DigiTeaL

DigiTeal – Digital Teaching Literacy

IO1.A2 – NATIONAL REPORT

Developed by:

Emphasys CENTRE

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.
Submission Number: 2020-1-UK01-KA226-SCH-094429

INFORMATION ABOUT OUTPUT

Output:	lO1 – DigiTeal Framework
Activity:	lO1-A2 : National Report

PROJECT INFORMATION

Project acronym:	DigiTeal
Project title:	Digital Teaching Literacy
Project number:	2020-1-UK01-KA226-SCH-094429
Sub-programme or KA:	KA2 Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices
Sector:	School Sector

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.
Submission Number: 2020-1-UK01-KA226-SCH-094429

Contents

1. General Introduction 4
2. State of the Art regarding Online Teaching 4
3. Needs and Gaps of Teachers in relation to Online Teaching 5
   3.1 Questionnaire Results 5
   3.2 Focus Group Results 12
4. Good Practices in relation to Online Teaching 14
5. Conclusion/ Summary 16
6. References 17

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.
Submission Number: 2020-1-UK01-KA226-SCH-094429

1. General Introduction

The pandemic of COVID-19 took the world by surprise, and citizens were forced into a global lockdown with almost no time to prepare, and with no precedent in recent years. Schools moved immediately to online teaching for the duration of the lockdown, and teachers have hardly had a chance to take a breath, let alone spend time retraining or developing key skills to help with the move to online teaching.

This report is part of the European Erasmus+ Project DigiTeal – Digital Teaching Literacy, and aims to provide an overview of the state of art regarding online teaching in Cyprus, along with a presentation of some of the good practices emerged during this time. Additionally, the results of the research regarding the needs and gaps of teachers in Cyprus in relation to online teaching are presented and discussed. The information presented in this report, will be used as a reference for the design of the DigiTeal Framework, which aims to present key skills and competences to be achieved by the educators in relation to online teaching.

2. State of the Art regarding Online Teaching

In order to counter the emerging risks of the COVID-19 pandemic, the government of Cyprus following the example of other countries around the world, suspended the in-school operation of all public and private schools at all levels in March 2020. As a result, teaching was transferred online, using both synchronous and asynchronous methods. Specifically, a distance synchronous education programme had been implemented using Microsoft Teams with more than 110 000 teachers and students having access to the software (Eurydice European Commission, 2021).

However, the transition to online teaching was not easy and various measures were taken to support both students and educators. Firstly, priority was given to students' access to computers/ tablets and internet at home through funding by the government (MOEC, 2021). Additionally, supportive educational material for students was uploaded onto the Ministry of Education (MOEC) website, on individual school webpages and also on public and private TV channels in the form of broad casting lessons and educational programmes. Similarly, online teacher training courses were provided by the Pedagogical Institute of Cyprus, along with supportive material produced by the MOEC and published on a dedicated website on topics such as online tools, teaching techniques, resources etc. Moreover, material and resources were produced to support parents and guardians to support their children with online teaching.

At the moment, most of the students returned back to schools in Cyprus, following all the necessary safety and hygiene measures according to the guidelines of the Ministry of Health, but certainly the impact online teaching had on education will be long lasting. A blended learning approach is adopted by schools in Cyprus, allowing students with medical or other reasons to participate in their learning experience remotely, while at the same time other students can

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.
Submission Number: 2020-1-UK01-KA226-SCH-094429

participate physically in class (MOEC, 2021). Hence, it is vital to support teachers transforming their classroom-based teaching in a virtual environment, and the first step is to identify the needs and gaps of teachers in relation to online teaching practices.

3. Needs and Gaps of Teachers in relation to Online Teaching

In order to identify the needs and gaps of teachers in relation to online teaching, a questionnaire was developed and distributed to teachers both online and face-to-face. Additionally, a virtual focus group was conducted with teachers who expressed an interest to discuss further their experiences and needs in relation to online teaching.

3.1 Questionnaire Results

The questionnaire was divided in 5 sections, and requested information in the following areas:

- Demographic Information
- Digital Skills
- Managing Learners Online
- Online Safety and Privacy
- Collection of Good Practices

In total, 40 educators were completed the questionnaire. Regarding the background of the respondents, 70% identified as women and 30% as men, and teaching in various educational levels but predominantly at the secondary level education (53%). The rest of the respondents stated that they teach on the primary level education (28%), VET education (13%) and private institutions (6%).

