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DSR Assessment 2: Individual Report

Digital Skills And Research Method

BMSW4003

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A virtual learning environment (VLE – Moodle) is an online platform used for educational purposes. It contains all the material necessary for the course, whether they are reading sources and informational sites with assessment or other forms of virtual learning.

As Walden University (2021) states, the steady implementation of VLE in teaching and in the day to day practice is bringing changes in the way learning is organised and opens up opportunities that nobody could have predicted.

These processes are advancing at a very fast pace and there is no doubt that they are changing many of the academic practices and professional culture.

Virtual learning environment makes way for new ways of learning that brings education into someone's home, breaking the traditional structure of educational institutions as well as the delivery methods. The virtual campuses have begun to develop, not only within distance learning institutions but also within those classroom-based.

The concept of VLE could be considered as a dynamic concept due to the constant evolution of digital technologies, to its potentiality and the importance that these environments have within the learning process.

Educational system based on the internet are being used not only to incorporate technology into their courses, but also to complement the traditional way of schooling we all are accustomed with.

Learning environments based on the use of technology and internet resources are mediators in the learning process as they facilitate interaction and enhancing the construction and reconstruction of knowledge and meanings.

Students have access to resources and courses in their own time, in their own space and lessons can be done from anywhere as long as there is an internet connection.

Virtual learning environments are mostly found in universities, but they also are included in school during times when students are not able to attend classes as they usually would, due to different reasons.

A Virtual Learning Environment contains also information about the courses, video presentations, additional resources or links to outside sources, virtual library, formal assessments, a portal for assignment submissions and academic calendar up to date for students to check it and be always informed about the upcoming events.

There are several methods of talking and working together, such as live video conferencing, emails, messaging or chats.

Teachers can plan lessons, tracking their students progress and achievements, but also assessing their performance.

Impact of Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) – Moodle

As with most things, online learning also has its own set of positive and negative aspects.

All around the world, educational institutions are looking toward online learning platforms to continue with process of educating students, regardless of the other factors that could compromise the traditional way of teaching.

Online learning is applicable not just to learn academics, but it also extends to learning extracurricular activities as well.

Advantages of online learning

According to my own survey, 14 out of 17 students said learning online and being able to study in the modules in their own time has motivated their individual learning outside classes.

Offers teachers an efficient way to deliver lessons, also has a number of tools such as videos, PDF's, library and teachers can use all of them as part of their lesson.

According to eThink (2020) some of Virtual Learning Environments also allow teachers to see the activities that students carry out to help in their learning, activities that are not visible in a traditional classroom such as course reviewing, assignments view, resource view, and also see what assignments have been uploaded and when, when is the deadline or what has not been uploaded at all.

As Walden University (2021) stated that while learning online and increasing knowledge and skills in the area of study, a student will also be sharpening digital skills by using an online learning technology, will become confident and highly productive using online tools such as online tests, email communications and video presentations.

It allows schools to reach out to an extensive network of students, instead of being restricted by geographical boundaries in addition to permitting students and teachers to attend classes from any location without having to be physically present in a classroom as the traditional way of schooling requires.

It also is more affordable as it eliminates the cost points of student transport, meals and all study materials are paperless, making it affordable while beneficial to the environment.

Online learning has also improved student attendance because as I mentioned above in the introduction, classes can be taken from any location which means fewer chances of students missing out on lessons.

As every person is different, every student has a different learning style as some are visual learners, while others prefer audio or other students are solo learners.

The Virtual Learning Environment – Moodle, has a range of options and resources that can be personalized to create a learning environment suited to the needs of each student.

According to Northeastern University (2019), a student earning a degree online is demonstrating that they can practice time management and are self-motivated, which are among the top 10 employability skills employers want to see in new hires and it can be also proved that the student can tackle multiple tasks, set priorities and adapt to changing work conditions.

Adding to the list of advantages, a student can begin a course or join a school or university at any point, no matter the group age as opposed to a traditional one where students need to be within a certain age group and would not be allowed to enrol.

Disadvantages of virtual learning environment

One of the challenges of online classes is internet connectivity and although internet has grown in bounds over the past few years, it's still a problem in smaller cities, towns or underdeveloped countries.

