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# **Digital Skills and Research Methods (BMSW4003)**

## **UWTSD London Campus Task 2: written assessment**

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# **The impact of Virtual Learning Environment**

## **Abstract**

**The main purpose of the study is to investigate the impact of a virtual learning environment.**

**Secondary data collection method and primary quantitative survey will be used for the collection of different information.**

**The findings indicate that a virtual learning environment has a positive and negative impact on learning practices.**

**It enables the student to take flexible timing for learning and promotes self-based learning. However, the cost of and technological issue is identified challenges.**

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## 1. Introduction

The virtual learning environment is the online-based platform used by Educational Institutes and organisations to offer students and professionals Digital solutions for enhancing their learning experiences (Herrera, 2017). It refers to the environment where educational systems and training can be offered by educators on digital-based solutions aiming to create an interactive and active learning environment for the learner (Herrera Mosquera, 2017). At this time of pandemic where government regulations have been imposed to maintain social distancing and nationwide lockdown, the virtual learning environment has become a renowned tool for influencing learning practices. Moreover, it has the advantage for the student to maintain their own learning practices and influence self-paced learning among the students. However, technological issues cost for internet connection and lack of concentration are some of the challenges of a virtual learning environment (Omar and Geer, 2018). Considering the effectiveness and challenges of the virtual learning environment, the present study will demonstrate an investigation on the impact of the virtual learning environment on influencing the learning practices of the student and professionals.

## 2. Rationale

During the recent time of the covid-19 situation and nationwide lockdown, the educational institute has shifted towards a virtual learning environment to enhance the learning experiences and maintain the classroom activity through online classes for the students. However, there are disadvantages of online learning classes and at the same time, there are many advantages of a virtual learning environment (Waheed et al., 2020). One of the advantages of a virtual learning environment is it increases the inclusivity and accessibility of the learning material. Moreover, lack of focus and cost of internet connectivity is identified to be challenging (Hussain et al., 2018). In addition, more time of engagement is required to access the material in online sources which can be reviewed and can act as a benefit for the students as well (Cahillane et al., 2019). Therefore, the rationale of this study is to present the impact of the virtual learning environment on the learning experiences of students considering the present covid-19 situation.

## 3. Aim and Research Objectives

The main aim of the study is to investigate the impact of a virtual learning environment on the learning experiences of students and professionals. The objectives of the study are:

To access The meaning of virtual learning environment.

To identify the advantages of a virtual learning environment.

To examine the disadvantages of virtual learning environment on learning practices

To determine the impact of virtual learning environment

To recommend ways to reduce the disadvantages and challenges of a virtual learning environment.

#### 4. Literature Review

According to this study developed by the author Farrelly et al. (2018), VLE is an online-based platform used by educational technology to provide Digital solutions of courses of the study. The most common example of VLE is the blackboard and model which is free to download but accounts for the substantial cost of hosting and managing the platform by the professionals. Moreover, the study developed by the author Ryan and Poole (2019), signifies that a virtual learning environment enhances the learning experiences among professionals and individuals which is meant to replace and replicate the physical classroom environment and support distant education. VLE makes use of technology for supplementing the in-class experiences and providing digital communication and interaction and polls through a virtual environment (Di Pietro et al., 2020).

In addition, according to the statement, the Vaidyanathan (2018), a virtual learning environment includes a system for offering digital-based solutions and creating an active learning environment for the professionals as well as the student. It helps the tutor create an effective content and course plan that can be provided to the student which is easy to access and Foster communication among the students (Hettiarachchi and Wickramasinghe, 2016). In addition, the statement of the author Nguyen et al. (2017), signifies that VLE provides a real time solution and it will become a major part of higher education institutes for providing a wider learning management system. VLE Increases accessibility inclusivity and helps in building relations on online platforms. It improves technical skills and understanding among the learner as well as the tutor and at the same time provides a flexible time of learning with comfort. However, the study developed by Dhakal and Sharma (2016), signifies that technological challenges and lack of understanding in computer devices can be an issue in handling virtual learning environments. Moreover, it also results in a lack of engagement interaction with the student due to ineffective face-to-face interaction with them.