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.
Submission Number: 2020-1-UK01-KA226-SCH-094429

Digital Skills

Respondents were asked to rate from 1-Not Confident to 5-Very Confident on how confident they feel in regards to online teaching – the majority of the respondents (45%) stated that they feel Confident (3) teaching online, 30% stated that they feel Very Confident (4) and 25% stated 'Not so Confident' (2).

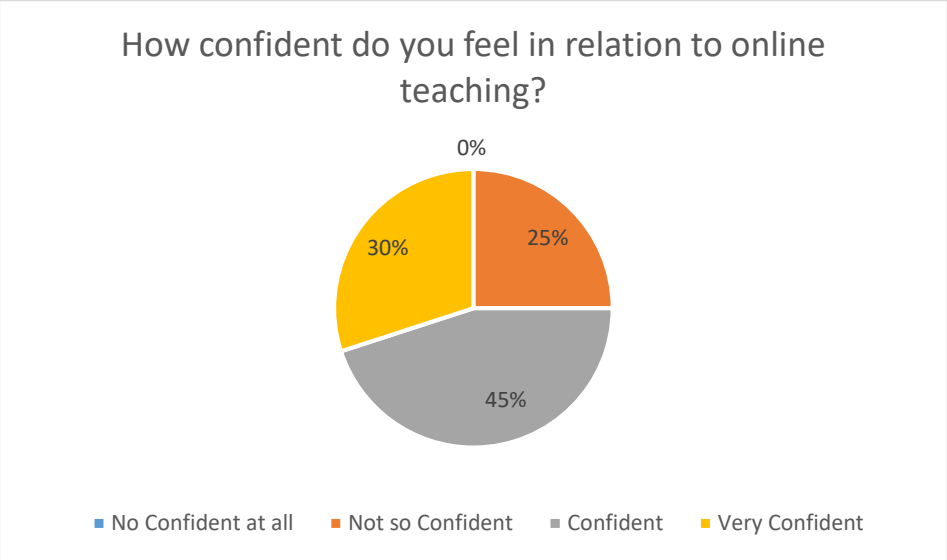


Figure 1: How confident do you feel in relation to online teaching?

In regards to the various difficulties faced during teaching online, the lack of appropriate equipment ranked first by the respondents (70%), followed by bad internet connection (55%), lack of appropriate software (53%) and lack of digital skills and competences (45%). Additional comments on the 'Other' option were the experience of trying something for the first time, whereas one participant stated that no difficulties were encountered.

Regarding the use of available tools and software, the majority of the respondents (48%) stated that their organization uses Moodle as their learning management system, whereas 40% of them stated that they do not use any learning management tools. Other options of learning management systems mentioned are 360Learning (5%) and Talent LMS (2.5%).

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.
Submission Number: 2020-1-UK01-KA226-SCH-094429

