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Digital Skills and Research methods

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VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

Virtual Learning Environment refers to teaching from a virtual space which includes a computer and internet connexion, where the teaching content is provide from the teacher to the students through platforms or applications, where the teacher and students are separated by time or space. (Kinimozhi, 2018)

On this report I am going to be talking about the Virtual Learning Environment which has taken an important role in 2020 due the situation we are going through right now, caused for the pandemic.

I am going to talk about the importance of VLE nowadays, what are the objectives, and what are the advantages and disadvantages that may experiences students that are studying right now from home, also I will reflect in tables and explain the results obtained from the survey made to eleven students from the University of Wales Trinity Saint David located in London.

I find this research very interesting because this is life changing for everyone, I think everyone has got different perspective of Virtual Learning Environment, everyone has different experiences.

Background

E-Learning types

- *Personal Learning*: In this type of learning the student choose their favourite subjects of study, then the students research information mostly from internet and teacher give feedback and asks questions via offline relationship.
- *Collective learning*: In this type there are requirements that are provided to the teachers and students to communicate to each other. Some of the platforms to communicate could be chats and forums. In this method the timetable of the courses and exams scheduled are the same for all students.
- *Virtual Classroom*:_This type of environment has same conditions as physical classrooms, conditions as attendance, punctuality, and active participation. In this modality the class is given through video conferencing, where the teacher can share their screen where they share documents, videos or diapositives to give their lessons and make it easier to understand to their students. This method is useful in universities or colleges where there not are available enough teachers to cover the classes. (Behrouzian, 2012)

Virtual classroom is taking more importance this year due the coronavirus pandemic where we were forced to close schools and universities, so we start taking classes from home to avoid physical contact as much as it is possible. This may be a new concept for many of us, a new way of teaching where we share ideas and knowledge through a computer with internet connexion independently where we are, where we are able to interact with the teacher and others students thank to an application previously downloaded to the computer. VLE as any method of teaching has advantages and disadvantages.

Benefits of Virtual Learning Environment

- One of the advantages is the possibility of reducing the courses cost because the university do not need a large place to give classes and one teacher can give classes to a larger number of students.
- Students that take classes online frequently improve their skill to work on their own to be more independent also students learn how to manage their time more effectively, with nobody supervising their work, virtual learners develop these abilities quicker than students that attend to a traditional classroom.
- Access to exclusive information and courses to students that can not afford advanced and specialized classes.
- Ability to develop stronger writing skills VLE teaches students to interact with each other through writing because the work they do is mostly on written. (Behrouzian, 2012)

Challenges of Virtual Learning Environment

- The lack face to face interaction may affect the relationship between teachers and students sometimes this physical interaction is important because students are more able to participate in class and teachers also can tell who is focused on class.
- In some modality of VLE students make their own schedule, and when they are not motivated or do not know how to a manage their time can struggle to meet deadlines.
- Another disadvantage could be lack of engagement, when the students are not focused on class and do not interact with the other students.

Types of technology in E-learning

- Lecture Capture: This technology is based on audio and video recording of class sessions. Lecture capture system use hardware tools such as a computer a camera and audio recording and software applications. The classes after recorded are edited and explained to create presentations for asynchronous viewing by students. The edited recording can be uploaded to a virtual learning platform.

In a software-based a program is downloaded to the computer which is linked to the hardware computer (video camera, microphone, and interactive whiteboard) then the lecture share a link where students registered to the course get access to the class already recorded.

- Webinars: This are interactive online classes that are delivered in real time and at the same time are being recorded and made accessible to a new student.

Most webinars are PowerPoint presentations that come with an audio explanation by the teacher that is delivery through a computer with internet connexion. Also on this modality teachers can share their screen to the students so all the information that viewed by the teacher can be displayed on the students computer using determined applications.