## 5. Research Methodology

### Research method and the methodology

For the present study investigating the impact of virtual learning environment interpretivism research philosophy will be used by the researcher to interpret the data collected from different Data Collection methods. In addition, exploratory research design will be used to explore the different factors and functions of the virtual learning environment in influencing the learning practices among professionals and the students. Moreover for aligning with the integrative and exploratory research methodologies deductive research approach will be used to test the validity of the theories collected from different sources.

### Qualitative, Quantitative and combined approach

According to the statement of the author Cyr (2016), the Quantitative research method deals with numbers and statistics and on the other hand, the qualitative research method includes the meaning and words. The qualitative research method is used in the data collection strategy for collecting different information by interviewing the sample population known as primary qualitative. In addition, different data from secondary sources such as online materials, books, articles and journals are collected which is called a

secondary qualitative method (Bretschneider et al., 2017). Moreover, the quantitative Data Collection method is used by conducting surveys of the sample population. In addition, combination of both qualitative and quantitative methods is called the mixed or combined approach which is used to access the information from different sources. For this study, the researcher will use the primary quantitative method and secondary qualitative method for collecting different information for the investigation.

#### Data, Primary and secondary data

The primary data collection method includes survey and interview processes. The collection of data is done by human participation through online or offline methods (Cyr, 2016). In addition, the secondary data collection method includes a collection of information from secondary sources such as books, articles, journals, online materials, Government website library and other secondary sources.

#### Data collection process

For this study, a secondary data collection method will be used by the researcher to collect information related to different aspects of the virtual learning environment by reviewing already existing books, articles, journals and online materials. In addition, a primary quantitative Data Collection method will be used where Students will be surveyed and their responses will be considered for findings and analysis of the study.

#### Population, Sample and Sample size

20 students from the UWTSD digital skills and research methods department will be surveyed by providing questionnaires (refer appendix).

#### Ethics in data collection

For maintaining the ethical consideration of Data Collection general data protection regulation 2018 will be used by the researcher.

This regulation helps in protecting personal data and information by high security and password to ignore any hacking and criminal offences.

## 6. Results/Findings, analysis and discussion

### Primary data analysis

The primary data collected by conducting surveys signifies findings related to the virtual learning environment and experiences among the students. From the primary data collection method presented in the appendix section of the study, it is indicated that around 50% of the students are using a virtual learning environment for a year. Based on the responses of the student it is found that some of the advantages of VLE are less travelling facility, flexible timing to access the material and it promotes self-paced learning. However, some of the disadvantages are lack of concentration, lack of internet connectivity along with cost and work engagement. It has a major impact on promoting learning and improving technical understanding among the students.

Therefore from the primary data collection, it can be analysed that the virtual learning environment has some positive and negative impacts on the learning experiences of the student. It is found that around 50% of the students agreed that virtual learning environments promote self-paced learning which shows that their learning practices have been improved. In addition, they also feel satisfied and engaged in VLE.

Moreover, the student also responded that VLE creates opportunities for learning new skills because more than 45% of the students agreed to the statement and at the same time they responded positively that VLE acts as an integrated tool that enables management of online learning.

Therefore it can be analysed that the student believes that a virtual learning environment can promote learning experiences and engagement however the challenges of Technical issues, internet connectivity and cost are some of the identified challenges from the data collection method. Secondary data analysis

The secondary data is collected by reviewing different literature presented in the literature review section of the study. The findings of the primary data collection method and the different reviews of literature collected through secondary sources indicate the same result related to the virtual learning environment. From secondary sources, it is identified that a virtual learning environment promotes learning experiences and initiates self-based learning among the student. It supports flexible timing and less travel facility which is satisfactory for the student and increases their work engagement. However, some of the challenges are technical issues and a lack of handling software devices for managing the virtual learning environment. In addition, it is also reviewed that some of the professionals believe that lack of focus due to an effective face-to-face interaction is yet another challenge of the virtual learning environment.

