortable to operate different software and hardware devices to connect with the students.

3. Research Methodology

The study has been conducted based on both the primary and secondary data using both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The combination of both methods is used to show a positivist research philosophy which includes the collection of factual data without personal justification (Shandilay, 2018). The deductive research approach has been followed under the positivism philosophy of research since using an inductive research approach can show a biased outcome.

3.1 Research Approach

The qualitative research approach focuses on arranging group discussions through which the respondents are not able to provide broad responses about their experience since it requires a limited answer (Tan et al.,2021). Therefore, published journals and articles that are done through open group discussions are used in this study to get a broad knowledge about the research topic.

On the other hand, the quantitative research approach involves working with the numerical values which can be gathered by conducting questionnaires. The response getting from the questionnaires can be converted into numerical data for making the analysis process smooth and justified.

3.2 Data Collection and Sampling

Data have been collected from 15 students on their satisfaction level with the virtual learning environment. A mixed study has been conducted for which primary data are collected through a questionnaire survey from the students and for gathering secondary data, journals and articles related to the virtual learning environment are analyzed.

The purpose of collecting data through a survey questionnaire is used since it is an easy source for gathering data for research. To get the actual results and experience of the UWTSD Moodle, which is the used LVE, the respondents are students chosen from the UWTSD.

The secondary data are collected by conducting research over the resources that can be found online. The selected journals and articles are published after 2015 to have the reliability and validity of the information.

3.3 Ethics in Data collection

While collecting data through primary sources, the respondents are selected from UWTSD and their actual experiences are recorded through survey questionnaires. In this study no biasedness has been shown by the researcher. The Data Protection Act has been followed to protect the responses from using outside of this study (Shandilay, 2018). Plagiarism issues are highly considered along with collecting data from secondary sources (Herrador-Alcaide et al., 2019). Moreover, the identities of the answering students were kept anonymous.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Primary Data Analysis

The analysis of the collected data is as follows:

1. Moodle helps you in communication.

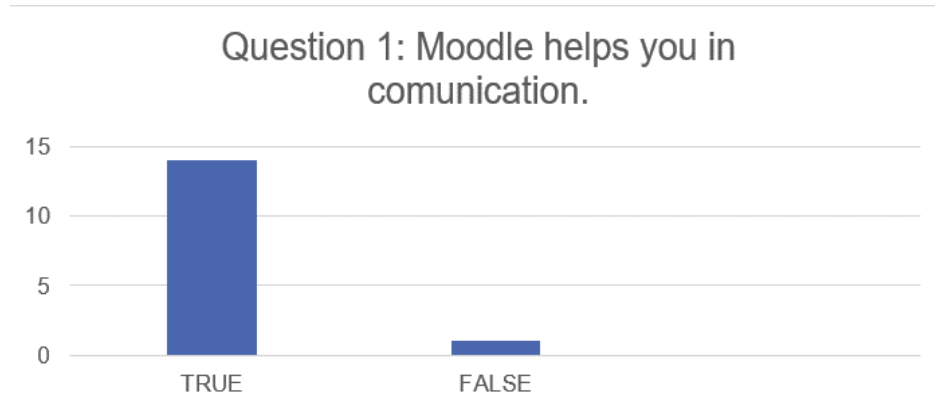


Figure 1: Moodle helps you in communication

Among 15 respondents, around 14 students strongly agreed giving the “TRUE” response for the statement that the used VLE which is the Moodle helps them in communications. On the other hand, just 1 out of the 15 students disagreed. Considering the answers, we can therefore conclude that the virtual learning environment helps the students with their communication.

