

The University of Huddersfield
**School of Education and Professional
Development**

**Research and comparison of the use of a VLE
and a static Intranet**

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Module: DFW 1320

Introduction

I am presenting this seminar on a comparison I have made between the use of a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and a static Hyper Text Mark Up Language (HTML) Intranet site at my school, as a method of delivering resources and lesson materials to students.

I developed the static HTML Intranet site at the school over the past year and frequently updated the subject areas, so that staff and students could have access to resources, organised in a subject specific manner. Over the past 3 months I have been testing a trailing various VLE systems, as recommended by the [DfES](#), for the school, and had settled on using [Moodle](#). Having installed Moodle on the server at school I have been working with a few key members of staff to test the capabilities of this system and to see how the students would find working with it.

To gauge the reactions of staff and students I set up an on-line questionnaire using [PHP](#) and [MySQL](#) with HTML to record peoples reactions to a database, so I could collate them all at a later date.

I have looked at various areas of the two systems to compare and contrast them, and along with the results of the questionnaire I have reached some conclusions about each system.

Development

Aims

- Conduct an analysis of the strengths / weaknesses of the school's VLE system against the school's old HTML Intranet.
- Discuss the benefits and drawbacks of conducting the research in the manner I did.

Discussion of aims

I conducted my initial research by developing an on-line questionnaire that I could use to gauge staff and students reactions to the two different systems. The questionnaire can be viewed on-line at <http://shunsley.eriding.net/survey/> .

The questionnaire consisted mainly of closed questions, so that I could compare the multiple answers and get some statistics from the results. There were also two open questions that I hoped would give people a chance to make their own points and hopefully raise some areas of interest that I had not thought of.

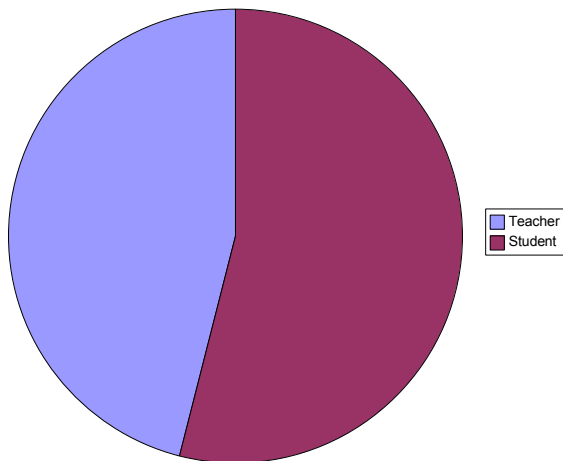
I then compiled the completed questionnaires using the scripts I had written to record the results to the database. The compiled results can be viewed on-line at <http://shunsley.eriding.net/survey/admin/> . I then took these compiled results and created some pie charts from them for ease of interpretation and viewing. These can be viewed in the following results of the questionnaire.

This is the first on-line questionnaire that I have developed and ran, so there were always going to be some teething problems with it. I discuss the positive and negative sides of researching in this manner later on in this section.

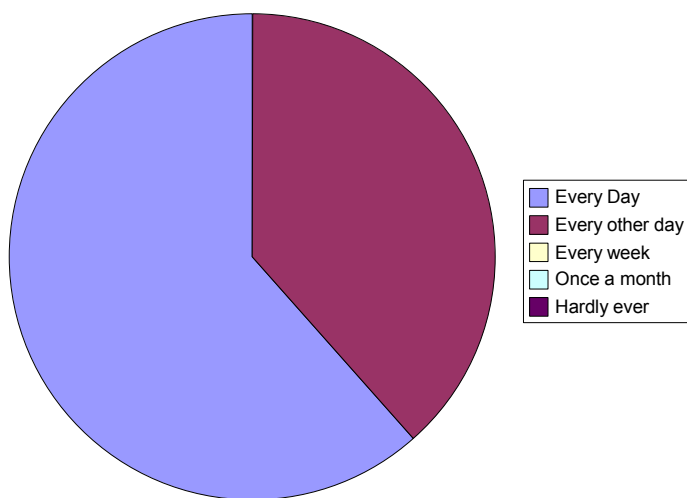
Results of Questionnaire

Here are the results, percentages and pie charts for each closed question I asked:
The question that had a 100% result, I have not made pie charts for.