## Summary of the findings

From the primary and secondary data collection methods, it is found that a virtual learning environment provides a positive impact on learning experiences and improves technical knowledge attention and promotes learning among the students and professionals. However, the cost of internet connectivity, lack of technological knowledge and internet issues are some of the identified challenges.

## 7. Conclusion and Recommendation

From the above discussion, it can be concluded that during the time of pandemic maintaining social distances have become a primitive role and the educational institute along with organisations have shifted toward virtual learning environments. A virtual learning environment has positive as well as negative impacts on the learning practices of students as identified from the study. It is seen that it influences self-paced learning and promotes learning activities among these students. It enables students to learn in flexible timing

without having to travel but on the other hand cost of internet connectivity and lack of technological knowledge result in more time to access the materials. Therefore considering the disadvantages several recommendations can be made:

For managing the internet connectivity issue broadband connection needs to be provided to the students so that they can access the material and attend online classes without any interaction

For lack of engagement, activities and games on the subject matter can be played online to improve the engagement of the students

The professionals need to make a clear understanding of technological devices and provide a lesson to the students to provide them with an overview to handle different software and technological devices

It is recommended that the professionals must provide a presentation of the courses so that a clear understanding of the topic area can be delivered to the student and at the same time the student can learn from the presentation style as well.

**Appendix 1 (Class activity 1-Questionnaire)**

1) Are you familiar with the Virtual Learning Environment?

- Yes
- No

2) Are you using the Moodle from UWTSD for virtual learning?

- Yes
- No

3) How often are you using the Moodle?

- 2 times/week
- 2-4 times/week
- 4-8 times/week

4) Do you think that is enough information on Moodle?

- Yes
- No

5) Do you think that the Moodle has to be improved at some points?

- It has to be improved a little bit  
.The content is not that great
- looks good to me but sometimes is  
to complicated
- needs no improvements

6) On a scale from 1 to 10 how satisfied are you with the Moodle from UWTSD?