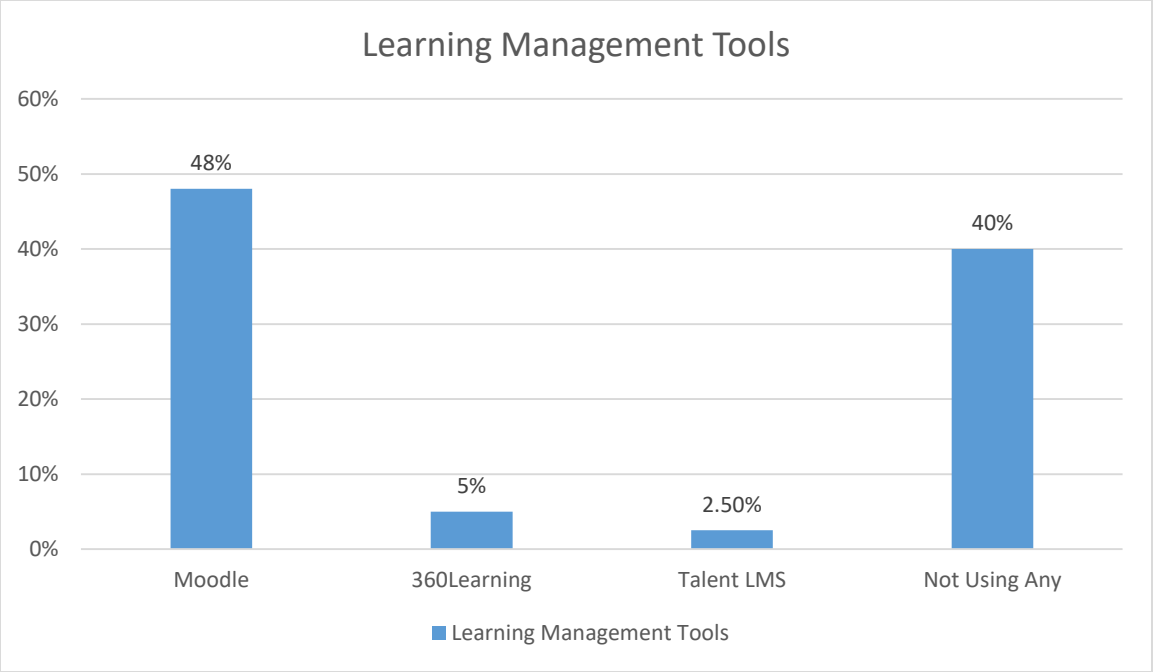


Figure 2: Which learning management system your organization uses?

Microsoft Teams (88%) and Zoom (56%) are the first options for the respondents to conduct their online teaching, followed by Skype (35%), Google Meet (25%) and Cisco Webex (3%).

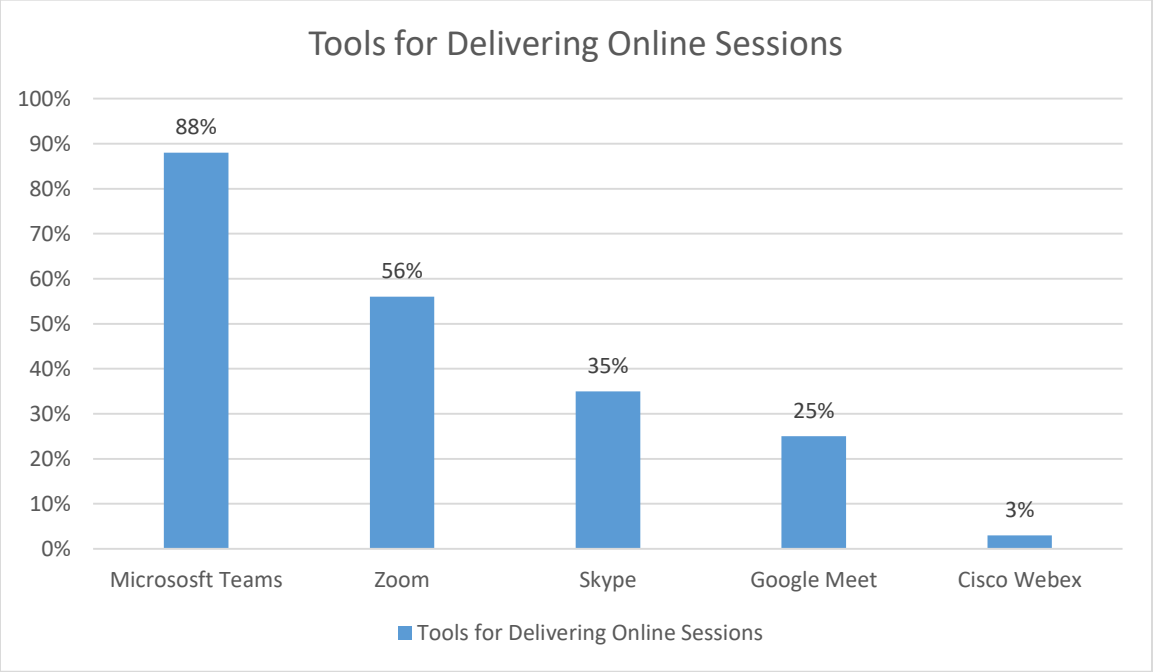


Figure 3: Tools/ Software for Delivering Online Sessions

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.
Submission Number: 2020-1-UK01-KA226-SCH-094429

In regards to various software and apps to enhance the interaction with their learners during online teaching, online quizzes were the most popular option (85%), followed by online interactive boards (40%), brainstorming charts (35%) and Padlet (28%). However, a few respondents (13%) stated that they do not use any.