2. Was it easy to familiarise with the Moodle?

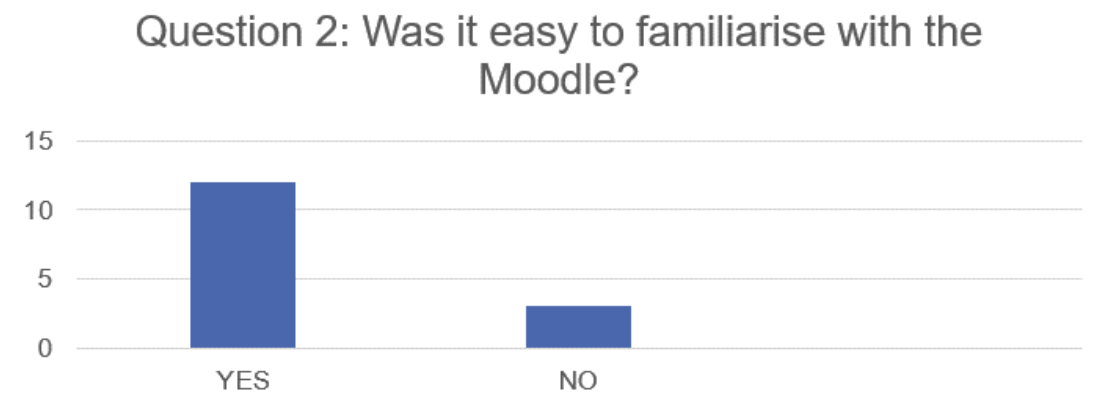


Figure 2: Was it easy to familiarise with the Moodle?

The graph shows that about 80% of the respondents agree with the fact that a virtual learning environment is easy to familiarise to, though around 20% of the respondents do not agree with the statement. Since most of the students indicated that it was an easy task to familiarise with the

virtual learning environment it can be deduced that there is no need for improvement in the graphical user interface that the system adopted.

3. Is the Moodle easy to use?

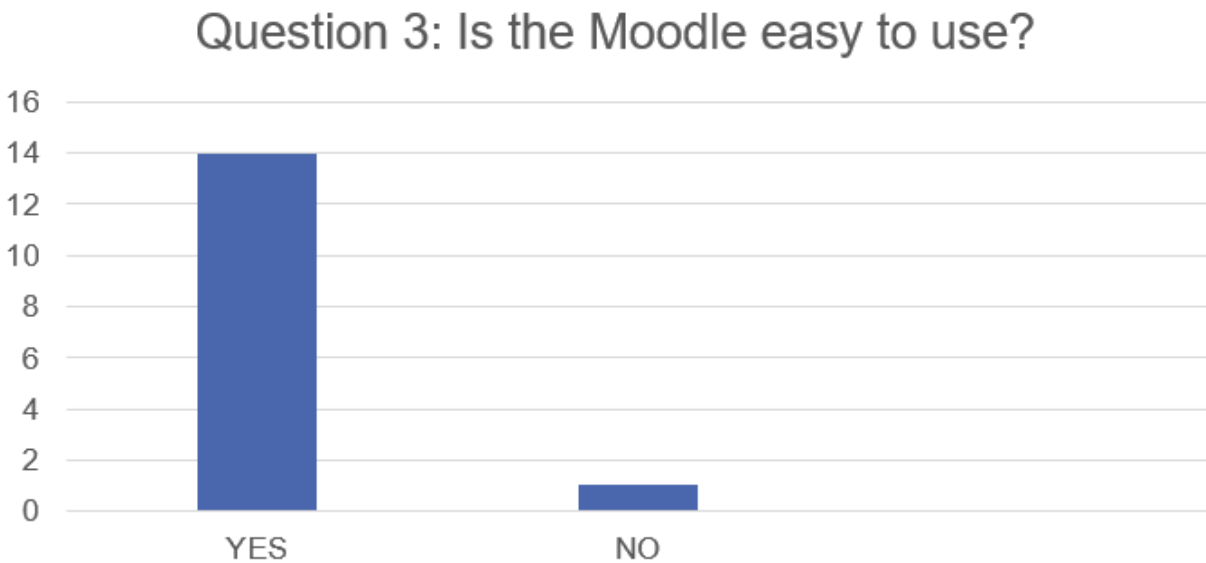


Figure 3: Is the Moodle easy to use?

Complementary to the last question 14 students confirmed that the Moodle is easy to use and just 1 student said that its not easy to use. All things considered; the Moodle is not only easy to familiarise but also easy to use.

4. How often do you use the library resources on the Moodle?

Question 4: How often do you use the library resources on the Moodle?