•6

•8

•10

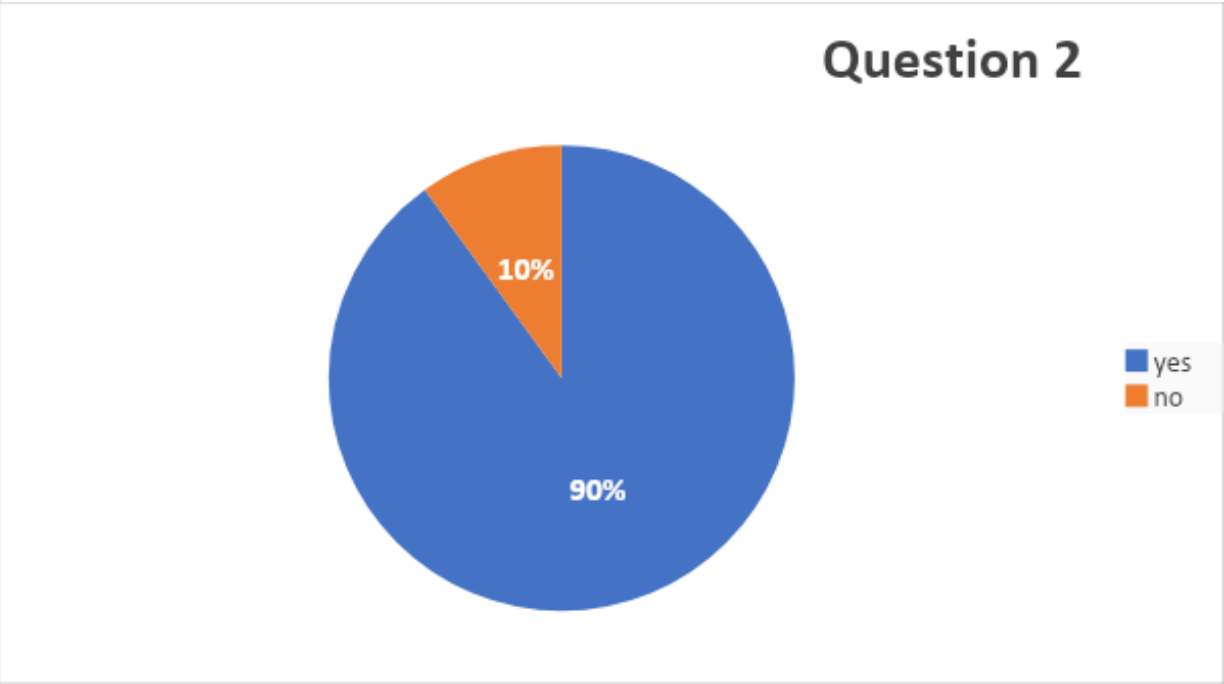
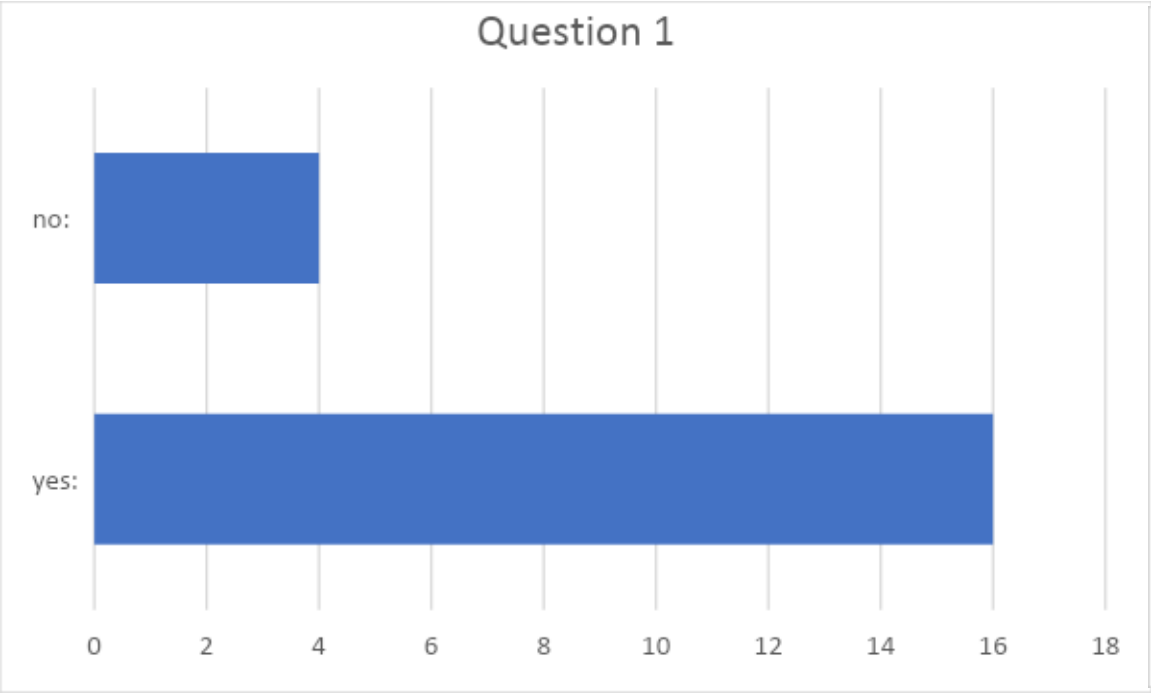
7) Which category of age are you belong?