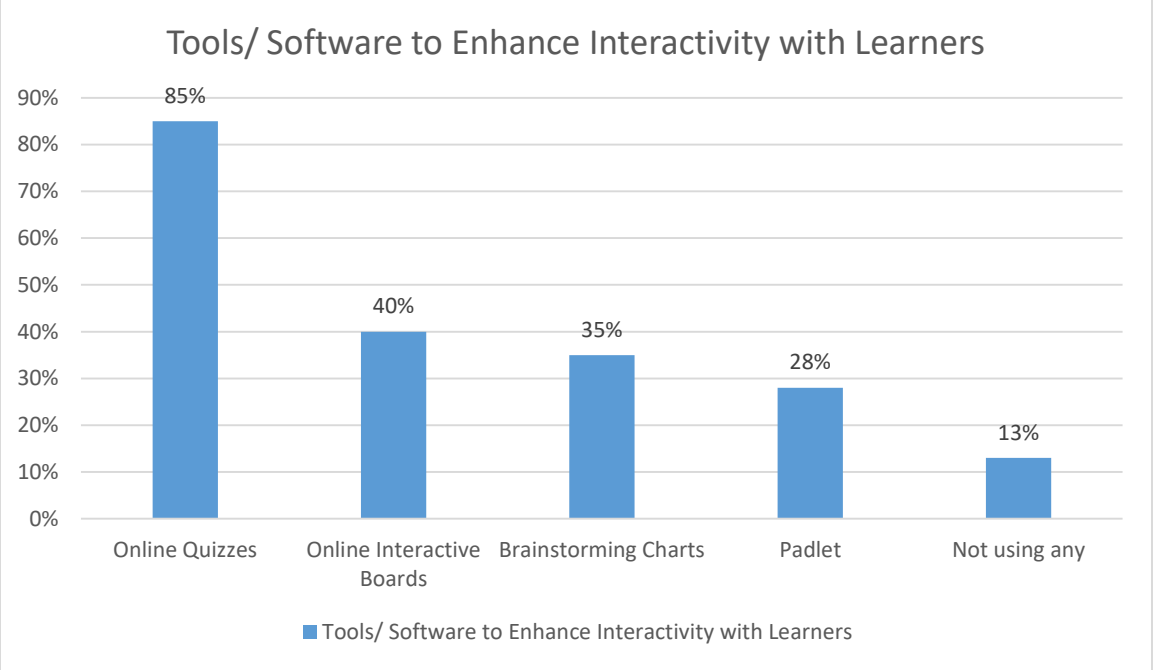


Figure 4: Tools/ Software to Enhance Interactivity with Learners

Concerning the creation of engaging content and resources for online teaching, the majority of the respondents stated that they do not use any tools (60%). However, some of the respondents mentioned tools such as Canva (23%), Google Draw (13%), Powtoon (13%) and Wordwall (5%).

In addition, 53% of the respondents were not aware of the Open Badges system as a validation method, 33% were aware of the Open Badges but not incorporated them into their practices, and only 15% were aware of them and using them in their teaching practices.

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.
Submission Number: 2020-1-UK01-KA226-SCH-094429