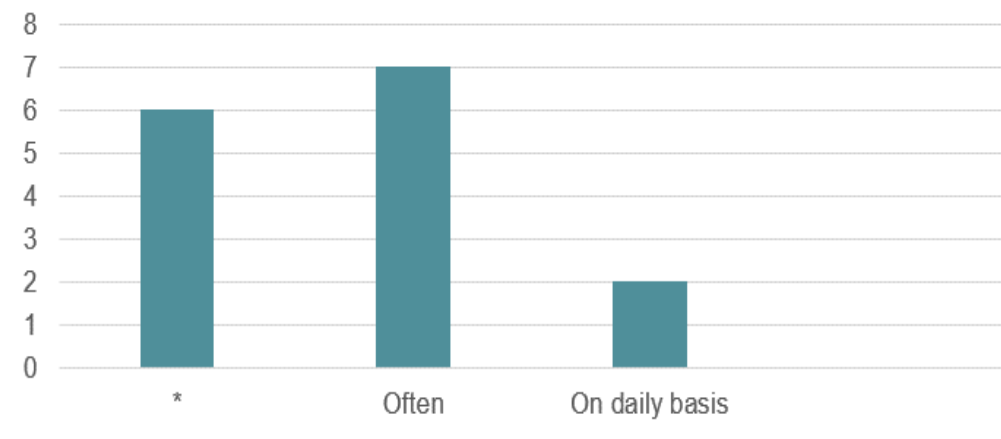


Figure 4: How often do you use the library resources on the Moodle?

The response to the statement on how often are the library resources used within a virtual learning environment showed that 40% of the students are rarely using the library resources while a bigger part of the students use the resources often (around 47% of the students) or on a daily basis (around 13% of the students) prefer the virtual learning environment. Therefore, the Moodle library resources are a good addition to the Moodle that should be kept as it is utilised by a big part of the students.

5. What is your favourite device for studying?

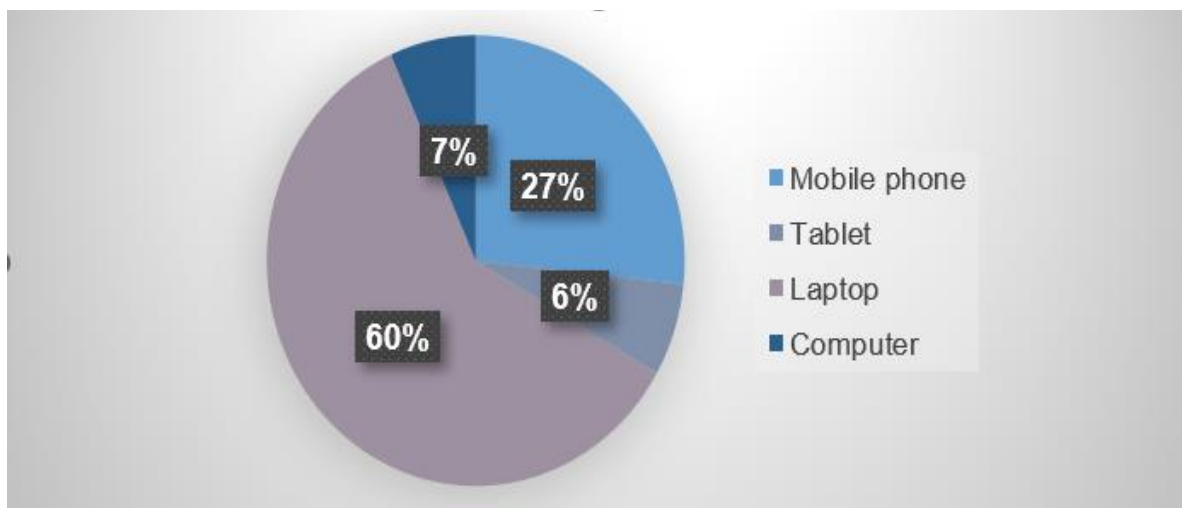


Figure 5: What is your favourite device for studying?

The graph shows that around 60% of the respondents are using the LVE from their Laptop, 27% are using their phone, 6% of the respondents are using their Tablet 7% are using a computer. From this question we can see that most of the students are using a laptop, but there are also other devices used, so it's important for the Moodle to be responsive on all the specified devices.