•6      •20-25

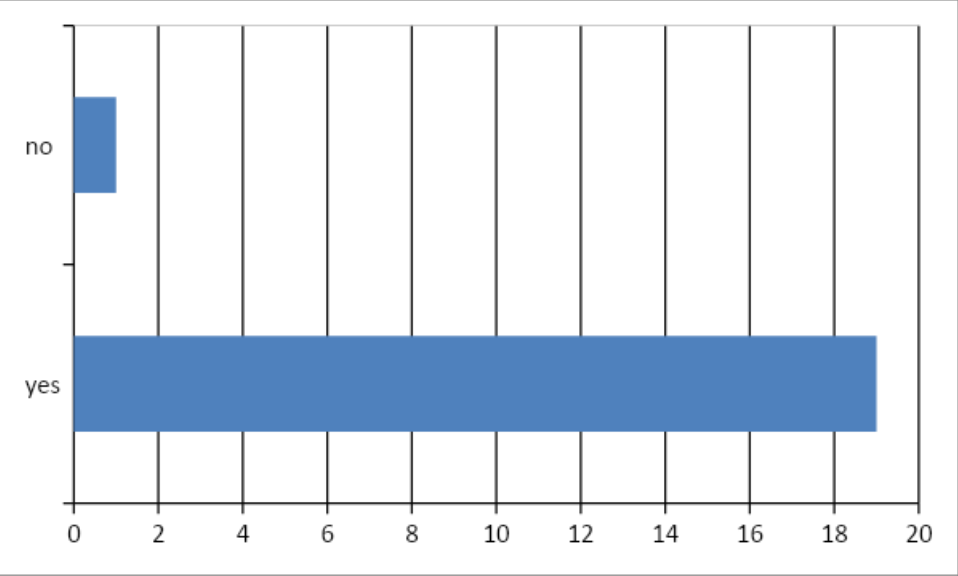
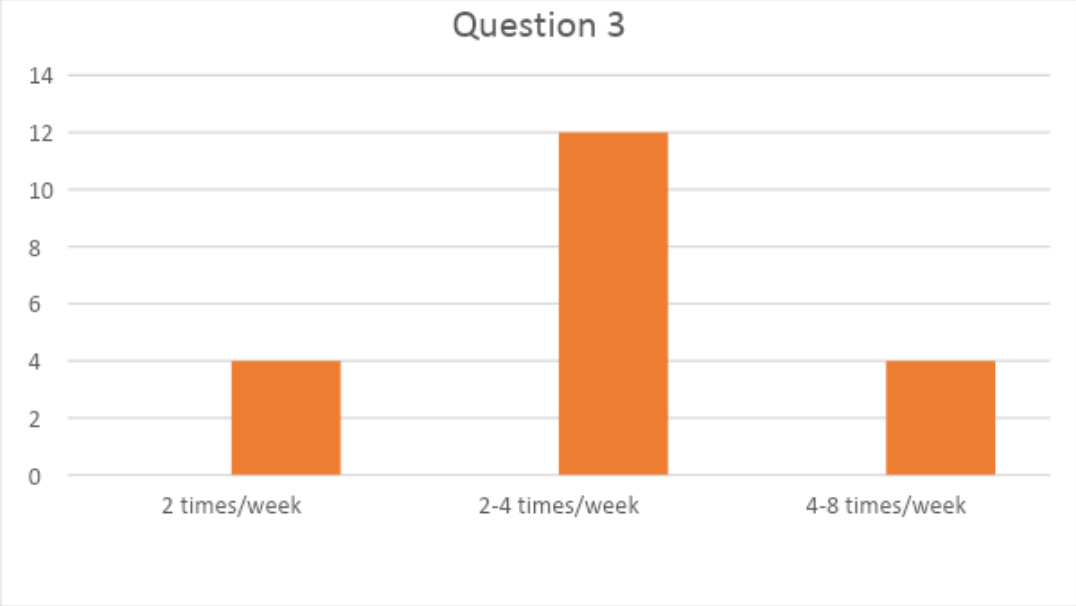
•8      •25-30