Question 1 Are you a teacher or a student?		
Teacher	6	46.1538461538%
Student	7	53.8461538462%



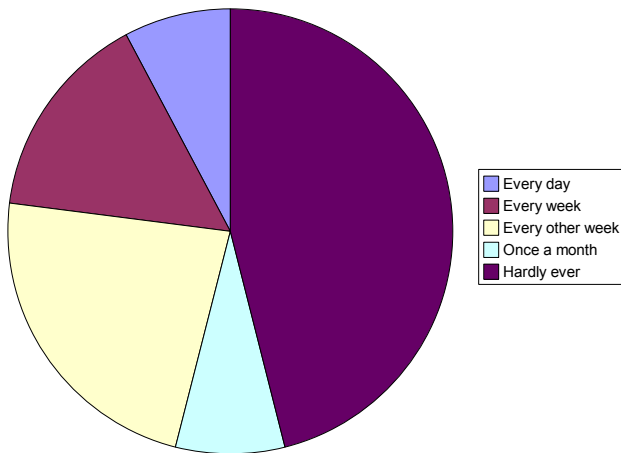
Question 2 How often do you use computers in your school work?		
Every Day	8	61.5384615385%
Every other day	5	38.4615384615%
Every week	0	0%
Once a month	0	0%
Hardly ever	0	0%



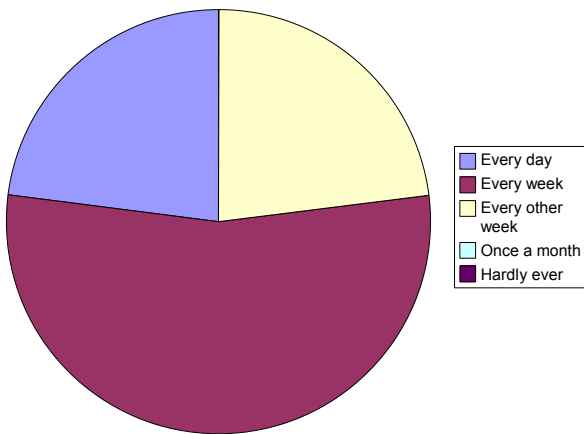
Question 3 Do you think that computers and digital resources help your learning / teaching experience?		
Yes	13	100%
No	0	0%
Do not know	0	0%

Question 4 Do you think that being to access the Intranet from home will help your studies / teaching?		
Yes	13	100%
No	0	0%
Do not know	0	0%

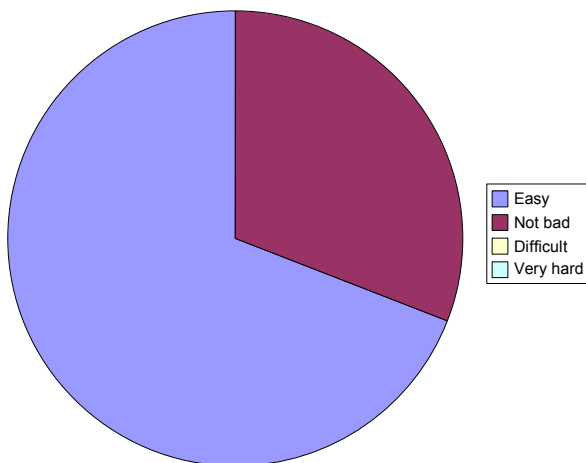
Question 5 How often did you use the old Intranet to get resources from?		
Every day	1	7.69230769231%
Every week	2	15.3846153846%
Every other week	3	23.0769230769%
Once a month	1	7.69230769231%
Hardly ever	6	46.1538461538%



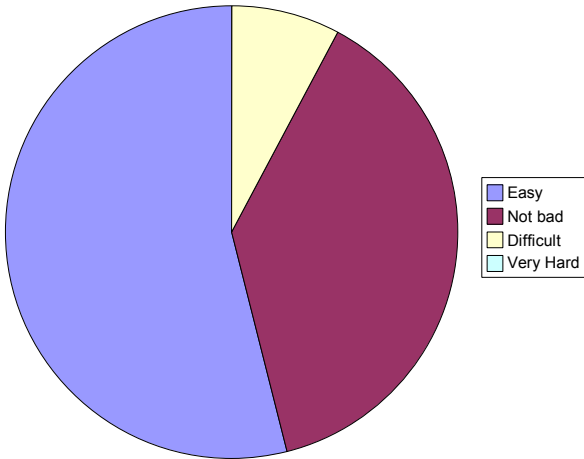
Question 6 How often do you find yourself using the VLE?		
Every day	3	23.0769230769%
Every week	7	53.8461538462%
Every other week	3	23.0769230769%
Once a month	0	0%
Hardly ever	0	0%



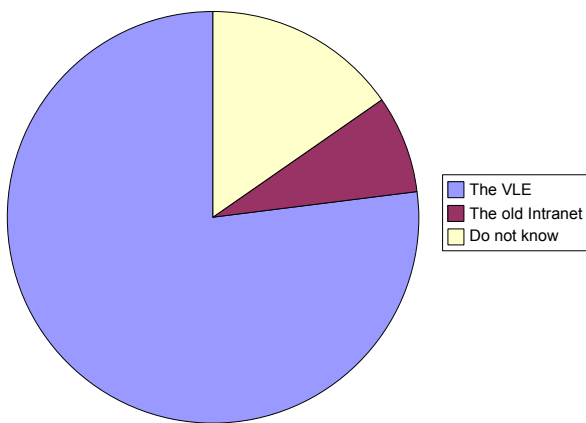
Question 7 How have you found logging into the school's VLE?		
Easy	9	69.2307692308%
Not bad	4	30.7692307692%
Difficult	0	0%
Very hard	0	0%