6. How many hours do you use the Moodle every week?

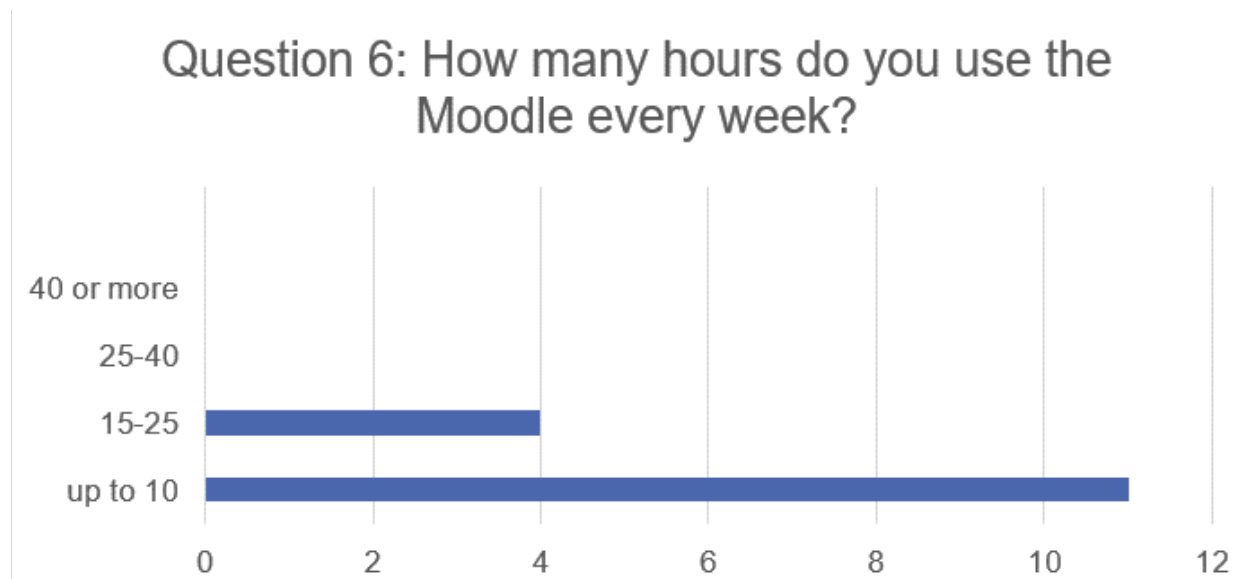


Figure 6: How many hours do you use the Moodle every week?

In terms of how much is the Moodle used in hours every week just by the students, most of the students (11 students) answered that they used the Moodle up to ten hours a week while the remaining 4 students answered that they use the Moodle in between 15 and 25 hours a week. None of the students used the Moodle more than 25 hours. Therefore, we could say that the Moodle is used on a weekly basis by all of the students a reasonable number of hours.

7. Does this Moodle help you to improve your English?

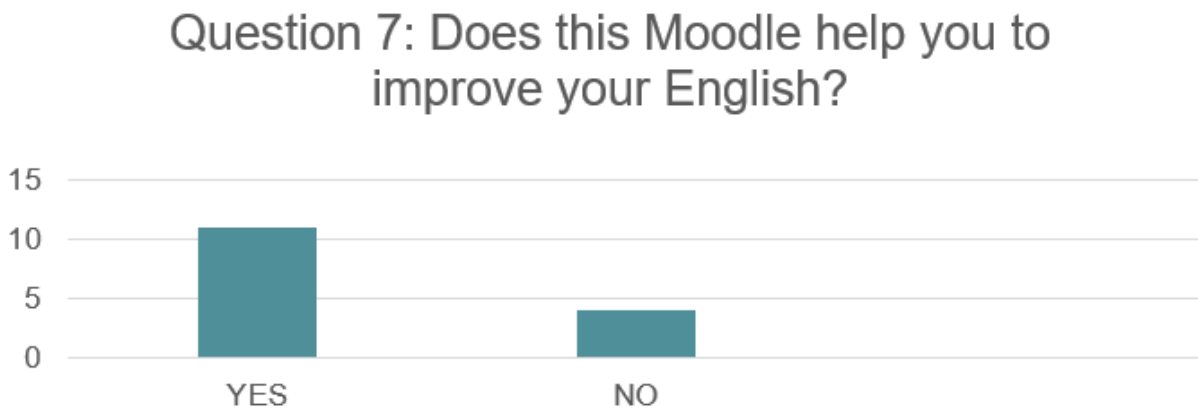


Figure 7: Does this Moodle help you to improve your English?

On this question, 11 students responded positive to the question if the Moodle improve their English while 4 students had a negative response. Therefore, most of the students are improving their English. This could be the case because the Moodle is written in English, and all the materials are well-written so that some of the students are also learning English while studying.

8: On a scale from 1-5 how do you feel when using the Moodle?

