DigiTeaL

DigiTeal – Digital Teaching Literacy

IO1.A2 – NATIONAL REPORT – UNITED KINGDOM

Developed by:

University of Wolverhampton

UNIVERSITY OF WOLVERHAMPTON

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1. General Introduction

This report reviews the status of online teaching in the UK following the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular the first UK national lockdown in March 2020.

Following a summary of research carried out at national level, we present the results of a survey of teachers in schools and colleges in the UK, along with further interviews carried out with a proportion of those teachers.

We then provide three examples of good practice within UK schools, and present our conclusions.

2. State of the Art regarding Online Teaching

In a review of research in England, Howard et al. (2021) concluded:

- The pandemic has been a challenging period for teachers, schools and colleges, students and parents;
- The quality and quantity of learning undertaken declined as a result of the pandemic;
- Most students reportedly have some learning losses, some severe, while some have learning gains;
- Learning losses appear to be most prevalent in maths and literacy;
- Experiences of teaching and learning during the pandemic were diverse, but disadvantage and deprivation appear to be most associated with less effective learning and overall learning losses;
- Learning experiences were diverse: there were differential experiences both between and within groups;
- There are important implications for learning recovery;
- There is much about learning during the pandemic that remains unknown and under-researched.

Ofsted (2021) detail the context of remote learning and provide examples of good practice, barriers and recommendations. They suggest that evidence from their visits indicates that due to the investment in time and resources required, schools are likely to continue using elements of remote learning post-pandemic.

> *'Our evidence shows that current remote education solutions across schools vary considerably in design. There does not appear to be a perfect one-size-fits-all solution. Instead, school leaders are taking into account their specific local contexts to design flexible remote solutions for pupils, staff and parents. Clearly, the message from the evidence is not that we should not be doing remote education. It is an imperfect but necessary substitute in mitigating against learning loss where classroom teaching is not*

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possible. Pupils are still learning more than they would without any school support.'
(Ofsted, 2021)

Safeguarding has been a key consideration for remote learning. NSPCC (2021) state that Government guidance for schools in England advises that schools should add an addendum or annexe to existing child protection policies and procedures, outlining how they will keep children safe during the coronavirus pandemic. NSPCC suggest this should:

- *'reinforce existing child protection procedures*
- *highlight any new ways of working during this period*
- *explain how your organisation can continue to contribute to multi-agency child protection meetings and plans*
- *clarify any changes to your code of conduct for staff and volunteers in response to new ways of working.'*

Sharp et al. (2020) report that:

> *'Nearly all teachers (98 per cent) report that their pupils are behind where they would normally expect them to be in their curriculum learning at the end of the 2019/20 school year.*
>
> *Teachers estimate that their pupils are three months behind, on average. The majority (78 per cent) see no difference between girls and boys in this respect, but 21 per cent say that boys have fallen further behind normal expectations than girls*
>
> *Teachers report covering, on average, only 66 per cent of the usual curriculum during the 2019/20 school year.*
>
> *Over half (61 per cent) of teachers report that the learning gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers has widened since the previous year, with the remainder judging that the 'disadvantaged learning gap' had remained the same (32 per cent) or reduced (seven per cent).*
>
> *Teachers in the most deprived schools are over three times more likely to report that their pupils are four months or more behind in their curriculum related learning in July, compared to teachers in the least deprived schools (53 per cent compared to 15 per cent).'*

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

3.1 Questionnaire Results

1. Number and background of the respondents

The UK survey received 15 responses. 86.7% were female and 13.3% male.

A mix of teaching levels was observed: 60% secondary school, 13.3% primary school and higher education, 7.7% FE college and the remainder from other.

2. Presentation of Digital Skills Results

Over 50% of respondents were very confident with online teaching. 40% were confident, 6.7% were not very confident. No respondents said that they were not at all confident.

Bad internet was the main obstacle for teachers (60%), followed by lack of appropriate software (40%) lack of digital skills and knowledge (33.3%) and lack of appropriate equipment (26.7%). Students' bad internet and lack of digital skills, and students' lack of interest, were flagged as minor obstacles (<10%).

A wide variety of learning management systems is used, with 26.7% not using one at all. 360Learning was the most commonly used (13.3%) and then a number were used by <10% of respondents:

- Moodle
- Brightspace
- Edmodo
- Teams 365
- SMHW
- DB Primary
- Institution's own system

Over a quarter of respondents used a combination of systems e.g. Edulink with SMHW and Teams, Satchel with Office 365 and One Drive.

Respondents showed a preference for Microsoft Teams to deliver training (86.7%), with Zoom, BongoLearn and an institutional system also being used.

To enhance interaction with learners, the most popular option was online quizzes (93.3%) and then online whiteboards and Padlet (both 33.3%). Brainstorming charts are used by 23.1% of respondents, and Kahoot by 7.7%.

The majority of respondents (57.1%) do not use any tools to create content. Those who did use tools, all used something different:

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- Google Draw
- Powtoon
- Kahoot
- YouTube tutorials
- Microsoft Forms and Teams
- Mentimeter

Only 13.3% of respondents are aware of Open Badges as a validation method, and none are using it.

3. Presentation of Managing Online Learners Results

Almost three-quarters of respondents (73.3%) observed low motivation in their learners, with 20% observing the same motivation as in classroom-based teaching (and 6.7% seeing more).

A majority (66.7%) also observed more learner fatigue during online teaching, with 20% observing the same levels as in classroom-based teaching. Respondents also noted that this could be learner-dependent, and that parents reported difficulty in engaging learners.