Earlier I mentioned that one of the advantages that VLE has the advantage of creating a learning environment suited to the needs of each student, but it can also be a disadvantage as some might feel lost when they can't ask the lecturer for clarification in real time.

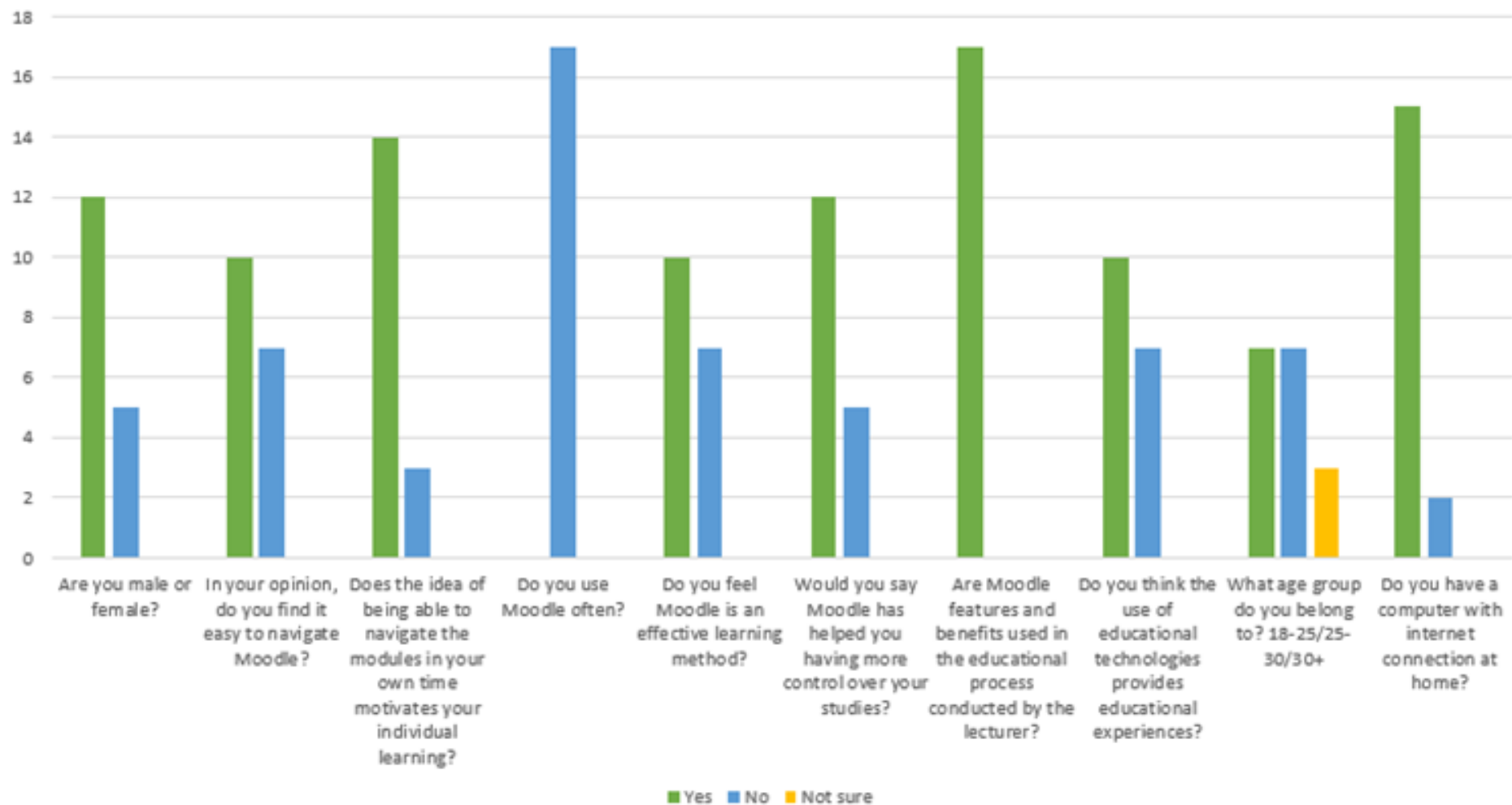
Another disadvantage is that studying online means mostly developing theoretical knowledge rather than practical skills.