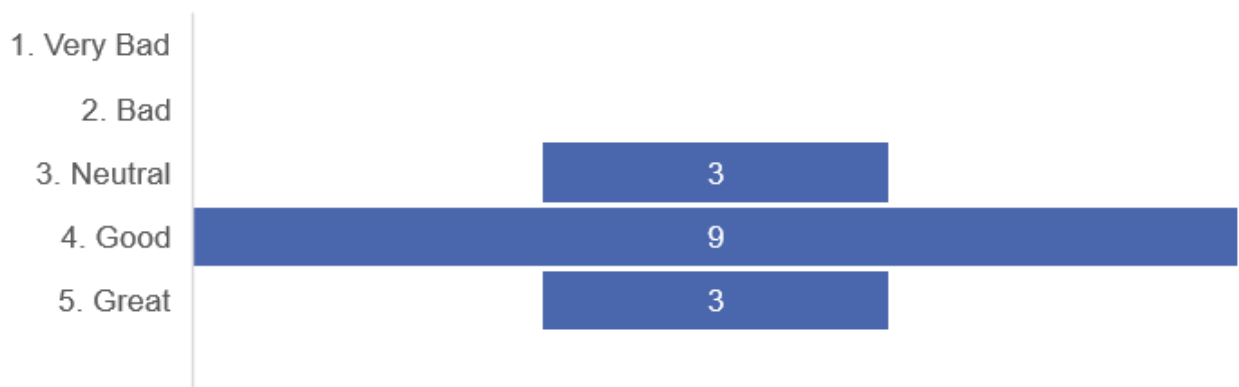


Figure 8: On a scale from 1-5 how do you feel when using the Moodle?

Lastly, most of the students had a good experience with the Moodle while 3 of them indicated that the Moodle was really great and 3 of them had a neutral experience about it. Therefore, the Moodle is designed well enough so that all the students can an overall positive experience.

4.2 Secondary Data Analysis

A virtual learning environment is necessary to modify the traditional procedures of learning and teaching in a way that uses different technological tools to help the instructors to clarify their lectures, as well as the students, will be able to understand properly (Queiroga et al.,2021). Different software enables the instructors to easily communicate with the students and students are also able to share their thoughts and feedback through that software. Attaining classes through software such as ZOOM, and Google Classroom makes the learning process easier for the students of UWTSD during the pandemic (Dommett,2019). This proves that what may be the situation, the learning process can be continued using virtual technologies.

Though it is not free from disadvantages since students have to remain confined within their homes which will lower their communication skills with others. Besides, getting affected by health conditions makes the students suffer while using the virtual learning process (Torres Martín et al.,2021). Even most of the senior teachers remain reluctant to use the technologies to conduct their classes (Tan et al.,2021).

4.3 Summary of the findings

The overall result shows a positive impact of virtual learning in the education process which enables the students not to get affected by that. The students of UWTSD are eager to get the virtual learning environment since it can be positive in determining the student's grade as the library resources are being used as well as enhancing personalized learning outcomes. Moreover, the Moodle also supports their communication skills since their English was improved after using it. Therefore, the system is complex and complete and could be improved by developing efficient tools and technologies and making the interface simpler, so the access and use of the virtual teaching tools are easier.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The virtual learning environment allow students get a fast and easy way to access their learning preferences even from a distance they can continue their learnings. The virtual learning system has both negative and positive sides which depend on the implementation of the institution's policy. While the Moodle is good and the moment, for improvements, the institution should focus on introducing a more simplified interface so that the students can navigate even easier throughout the Moodle resources.

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Appendix

Dear Participants,

This is a survey conducted for academic purposes on how a virtual learning environment affects the learning experience of the students. Your response will help us to conduct our research efficiently. We assure the safety of the participants' information.

Thank You

QUESTIONNAIRE

Question 1: Moodle helps you in communication.

☐ True

☐ False

Question 2: Was it easy to familiarise with the Moodle?

☐ Yes

☐ No

Question 3: How often do you use the library resources on the Moodle?

- ☐ Rarely
- ☐ Often
- ☐ On daily basis

Question 4: Is the Moodle easy to use?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Question 5: How many hours do you use the Moodle every week?

- ☐ up to 10
- ☐ 15-25
- ☐ 25-40
- ☐ 40 or more

Question 6: Does this Moodle help you to improve your English?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Question 7: What is your favourite device for studying?

- ☐ Mobile phone
- ☐ Tablet
- ☐ Laptop
- ☐ Computer

Question 8: On a scale from 1-5 how do you feel when using the Moodle?

- ☐ 1. Very bad
- ☐ 2. Bad

☐ 3. Neutral

☐ 4. Good

☐ 5. Great