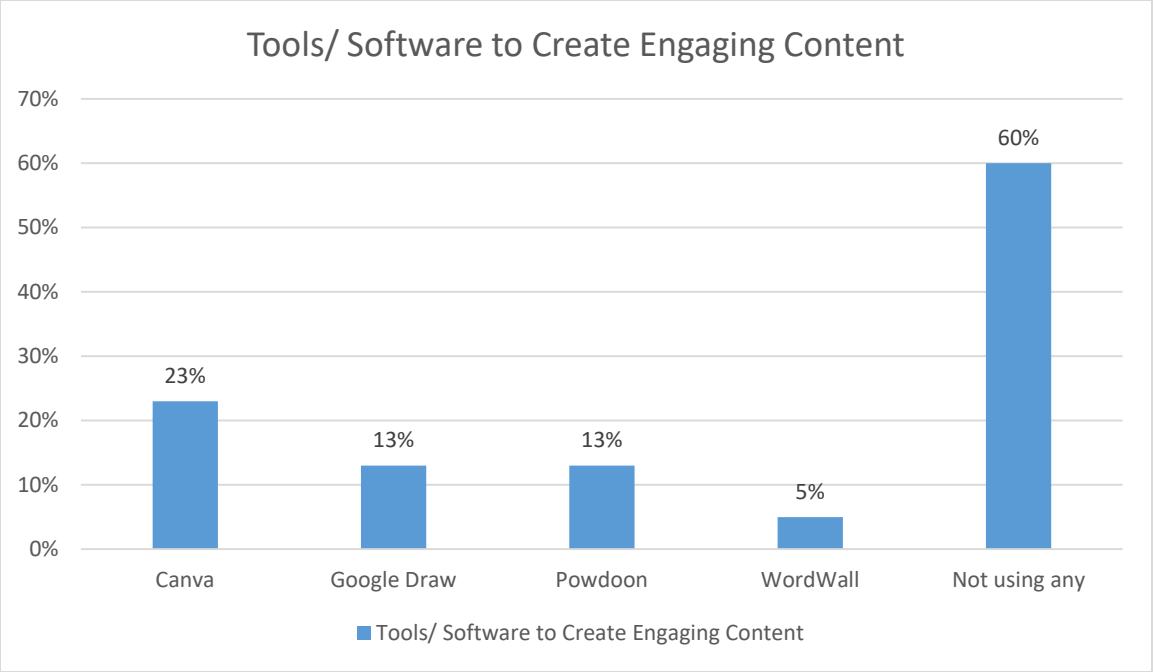


Figure 5: Tools/ Software to Create Engaging Content

Managing Learners in the Online Environment

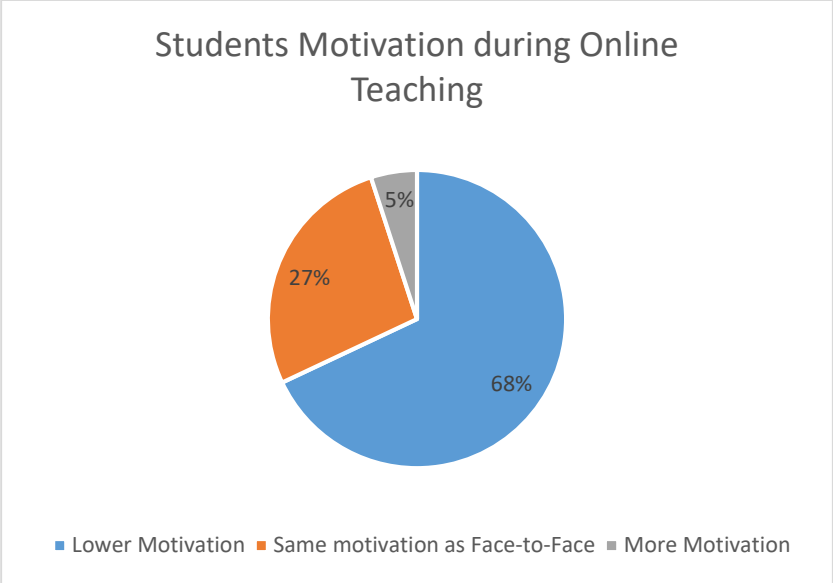
Managing their learners in the online environment was a challenging task for educators. Specifically, 68% reported that their students showed lower motivation compare to face-to-face setting, whereas only 5% of them stated that their students appeared more motivated. The remaining 27% stated that there was no change in the students' motivation, as they showed the same motivation as at a face-to-face setting.

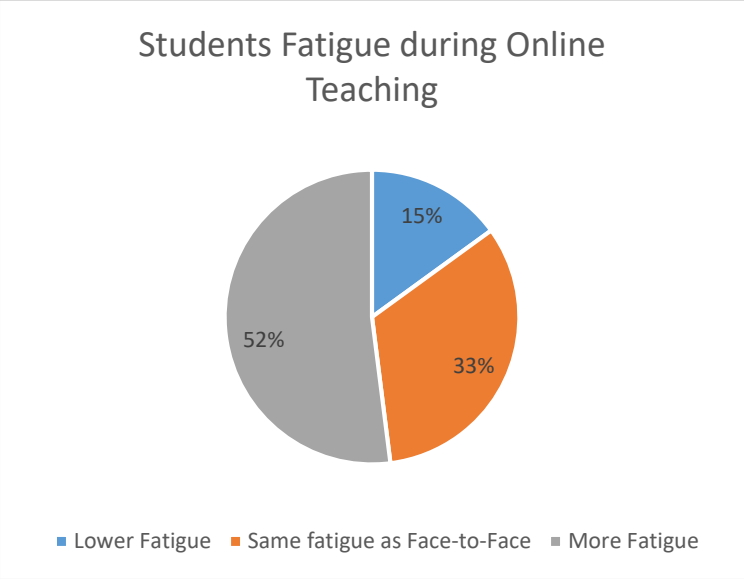
Regarding students' fatigue, more than half of the respondents (52%) mentioned that their students presented more fatigue compare to face-to-face teaching, 33% stated that students presented the same fatigue as in a face-to-face teaching, whereas a few respondents (15%) mentioned that students show lower fatigue during online training.