While studying online, screen time increases and as a student it's easier to get distracted by social media or entertainment, which can result in low student engagement.

To use VLE – Moodle, a student or a teacher must be somewhat confident using technology as accessing online classes requires a minimum knowledge of computing literacy (Reverb (2020)) and according to the survey I did in my classroom, 100% of them consider that moodle it is not easy to use which could potentially lead to students feeling overwhelmed and wanting to abandon studies all together.

Here we can also add the fact that in my classroom 17 people have responded that they do not use Moodle outside the classroom and it could be because they do not have computer skills.

The following section reports a quantitative survey conducted to gather data and put them in context.



This questionnaire was completed by 17 people (12 females and 5 males) which represent a 100% response rate from my classroom. Of these responses 58,82% find it easy to navigate Moodle while 41,17% doesn't find it easy. 82,35% feels that the idea of being able to navigate the modules in their own time motivates their learning, although there is a small number 17,64% that don't share the same feeling.

100% of the responders do not use Moodle often. 58,82% said that Moodle is an effective learning method, while 41,17% responded that it is not. Also 82,35% responded that Moodle has helped to having more control over studies, while the rest of 29,41% said it didn't. 100% of the responders said that Moodle features and benefits are used by the lecturer.

58,82% responded that educational technologies provides educational experiences while the 41,17% represents the number of those who don't agree. 41,17% belong to age group 18-25, 41,17% belong to age group 25-30 and lastly 17,64% belong to 30+. On the last question, 88,23% of responders have a computer with internet connection at home while a very small number of 11,76% said they do not.

Conclusion

In the research described and information found, detecting the impact of accessing certain activities within a VLE helps the behaviours of students to be visible to lecturers and not only and therefore, methods of teaching can be adapted and content improved resulting in better helping the students in their learning and performance.

According to student's opinions from my classroom and not only, the online learning promotes the development of autonomous learning as well as effective teacher-student communication.

Despite the technical difficulties that sometimes can make them feel overwhelmed as I covered above, their experience with VLE is for the most part satisfactory and they are eager to share new knowledge with others.

Additionally, while students in general are constantly using the internet nowadays, the time dedicated to this increased even more due to the current worldwide situation we're living.

Furthermore, some students still struggle with education applications that may require abilities other than those they frequently use with personal devices, but they have more confidence in asking for help online than they would have in a traditional classroom.

Notwithstanding the mentioned disadvantages, the use of a VLE provides students with a less stressful learning environment and also help with increasing engagement, confidence and last but not least, responsibility which is one of the main needed in the workplace.

The following section reports a quantitative survey conducted to gather data and put them in context.

Questionnaire Design

Student Name: _____Ana-Maria Trusca_____ Student ID: _____2019595_____
Module Name: Digital Skills and Research Methods Term 2 Group: _____

Aim: This exercise is aimed to help you in your questionnaire design. Please note, you need to use this questionnaire to conduct a survey which is also one of the important parts of your research report.

Please write down your questions that you are going to use in your primary data collection. Try to have different types of questions such as open-ended questions and close-ended questions (yes/no questions, multiple choice questions, Likert-scale questions).

Question 1:

Are you male or female ? F / M

Question 2:

In your opinion, do you find it easy to navigate Moodle? YES / NO

Question 3:

Does the idea of being able to navigate the modules in your own time, motivates your individual learning? Yes / No

Question 4:

Do you use Moodle often ? yes / no / not sure

Question 5:

Do you feel Moodle is an effective learning method? Yes / No

Question 6:

Would you say Moodle has helped you having more control over your studies?

Yes / No / Not sure

Question 7

Are Moodle features and benefits used in the educational process conducted by the lecturer?

Yes / No / Not sure

Question 8:

Do you think the use of educational technologies provides educational experiences?

Yes / NO / Not sure

Question 9:

What age group do you belong to?

18-25 / 25-30 / 30+

10.

Do you have a computer with internet connection at home? Yes / No

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