66.7% of respondents also saw lower grades during online teaching, while 33.3% saw classroom-based levels maintained.

60% of respondents reported that previously high-achieving students found online teaching easier than classroom-based learning, although one respondent noted that these students may be coping better, but not necessarily finding it easier. A small number of respondents also mentioned learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, learners with Special Educational Needs, learners with physical disabilities and previously low-achieving learners.

4. Presentation of Online Safety and Privacy

93.3% of respondents were aware of the GDPR requirements relating to online teaching (with the remaining 1 respondent presumed to be the respondent who had said they are not doing face-to-face online teaching).

Respondents are taking a number of steps to protect their learners' privacy while online:

- Consent to record the session (73.3%)
- Not sharing students' photos or information without consent (66.7%)
- Using tools that protect students' personal data (53.3%)
- Inform students about personal data issues (30.8%)

To avoid disruptive intrusions into online teaching, 64.3% of respondents verify learners' identity before giving them access to an online session. 42.9% set a password for accessing online sessions, and/or avoid sharing online session links via social media platforms.

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50% of respondents inform students about online threats such as inappropriate content and cyberbullying, in order to protect them. 35.7% have a cyberbullying reporting system in place. Under 15% use technical measures such as changing security settings or having Smoothwall installed on school laptops. 28.5% do not take any measures to protect learners from online threats.

5. Good Practices Results

100% of respondents said that they shared best practice with other teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. They reported tips such as:

- Keep the sessions student focused using break out rooms. Don't get so caught up in making the resources "fancy" that you lose sight of the lesson goal.
- Use of Loom to pre-record lessons
- Constant contact with the students both vis emails and regular weekly telephone calls to parents
- Use of online platforms such as google arts and culture along with VR
- Spent as much time as needed to teach students the online tools they need to use

3.2 Interview Results

Two of the teachers who had responded to the survey were willing to discuss online teaching in more detail in individual interviews. While the discussions generally echoed the survey results, the teachers raised some additional points of interest.

One teacher worked in a college focusing on English language tuition. She noted that time zones were an issue with her classes, because learners either left the UK during the pandemic, or were delayed in reaching the UK. Furthermore, learners from countries with restricted internet access had additional problems in accessing the learning platform, and if they could not legally use VPNs then additional workarounds had to be found.

The second teacher had several learners in her classes from large Muslim families. She found that they reported difficulties in engaging with online learning because they were expected to a) help with household chores during lesson times; b) help younger siblings with their online learning; and/or c) share technology access with siblings (not having enough tablets etc. for all school-age children in the house to join online learning at the same time).

Interestingly, this teacher found an unexpected benefit to online learning. As an art teacher, she had previously quickly demonstrated techniques in class. She now produced videos of herself using techniques while working on her own art. This gave her more time and motivation for her own artistic practice, and prompted the learners to see her as an artist in her own right, rather than as a teacher only.

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4. Good Practices in relation to Online Teaching

GOOD PRACTICE 1	
Name	EdTech Demonstrator programme
Description	The UK government funded this programme so that any publicly funded school or colleges could be put in touch with "demonstrator" schools or colleges. The demonstrator can support them in setting up a new online learning system and using technology effectively.
Key Stakeholders/ Provider (If applicable)	Schools and colleges
Level (Organisational, Regional, Local, National)	National
Link/ Website	https://get-help-with-tech.education.gov.uk/EdTech-demonstrator-programme

GOOD PRACTICE 2	
Name	Oak National Academy
Description (50-70 words)	This website, set up for teachers by teachers in March 2020, supplies a year's worth of teaching materials aligned with the national curriculum. It also offers free teacher training workshops, on subject-specific topics, material development and classroom management topics (e.g. learner motivation). For school pupils, it has a hub with free video students so that pupils can catch up on lessons they've missed, or watch for revision.
Key Stakeholders/ Provider (If applicable)	Schools
Level (Organisational, Regional, Local, National)	National
Link/ Website	https://www.thenational.academy/

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GOOD PRACTICE 3	
Name	Tauheedul Islam Boys' High School
Description (50-70 words)	This school has a large number of pupils with English as a Second Language, and was concerned about engagement if pupils were working alone at home. They used a number of support measures: • IT MOTs • Real-time checking of work • Pupils could type, use a stylus or work on paper and upload a picture of their work • Digital inking for prompt feedback • Staff training coordinator and bespoke staff training • Clear expectations
Key Stakeholders/ Provider (If applicable)	Schools
Level (Organisational, Regional, Local, National)	Organisational
Link/ Website	Department for Education case study (see references) p20-22

5. Conclusion/ Summary

Since the start of the pandemic, schools have invested financially in technology to support online learning, and both teachers and pupils have spent considerable time learning how to manage online learning.

Although teachers report that pupils are more likely to experience learning loss than learning gains, some of this may be due to the haste of switching without prior planning in the March 2020 lockdown. As we approach two years after that date, learning management systems have become embedded and teachers have been able to develop a good baseline of skills for online learning.

Lack of access to technology and internet is perceived by teachers as the biggest barrier to online learning. This may be because a lot of governmental response in the UK has focused on getting schools set up with and trained on learning management systems, proactively reducing a skills gap in that area.

Teachers indicate a great willingness to share their own best practice and to learn from their peers. Training seems to have been focused on digital skills, but some training around classroom management and pupil engagement has been made available.

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