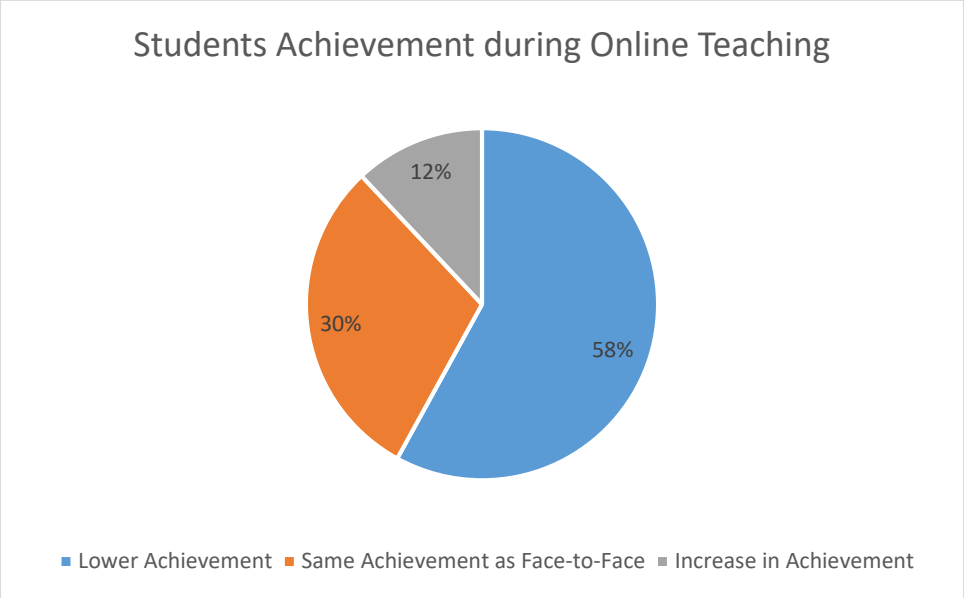
In terms of students' achievement and performance, the majority of the respondents (58%) suggest that students' grades are lower compare to face-to-face teaching, 30% noted no changes in students' achievements, whereas only 12% of the respondents noted an improvement in students' grades compare to face-to-face teaching.

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.
Submission Number: 2020-1-UK01-KA226-SCH-094429







In regards to some groups of students that might have benefited from online teaching, the majority of the respondents (55%) stated that learners from disadvantaged groups have been benefited from this transition, followed by previously low achieving learners (30%). Additionally, some of the respondents stated that this transition has benefited learners from large families (20%), neurodiverse learners (20%), learners with special educational needs (20%) and learners with physical disabilities (15%). A couple of respondents (5%) stated that none of the above group have been benefited from online teaching.

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.
Submission Number: 2020-1-UK01-KA226-SCH-094429

Online Safety and Privacy

In terms of online safety and privacy, 63% of the respondents stated that they are aware of the GDPR guidelines to protect their learners' privacy, whereas 37% mentioned they are not.

In order to protect their students' privacy and personal data, some of the measures implemented by the respondents are: not sharing students' photos or information without their consent (85%), using tools that are protecting students' personal data (53%), inform students about privacy issues (43%), requesting consent to record the session (43%) and allowing students to have their camera off (3%). However, 5% of the respondents stated that they do not take any protective measures in regards to students' privacy.