Question 8 How easy do you find it to navigate around the school's VLE?		
Easy	7	53.8461538462%
Not bad	5	38.4615384615%
Difficult	1	7.69230769231%
Very Hard	0	0%

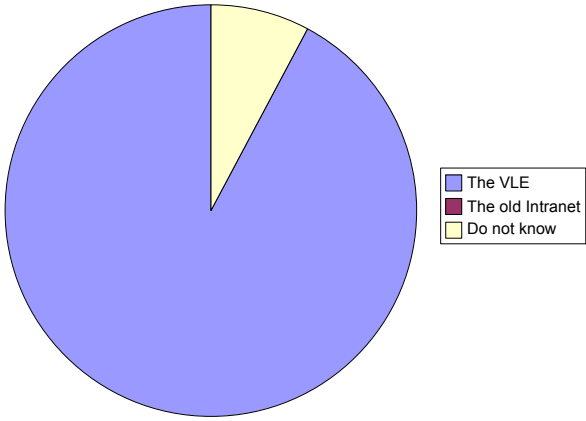


Question 9 Which have you used more for your studies, the old Intranet or the new VLE?		
The VLE	10	76.9230769231%
The old Intranet	1	7.69230769231%
Do not know	2	15.3846153846%



Question 10 Which do you think is a better system for delivering resources and teaching, the old Intranet or the new VLE?

The VLE	12	92.3076923077%
The old Intranet	0	0%
Do not know	1	7.69230769231%



Analysis of Questionnaire Results

We can draw certain information from these results.

In terms of the use of computers and digital learning objects; we can see that there is an almost equal number of students compared to teachers taking this questionnaire, meaning the results should be fairly balanced in terms staff and students ideas. Everyone who took the questionnaire felt that computers and digital resources helped them in their teaching and learning experience and that access to these DLO's from home would help their teaching and learning experience even more. 60% of the people who took the questionnaire use a computer every day in their teaching and learning experience and everybody used a computer at least every other day.

In terms of comparing the static Intranet to the VLE, we can see that whilst almost 50% of people hardly ever used the static Intranet, over 50% now use the VLE at least every week, a dramatic improvement. Over 75% of the people claim to have used the VLE more for their studies than the static Intranet and over 90% of the people feel that the VLE is a better system of delivering teaching and learning materials than the static Intranet.

We can also draw some information about peoples experiences with the VLE itself, 70% have found it easy to log into and over 50% have found navigation of the VLE easy, with under 10% finding navigation difficult. For a new system that has not been in place long these are encouraging results, and hopefully with time, people will find the whole process of using the system easier.

If we look at the results we gained from the two open questions on the questionnaire, we can gain some more direct insight into peoples feelings about the two systems.

When questioned about the strengths and weaknesses of the static Intranet, 5 of the 13 people mentioned not having home access as a weakness, and 3 of the 13 people mention that staff being unable to update their areas was a draw back.

The VLE system solves both of these problems that were highlighted in the static Intranet with 6 of the 13 people highlighting home access as one of the VLE's main advantages.

People also highlight that the ability to communicate with staff and pupils through the VLE is a benefit and that it is a new way of using the computers in study.

Benefits and drawbacks of research methods used

The method of an on-line questionnaire that I used to gather this research had certain advantages and disadvantages, a lot of these did not become apparent until I had asked people to complete the questionnaire.

The main advantages were

- People did not have to write anything, so it took very little time to complete.
- There was no paper to be thrown away, lost or filed.
- There was very little for me to do in the way of compiling the information as the database and scripts used for the question did most of this for me.

The disadvantages that I came across were;

- There was a lot of time involved in writing all the HTML and PHP / MySQL to get the on-line questionnaire working
- Getting people to answer the questionnaire
- Knowing how many people had even read the email directing them to the questionnaire

There was an encouraging number of people that completed this questionnaire and there did not appear to be any problems in terms of people filling it in. Despite the amount time that was spent by myself in setting up this questionnaire, I still think it is a valid method of researching a subject and would use it again if necessary.

Conclusion

The results to the questionnaire show that without a shadow of a doubt the new VLE, system is a far better way to deliver teaching and learning resources. The teachers and students use the new system more, there are more varied ways in which they can interact with each other and their learning experience and all of the information can be accessed from home.

In terms of the benefits that I directly see for myself, they are that home access will increase the usage of the system and now that staff can update their own areas, I can spend my time administering the system, as opposed to just updating the resources for departments.

As staff use the system more, I am sure that the quality of resources available to the students will be of a lot higher quality and that the experience will improve even more.

The key to ensuring that this all keeps developing, is to provide training to the teaching staff and introduce the system to the students in a manner that enables them to use the system effectively.

The actual method of research, by asking people to complete an on-line questionnaire; is, I feel, a good method. Although it did involve a lot of initial work for myself, I think it is worth the time needed and future questionnaires will not take as long to set up, as I now have the skills needed to do this and will not have to learn them as I go along. In terms of the people taking the questionnaire, I think it is perhaps better than a traditional questionnaire as it takes less time to complete and there is no paper work to get lost or thrown away.