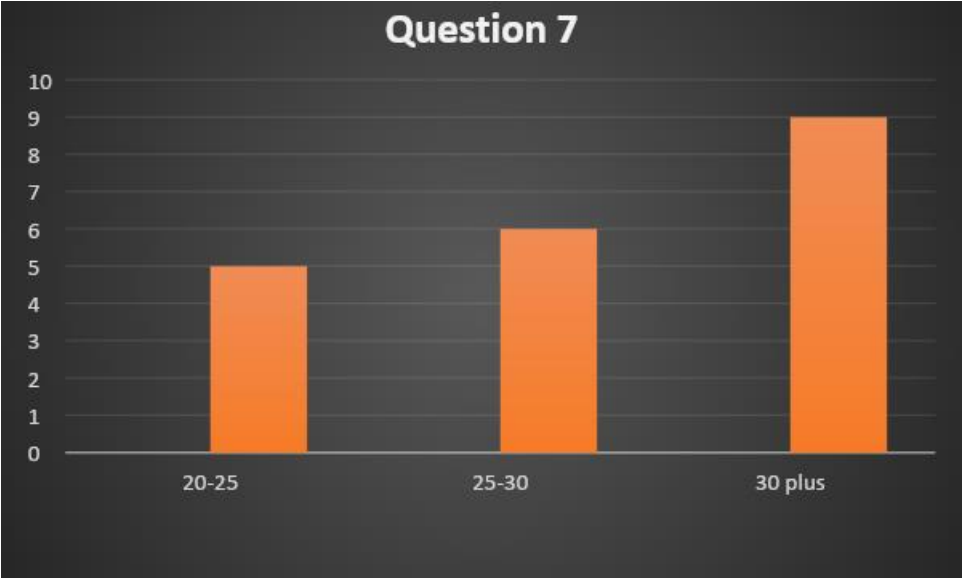
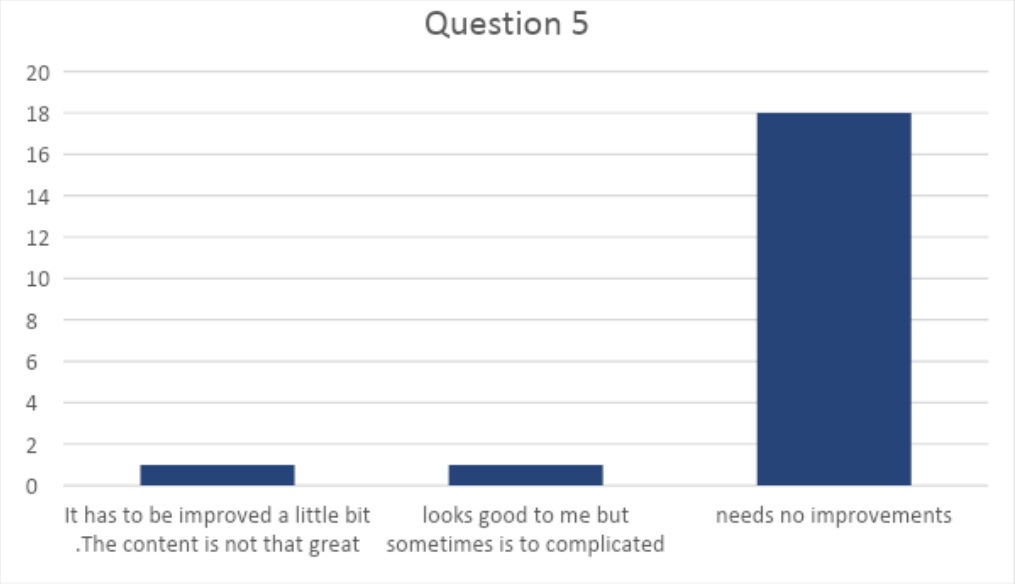
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Appendix 2 (Class activity 2-Excel Result table)



Question 3





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