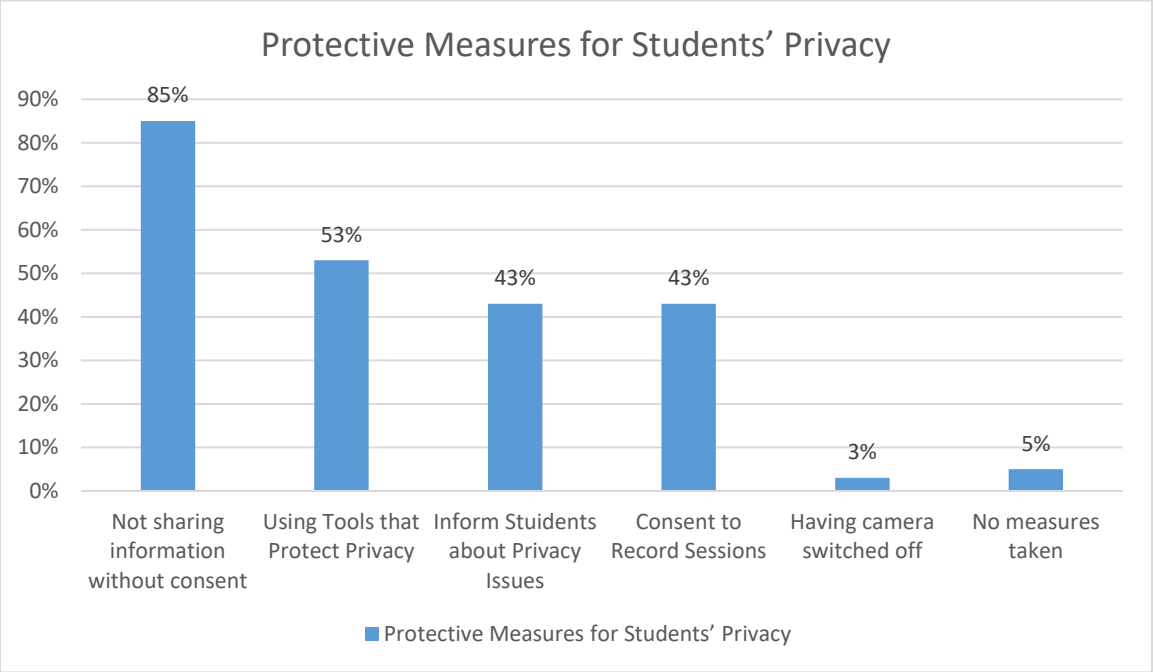


Figure 6: Protective Measures for Students' Privacy

In regards to avoid disruptive intrusions during online class, 73% of the respondents had set a password for accessing online meetings, 62% of them used a verification of participants identity before accepting them in the online session and 43% avoid sharing the meeting in link in social media platforms. A few respondents (10%) mentioned that they do not take any measures for this issue.

Moreover, in terms of protecting the learners from online threads such as accessing inappropriate content and cyberbullying, 60% mentioned providing information to students about this topic as a preventive measure, and also changing security settings (40%) and established a cyberbullying reporting system (25%). Some of the respondents (23%) stated that either do not use or they are not aware of any measures implemented to protect students from such issues.

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.
Submission Number: 2020-1-UK01-KA226-SCH-094429

Exchange of Good Practices

Almost all the respondents (90%) shared tips and good practices with their colleagues during and after COVID-19 pandemic, in relation to online teaching.

Some good practices shared are:

- ✓ The creation of a blog for the classroom, in order for the educator to share announcements, homework and activities with students and make their learning experience more fun and engaging.
- ✓ Giving the opportunity to all the participants to contribute and share opinions/ thoughts during online teaching and keep track of the learners' progress in terms of completing assignments and homework
- ✓ Encourage your learners to switch their camera on for better interaction. It is also helpful for the educator to monitor learners' attendance and focus.

3.2 Focus Group Results

In addition, to the questionnaire distribution, a virtual focus group was conducted with educators who expressed an interest to discuss further their experiences and needs in relation to online teaching. In total, 5 educators participated in this activity, which was conducted online through Zoom.

The discussion started by asking the participants to share their experience with online teaching so far – one educator stated that adapting to online teaching after the first lockdown was a big challenge for them, but when the second lockdown started in Cyprus educators were more prepared. All educators participated suggested that they needed some time to adapt to this new reality, but now they feel more prepared to deliver a session online.

In regards to the difficulties/ challenges encountered the following challenges raised:

- ➢ Lack of appropriate equipment – bad internet connection, large families faced issues of accessing devices ('one device for 2-3 students')
- ➢ Support and communication were required also by parents, however parents who were lacking digital skills was also a challenge as they were not able to support their children.
- ➢ Harder to keep students online the same time as you would have them in school – hence, the teaching approach had to be adopted, and also the pace of delivery.
- ➢ Finding appropriate tools to deliver your lesson in an engaging and interactive way was a challenge at the beginning.

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.
Submission Number: 2020-1-UK01-KA226-SCH-094429

In terms of managing learners online, the following challenges were raised by the participants:

- Some students lost their motivation and found it hard to concentrate when being at home with so many distractions (TV, Games, etc.)
- At first students were attending the lesson with their camera switched off, but it was hard to tell if they were following the delivery of the lesson or if they were doing something else – all the educators are encouraging their students to switch their camera on, but students have the right to refuse.
- Online teaching makes it harder for the educator to monitor the progress of the learners, as you are not able to observe them in the class as you would have done in a classroom environment.
- A lot of students were presenting various gaps in their learning that would have been prevented in face-to-face education.

Participants have also been asked what skills and competences they would like to develop further in order to be better prepared as educators to deliver an online session. Most of the participants believed that they possess good digital skills, but they would like to explore more applications/ software/ tools in relation to managing an online classroom and to create more interactive sessions and resources for their students.

Lastly, participants were asked to share some tips and good practices that helped them in regards to online teaching. One educator shared that in order to keep his students active, he used an app which the educator rolls a dice and the dice picks a student to speak at random. This way students stayed attentive to the lesson and they found the lesson more pleasant.