- Interactive web conferencing: This technology is focused on two- way communication with the participants in different locations communicated through a device with internet connection, the conferencing is carried out with a link. This allows the teacher give class to a multiple classroom in real time with the interaction of students located anywhere in the world. The technology used is internet connection (Kinimozhi, 2018) and software application such as Microsoft Teams that has taken really important role nowadays in the virtual classroom.

Risks of E- Learning technology

- For authors there are several risks such as unauthorized use of the material from others party that are not registered to the course, modification and use of the original material in distinct situation related to E-learning. Authors material could be also destroyed by hackers.
- Risks related to assessment would be cheating from students in their exams.
- All students must be concerned about misuse of login information to prevent attackers access to this information.
- Malicious programs that can damage the software of the computer and you can lose all your material. (Sharma & Karforma, 2012)

Legislation associated to E-Learning

- Copyright, intellectual property and licensing.
- Copyright protection and digital rights management.
- Copyright and caching content.
- Licensing
- Plagiarism
- Data protection Act
- Technical Security
- Freedom of information Act
(GOV.WALES)

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The principal aim of this research is to understand how VLE has impacted students in our university and the way how lectures give their class and how students feel about VLE thanks to the primary data and secondary data.

The objective is to know what the students know about the VLE and where they may struggle when the have virtual classes.

RESEARCH METHODS

On this research about virtual learning environment I have investigate more about this modern way of teaching that is taking an important role nowadays, I have made my research in internet where I found very interesting articles from university most of them about the virtual learning

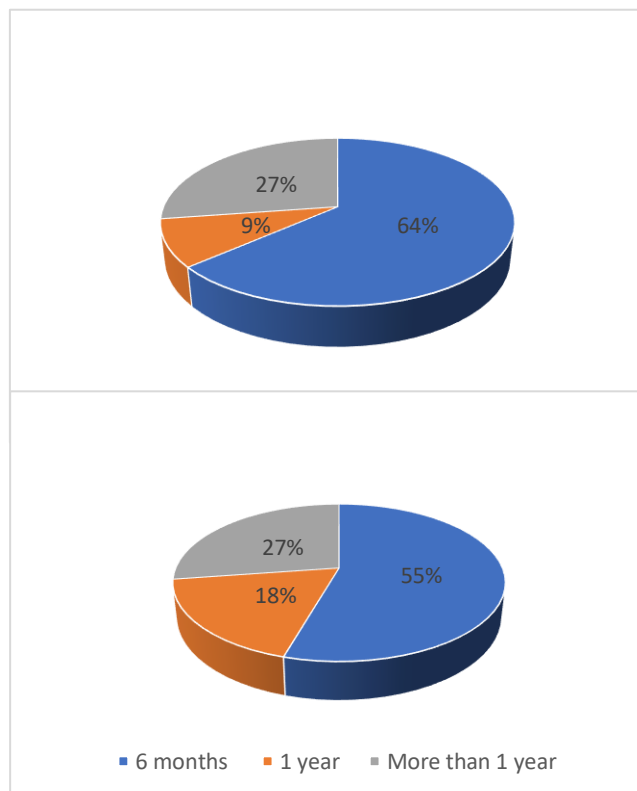
environment and how it has impacted in our academic studies and what are the advantages and disadvantages of this virtual teaching.

As it was required from my university I have made a survey where I ask questions to my classmates and other students from the University of Wales and I have based all my questions in my personal experiences to find out how students feel about the virtual environment which we have been introduced into it recently and it may be something new for most of us.

For this survey I have ask to the students of the University of Wales in London 10 questions and the survey was sent to 15 people which I have obtained 11 answers referring to the virtual class, Moodle which is the platform where we find information about the course and uploaded our assignments also I ask about the program we use to take classes that is Microsoft teams so I have thought about some advantages and disadvantages that may have these platform to understand how they feel and to learn how the answers may vary from one person to another depending in their personal experiences.

RESULTS

The following survey was made to 11 students from the University of Wales.

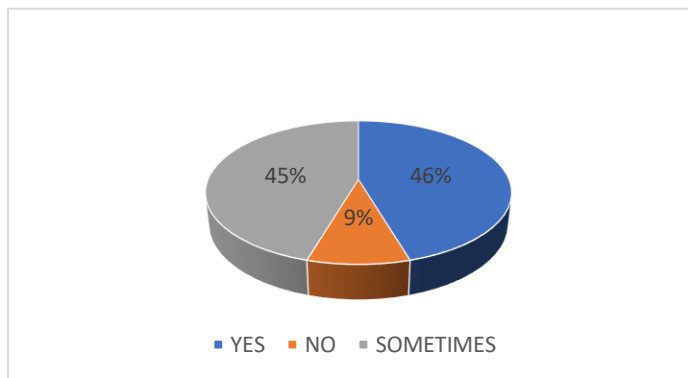


Do you find Moodle Platform Helpful?

As we can see on the chart 64% of students find useful Moodle which is the mayoralty of the people that answers to the survey and the rest of the students find it only sometimes, I think the results are overall good but it could be better.

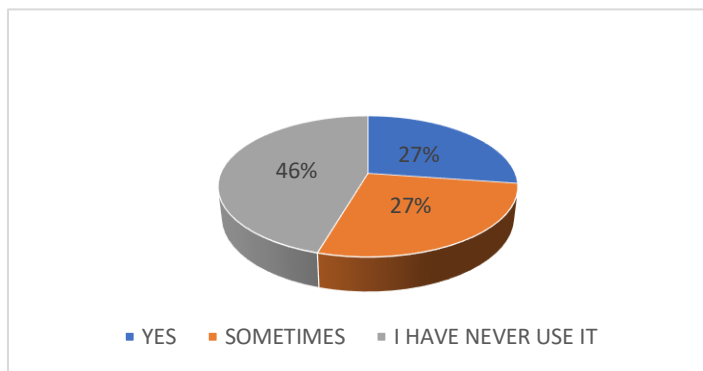
For how long you have been using Moodle?

I made this question to learn how many of the students are new in this concept of virtual environment and I found out 73% of the students have only studied for a year or less which is makes VLE something new for most of us.



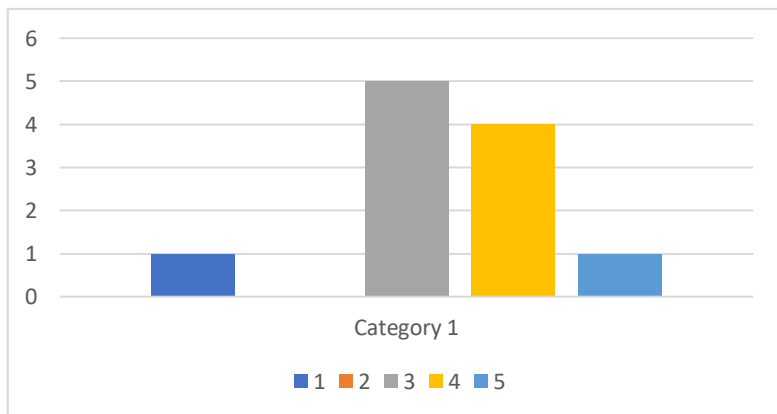
Do you think Moodle is a platform where you can find links or information easily?

On this question we can learn that most of the students struggle sometimes to find information in Moodle.



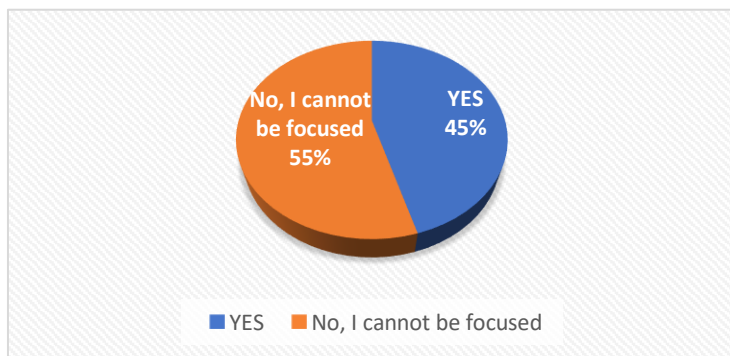
Do you use the virtual library that is provided by UWTSD?