Additionally, another educator mentioned that using quizzes at the end of each lesson ensures a better understanding of the lesson and the learners have the opportunity to apply what they learned during that session.

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.
Submission Number: 2020-1-UK01-KA226-SCH-094429

4. Good Practices in relation to Online Teaching

This section presents good practices in Cyprus in relation to online teaching such as available training programmes and initiatives at a local/national level directed to teachers/ educators, in order to develop their skills and competences.

GOOD PRACTICE 1	
Name	Funding for Laptops and Tablets
Description (50-70 words)	A funding up to €400 was available for students and teachers who wish to purchase a laptop or tablet to support their online and teaching practices.
Key Stakeholders/ Provider (If applicable)	Ministry of Education and Culture
Level (Organisational, Regional, Local, National)	National
Link/ Website	http://www.moec.gov.cy/2020_2021_epichorigisi_agora_laptop.html

GOOD PRACTICE 2	
Name	E-Learning Schools Platform
Description (50-70 words)	E-Learning Schools platform offers free access to supporting material and resources for teachers, students and parents/ guardians in relation to online teaching and learning.
Key Stakeholders/ Provider (If applicable)	Ministry of Education and Culture
Level (Organisational, Regional, Local, National)	National
Link/ Website	https://elearning.schools.ac.cy/index.php/el/

GOOD PRACTICE 3	
Name	Online Seminar 'Digital Education in Cyprus'
Description (50-70 words)	An online seminar for educators and teachers in order to upgrade their skills and competences

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.
Submission Number: 2020-1-UK01-KA226-SCH-094429

	regarding online teaching, and to share good practices.
Key Stakeholders/ Provider (If applicable)	Ministry of Education and Culture
Level (Organisational, Regional, Local, National)	National
Link/ Website	http://www.moec.gov.cy/psifiaki_ekpaidefsi.html

GOOD PRACTICE 4	
Name	Online Learning Transition – Manuals and FAQs
Description (50-70 words)	Free access to resources and materials for educators in relation to the transition to online learning.
Key Stakeholders/ Provider (If applicable)	European University of Cyprus
Level (Organisational, Regional, Local, National)	National
Link/ Website	https://euc.ac.cy/el/online-learning-transition/

GOOD PRACTICE 5	
Name	Seminar 'How to teach physical sciences through online teaching'
Description (50-70 words)	A seminar aims to introduce educators of physical sciences on different ways and tools, in order to deliver engaging and practical sessions online.
Key Stakeholders/ Provider (If applicable)	Cyprus Pedagogical Institute
Level (Organisational, Regional, Local, National)	National
Link/ Website	https://www.pi.ac.cy/pi/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=3203&Itemid=124&lang=en

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.
Submission Number: 2020-1-UK01-KA226-SCH-094429

5. Conclusion/ Summary

A brief summary of the key findings – 200-300 words.

This report is part of the European Erasmus+ Project DigiTeal – Digital Teaching Literacy, and provided an overview of the state of art regarding online teaching in Cyprus, along with a presentation of some of the good practices emerged during this time. Additionally, the results of the research regarding the needs and gaps of teachers in Cyprus in relation to online teaching were presented and discussed. The next steps involved the design of the DigiTeal Framework, which aims to present key skills and competences to be achieved by the educators in relation to online teaching.

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.
Submission Number: 2020-1-UK01-KA226-SCH-094429

6. References

Provide a list of the references used in an APA format.

CEDEFOP, 2020. *Cyprus: Responses to the Covid-19 outbreak*. [online] CEDEFOP. Available at: <https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news/cyprus-responses-covid-19-outbreak> [Accessed 27 October 2021].

ELearningSchools, 2021. [online] Elearning.schools.ac.cy. Available at: <https://elearning.schools.ac.cy/index.php/el/> [Accessed 27 October 2021].

Eurydice - European Commission, 2021. *National Reforms in School Education - Eurydice - European Commission*. [online] Eurydice - European Commission. Available at: <https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/cyprus/national-reforms-school-education_en> [Accessed 27 October 2021].

MOEC, 2020. *Η Ψηφιακή Εκπαίδευση στην Κύπρο*. [online] Moec.gov.cy. Available at: <http://www.moec.gov.cy/psifiaki_ekpaidefsi.html> [Accessed 27 October 2021].

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

This project has been funded with support from the European Commission. This communication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.
Submission Number: 2020-1-UK01-KA226-SCH-094429