Here I found out that no many students make use of the virtual library, and I can tell it is because we can find some information easily on the navigator.



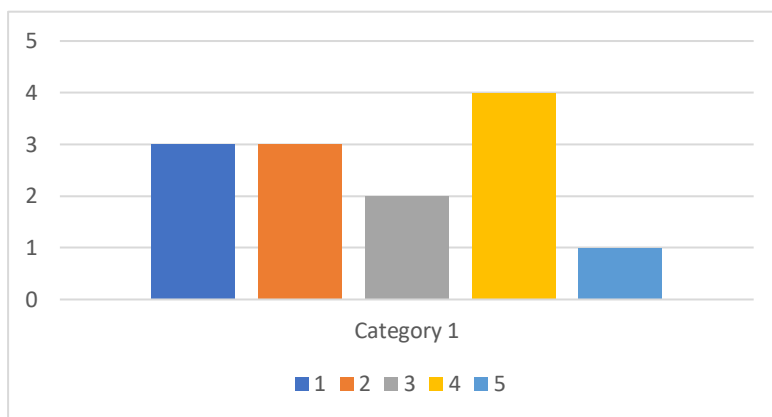
How often do you log into Moodle?

1 is rarely and 5 is very often so we can see the use of Moodle by the students it is not very often.



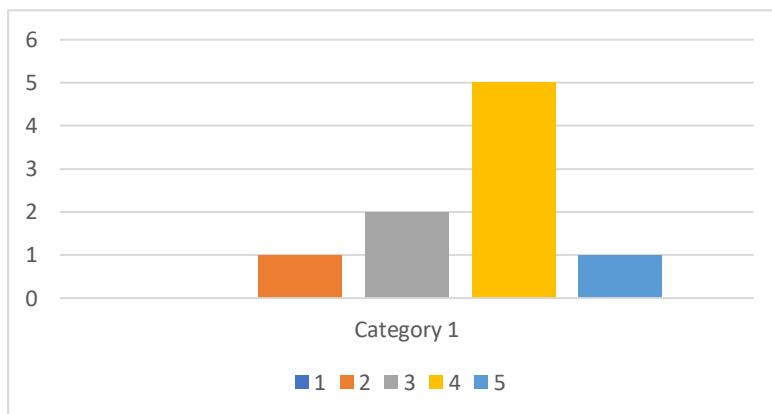
Do you think is beneficial studying from home?

The response is divided almost by half of the students that think studying from home can be sometimes not productive for them.



How often do you struggle to connect to the classes on Microsoft teams?

Here 1 is never and 5 is often. The answers are variable we can learn that sometimes students cannot connect to the class easily.



Do you find Microsoft Teams an App easy to use?

1 is difficult and 5 easy here most of the students find easy to use this application.

To end this survey I have asked the students what are the advantages and disadvantages for them of having virtual classes and most of them concluded that for them it was the flexibility that they have to manage better the time and save money of cost of transport, and as disadvantages most of them agreed that they can not be properly focused on class.

DISCUSSION

As a result of my survey I can tell the opinion about VLE is divided from students that may think is favourable for them and other students that they think is not.

As we could see in the chart some students find useful Moodle and this could be because sometimes they do not find the information easily, I personally think this could improve or maybe give a class to those students that struggle with this platform.

Also I have learned that opinions are divided about the effectiveness of VLE, some of them may be students that do not know much about technology or do not have digital skills, for them this could be a disadvantage for their studies.

On the other hand, there are students that find VLE easy for them and they study more effectively because they can manage better the time and they find the use of technology easy.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion I learned the impact of VLE in our studies, there are so many advantages that we can take advantages of and also there are few things that could be improve to make easier to use the applications for some users.

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